

# The Volunteering Services Unit

## Operational Policies & Procedures

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### Definitions:

- Partner Organisation – community, voluntary and statutory organisations which we refer volunteers to and/or collaborate with on student-led projects.
- Internal Project – volunteering activities organised by the VSU, and student-led projects
- Project Leader – Student with responsibility for overall planning and delivery of a student-led project
- Activity Leader – student leading a particular volunteering session. Can be Project Leader or other student volunteer delegated this responsibility
- The VSU is open to UCL students and staff, but for brevity we have generally referred to people enquiring about or using our services as 'students'. Note however that only UCL students may participate on Internal Projects.

### General Aim

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The VSU exists to connect UCL's students with well-run and rewarding volunteering opportunities across London.

### Specific Aims

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As a result of our work:

- UCL students will have opportunities to develop the attributes outlined in [UCL's Education for Global Citizenship](#) – that is:
  - A critical and creative thinker
  - Ambitious – but also idealistic and committed to ethical behaviour
  - Aware of the intellectual and social value of cultural difference
  - An entrepreneur with the ability to innovate
  - Willing to assume leadership roles: in the family, the community and the workplace
  - Highly employable and ready to embrace professional mobility
- UCL students will have opportunities to improve their well-being, their sense of civic engagement, and their employability through volunteering.
- New connections will be made between staff and students at UCL and communities across London.
- Not-for-profit organisations will be able to recruit UCL student volunteers and thereby increase the impact of their own organisations.

### Objectives

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We will:

- Provide a range of volunteering opportunities appropriate to the needs, interests and skills of the UCL student body;
- Keep in regular contact with students who've expressed an interest in volunteering to offer support and get feedback on their experiences.
- Enhance students' volunteering experience by provision of support, training, information and advice.

- Provide financial support and practical guidance to students wishing to establish their own volunteering projects;
- Promote volunteering as a core element of the UCL student experience and publicise opportunities widely across UCL;
- Reach out to student groups under-represented amongst volunteers and to those covered by UCLU's Liberation Sections.
- Provide advice and data on student volunteering to the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) in support of UCL's Global Citizenship activities and work to meet targets for recruitment.
- Develop strong working relationships with relevant charities, NGOs and other organisations across London, with a particular focus on Camden and East London.
- Collaborate with UCL Departments in the promotion of student volunteering and the achievement of shared objectives;
- Offer a two week voluntary sector option as part of UCL's Global Citizenship Programme.

## Accountability

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The Volunteering Services Unit is a joint project of UCL and UCLU. It is funded by UCL to support the Global Citizenship agenda at UCL, specifically through the promotion of volunteering and the provision of volunteering opportunities to UCL students. As a student-facing service, the Volunteering Services Unit is based within UCLU.

The VSU reports to and is accountable to the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs). The direction of the VSU's activities and targets for recruitment and placements will be agreed annually with the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs).

In addition, the VSU's annual plan will be drawn up with reference to:

- UCL Strategic Plan
- UCLU Strategic Plan
- Input from VSU Steering Group
- Input from UCLU Sabbatical Officers and Senior Management Team
- Input from UCL students, including UCLU Volunteering Officer and UCLU Volunteering Society
- Input from the VSU's community partners
- Input from colleagues across UCL and UCLU
- Input from the VSU's student advisory group (The VSU Think Tank).

On an operational basis, the VSU abides by the Union's policies and procedures. UCLU's Membership Services Manager has managerial oversight of the VSU.

The Volunteering Services Unit Steering Group (VSUSG) will meet three times a year, with the aim of providing strategic advice and guidance to the VSU on its activities, and in order to monitor the VSU's progress against its agreed targets. The VSUSG shall be chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) or his / her nominee. Membership will comprise staff from UCL, and staff and elected student representatives from UCLU.

The VSU's activities will be funded through UCL's central budgets, with levels of funding confirmed annually on a rolling basis.

In support of the VSU, UCLU:

- Promotes the VSU as a UCLU-based student-service;

- Provides line management for the Volunteering Manager;
- Provides office space for the VSU in an appropriate location, and access to Union meeting spaces and other similar facilities;
- Provides financial processing and marketing support.

## Volunteering Policies

The VSU subscribes to Greater London Volunteering’s Charter on volunteering, and we encourage our partner organisations to do so as well.

The Charter is built around 10 key principles of volunteering:

Principle	How this is reflected in our work
Equality and Diversity – Volunteering is open to all. Volunteers are treated with fairness.	In how we <a href="#">promote volunteering</a> ; how we <a href="#">recruit and screen volunteers</a> ; our <a href="#">equal opportunities and diversity policy</a> ; our <a href="#">policy on students with disabilities</a>
Expenses – Travel, and any other agreed, out of pocket expenses are reimbursed.	Through our <a href="#">policy on expenses</a> .
Induction – Volunteers are introduced to the work and ethos of the organisation.	Through our <a href="#">policy on inductions</a> .
Organisational Involvement – Volunteers have influence and an informed voice on organisational issues.	Through our policy on <a href="#">volunteer influence</a> .
Personal Development – Identified needs are met by relevant training and development opportunities.	Through our policy in <a href="#">Induction &amp; Training</a>
Recruitment process – Recruitment procedures are fair, efficient and consistent.	Through our <a href="#">policy on recruitment and screening of volunteers</a> .
Resolving difficulties – Volunteers are aware of how to raise a concern, and how it will be handled.	Through our <a href="#">system of follow-up emails</a> and our <a href="#">complaints procedures</a> .
Reward and Recognition – The organisation expresses its appreciation of the volunteers’ contribution.	Through our <a href="#">Reward and Recognition Policy</a> .
Safe Volunteering Environment – The physical and emotional risks of volunteering are identified, minimised, and covered by adequate insurance.	Through our <a href="#">Health and Safety Policy</a> and through cover by UCLU’s Insurance Policy.
Support – A named supervisor ensures ongoing support appropriate to need.	Through our <a href="#">Supervision and Support Policy</a> .

