

# Volunteer Role Descriptions

## Creating role descriptions for your volunteers

Creating role descriptions is good practice in volunteer management. This guide identifies the benefits of role descriptions and guides you through the creation of role descriptions for all of your volunteering opportunities.

### Introduction

Part of good volunteer management is about having clear role descriptions for every type of volunteering opportunity.

The term 'volunteer' is often associated with just community volunteers. However we consider volunteers as anyone who gives up their time to perform a role or function with no payment. Volunteers in students' unions are diverse; from society committees to part-time officers, from sports club captains to campaigners. Before creating these role descriptions it is a good idea to identify who the volunteers are in your students' union.

### Why are role descriptions useful?

Role descriptions are useful as they outline the duties, expectations and responsibilities of the organisation and the volunteer.

Potential volunteers can identify the typical activities involved with each role and can consider whether they want to take on the volunteer position.

The students' union can use volunteer role descriptions to identify the skills that each volunteer needs and identify training that is appropriate.

### Creating role descriptions

There are some fundamental elements of a role description that you should include:

- **General purpose of the volunteer position** – why is the work valuable? What will the volunteer be a part of or be contributing to?
- **Specific responsibilities of the role**
- **Qualifications or experience** (if relevant)
- **The staff and/or officer responsible for the volunteer** (someone they can ask for advice and support)
- **The hours and place of volunteering** (can be general but do give guidance on this)
- **Benefits** – what do they get out of being a volunteer? (Training, supervision and guidance, a t shirt, discount in SU shop, skills development opportunities)
- **Volunteer's position within the organisation** (identify where they fit with the democratic structure, how they contribute to the success of the students' union)

A volunteer role description is very similar to a job description but you must ensure that the role description does not sound contractual, as you may then be expected to pay your volunteers.

There's some [guidance from NCVO](#) about the difference between volunteers and paid employees.

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If you have any questions about this guide or would like to suggest any amends please contact [studentopportunities@nus.org.uk](mailto:studentopportunities@nus.org.uk).