

International Student Volunteering Guidance

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO) defines volunteering as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups).

All international students, including exchange students, are welcome to volunteer their time whilst here at Aberystwyth and we encourage you to get involved! However, it's important to understand the difference between volunteering and voluntary work before applying for a role. This is because students on a Visitor Visa are not allowed to undertake voluntary work, and for those on a Student Visa, voluntary work counts towards the maximum number of hours you are allowed to work per week to meet your visa conditions.

[UK Council for international Student Affairs \(UKCISA\)](#) definitions are:

Volunteering

- You do not have a contract. This means you should not have regular fixed hours or days in which you are asking to give up your time.
- You must not be a substitute for an employee and must not be doing unpaid work or receiving payment for the volunteering that you undertake. However, you can be reimbursed for reasonable expenses such as travel and food.

Examples of volunteering are one-off activities, club society committee members, academic reps, volunteer officer, peer guides, A-Team, fundraising roles etc.

Voluntary Work (unpaid work)

- You will usually have contractual obligations to perform the work. This means you will have regular agreed hours or days that you should work.
- The employer is contractually required to provide the work, but the contract does not have to be written.
- You may receive some sort of remuneration/payment in kind.

Examples of voluntary work are usually set hours which are agreed in advance, this could be working in a charity shop or helping at youth group sessions but always at a particular time and day. It's always advisable to check with the organisation offering about what type of volunteering is being offered. Any kind of unpaid or voluntary work will count towards your weekly 10 or 20 hours that you are allowed to work under a Student Visa.

Visa Guidance

The earliest you can apply for a UK visa is three months before the date of your intended trip, also keep in mind that the processing of your visa application may take up to three weeks. It is always advisable to check the conditions of your visa. UKCISA have put together clear information providing advice on what kind of work you can do to meet your visa responsibilities. You can check this through the following website: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Student-work>

If you need advice on visa conditions and protecting your status in the UK, please email immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk

If you need any help finding or checking a volunteering opportunity, please email our Volunteering Coordinator on suvolunteering@aber.ac.uk