

Manuscripts & Special Collections Volunteer Policy

1. Aim of volunteer policy

Manuscripts & Special Collections engages volunteers and students in a variety of activities in support of our mission to preserve the collections, and make them accessible to a wide audience. It recognises that volunteers can make an important contribution to aspects of collections care, and that the time, energy and skills offered by volunteers can benefit the work of Manuscripts & Special Collections. The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance to staff and volunteers engaged in these activities. The policy does not constitute a binding contractual or personnel agreement.

2. Scope of volunteer policy

Unless otherwise stated this policy applies to all people working or undertaking tasks involving archives or special collections for Manuscripts & Special Collections without remuneration; including students on placements or work experience. It establishes clear guidelines for the involvement of volunteers with Manuscripts & Special Collections, acknowledging the value of the contribution made by volunteers, recognising the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers and staff; and ensuring the quality of both the volunteering opportunities on offer and the work carried out by volunteers.

3. Application and Recruitment

Requests to volunteer within Manuscripts & Special Collections will be considered individually. Preference will be given to those who indicate an intention to pursue a career or academic course in the heritage or library sector. Potential volunteers will need to submit an application form and a reference. If no suitable placement is available, the details will be held on file for one year. If a suitable placement is available, potential volunteers will make a preliminary visit to Manuscripts & Special Collections for an informal meeting with the Team Leader and/or proposed supervisor to ascertain their interest in and expectations of volunteering and whether they have the appropriate skills and capabilities for the proposed tasks or project. Staff may accept or refuse requests depending on resources available for supervision of volunteers; whether suitable, meaningful work can be found for volunteers and the aptitude of volunteers for such work. Volunteers will be informed of the outcome of their application as expeditiously as possible.

Volunteers may be actively recruited, for example as part of a specific project or if a certain skillset is required. Before recruiting volunteers, staff will ensure they have a clearly defined project or role prepared for new volunteers. In the first instance staff are encouraged to recruit volunteers from staff and students at the University of Nottingham. Where this is inappropriate or unsuccessful, staff may advertise more widely but are encouraged to recruit through organised bodies such as local groups and societies.

4. Commitment

Working days and times as well as the duration of the placement should be agreed between the volunteer and Manuscripts & Special Collections in advance of the placement start date. Volunteers should notify their supervisors of any absence in advance, or in case of illness/emergency, as soon as possible.

5. Induction

All volunteers will receive a general induction on their first day to cover the purposes and requirements of the role, as well as practical information on working hours, breaks, location of toilets, parking facilities, introductions to relevant staff, and emergency procedures.

6. Supervision

Each volunteer will have a clearly identified supervisor who will be responsible for the direct management of the volunteer and guidance of the work of the volunteer. Supervisors will be responsible for developing suitable assignments for volunteers and providing feedback to volunteers. Supervisors shall be the first point of contact for volunteers that they manage. Staff assigned supervisory responsibility for volunteers may request appropriate training.

7. Volunteer rights and responsibilities

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to Manuscripts & Special Collections. Volunteers will be extended the right to meaningful assignments and the right to effective supervision. In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and judgement. Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged or closed information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer.

8. Trial period

All volunteer placements are subject to a limited trial period the appropriate length of which is agreed to by both parties and will be determined by the nature and length of the placement. At the end of this period the supervisor should meet with the volunteer to review the placement. This is a mutual opportunity for assessment of the initial placement.

9. Training

Volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their duties. The timing and method of delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the role and the capabilities of the volunteer. Staff who supervise volunteers shall have primary responsibility for design and delivery of on-the-job training to those volunteers assigned to them.

10. Refusal of assignments

Manuscripts and Special Collections staff are not expected to make unreasonable demands on volunteers. Volunteers have the right to refuse tasks that appear to be outside the original agreed role, or beyond their skills and capabilities.

11. Reimbursement of expenses

The University will reimburse expenses for travelling to and from Manuscripts & Special Collections or for parking. The maximum payment is £4 for a half day's work, or up to £8 for a full day's work, where a half day consists of a minimum of 3 hours work, and a full day consists of 6 hours minimum. Evidence of expenditure must be supplied (e.g. parking tickets, or bus/train tickets). Mileage is not payable. Food or drink is not payable.

12. Resignation & Termination

Volunteers may resign from their volunteer service at any time. Advance notice should be given where-ever possible. Manuscripts & Special Collections may at any time and for whatever reason terminate a volunteer's service.

13. Feedback

Feedback from volunteers regarding their expectations, experiences and suggestions for improvement, is welcomed. For ongoing volunteers, feedback will be sought and given at the completion of each project and at the annual renewal of the Volunteer Agreement.

A short exit interview will also be held for volunteers who resign or who reach the end of their agreed placement.

14. Complaints

Volunteers should express any concerns or grievances to their supervisor in the first instance. Should a volunteer not wish to discuss the matter with their supervisor they may express any concerns or grievances to the Team Leaders.