## Promotion of Volunteering

The VSU will promote volunteering in accordance with our Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy. We can only find voluntary roles for current UCL students and staff members.

The VSU will promote itself in a number of different ways, including the following:

- Posters and flyers
- E-newsletters

- Welcome Fairs and other events
- Volunteering Fairs
- Information sessions
- Webpages
- Social Media
- Internal UCL and UCLU media
- Direct contact with UCL departments and with UCLU societies
- Collaboration with the UCLU Volunteering Society

We will reach out to student groups under-represented amongst volunteers and to those covered by UCLU's Liberation Sections.

We will promote the different benefits of volunteering, including improved well-being and improved employability.

## Recruitment and Screening of Volunteers

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The VSU's policy in screening volunteers is as follows:

For externally run projects:

- The responsibility for accepting a prospective volunteer on to an externally run Partner Project lies solely with the organisation.
- It is anticipated that the organisation will use relevant screening procedures, such as Disclosure & Barring Service checks, references, interview, and inductions.
- In certain circumstances – such as joint projects – responsibility for volunteer recruitment and screening will be decided by negotiation.
- For placements on the GC Voluntary Sector programme, the VSU is responsible for selecting volunteer teams.
- On request, we will run DBS checks for students for external projects that require such checks.

For internally run projects:

- The VSU, the Project Leaders and the Partner Organisation will agree recruitment, selection and screening procedures.
- The VSU will ensure that relevant screening processes take place. If necessary, these will include Disclosure & Barring Service checks, interviewing, taking references and an appropriate induction.
- The VSU and the Project Leaders will agree clear criteria for who is and isn't suitable for volunteering on their project. These criteria must only relate to the qualities and skills required for the volunteer role.
- Volunteers awaiting their DBS disclosure may be able to work in supervised contact with clients in circumstances agreed by the Project Leader, the VSU, and relevant partner organisations.
- Any instance of an undeclared criminal record coming to light may disqualify the volunteer from any form of contact with vulnerable groups, at the Volunteering Manager's discretion.
- Where required, references will be requested for any volunteer coming into contact (supervised or unsupervised) with vulnerable clients. Referees must have known the volunteer in a professional capacity for at least 6 months. Students may begin volunteering when one satisfactory reference has been received.

- In the instance of anything in the reference or in the DBS disclosure giving cause for concern about a volunteer, any restrictions on volunteering will be decided by the Volunteering Manager and the Head of Student Engagement & Communication.

Where a volunteer already holds a disclosure from the DBS, then our default position is as follows:

- If the original disclosure was obtained by UCL, and if the check was for the appropriate workforce (i.e. adult and/or child) we will obtain the reference number and check with Student and Registry Services or the relevant UCL department. No further check will be carried out.
- If the original disclosure was obtained externally, or was for a different workforce, we will ask for a new disclosure.
- If the Partner Organisation requires a new DBS check to be completed, even where one has already taken place, we will request a new one.

## Volunteers' influence

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We will involve volunteers in decision making about the VSU through;

- Creation of a student advisory body – The VSU Think Tank.
- Regular consultation with UCLU Volunteering Society and UCLU's elected Volunteering Officer.
- Regular meetings with UCLU Sabbatical Officers.
- Student representation on the VSU Steering Group.
- An annual survey of students registered with the VSU.
- Gathering of feedback on VSU training and other activities.
- Focus Groups

## On-going Contact

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### All students

- All students will be emailed within three days of their initial enquiry. All subsequent communications with students that need to be followed up will be logged for future action.
- After a volunteer has been placed for one month, including on an internal project, they will be emailed to see how their volunteering is progressing. If there are any concerns or questions to be addressed, these will be referred to the Volunteering Manager. We will send out the VSU vacancies bulletin twice a week – one edition detailing ongoing vacancies, and another with one-off opportunities.
- We will send targeted volunteering opportunities by email to relevant students.
- At least once a year we will send individual emails to all students registered with us – both those that we know are volunteering, and those that are not. The purpose of this email is to enquire about how the student's volunteering is going and/or to see if there is any further help we can offer. These emails will be personalised.
- We will log all significant contacts with volunteers and projects on the VSU database.
- We will contact Project Leaders requesting a monthly update on their project progress and give relevant news and notices.

### One-Off Events

We will contact projects after one-off events to record who participated and to assess whether there is any feedback for us. Participants will also be emailed within a month of the event to ask for feedback.

## Internal Projects

VSU staff will arrange regular supervision meetings with student Project Leaders, as required by the project.

## Equal Opportunities and Diversity

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The VSU is committed to equal opportunities and anti-discrimination in its practice, and follows UCLU's policies on equal opportunities and diversity.

The VSU is committed to ensuring that volunteering opportunities are open to all in the UCL community. We will work with others to identify ways we can meet this commitment, including UCLU's Liberation Sections and Sabbatical officers, colleagues within UCLU, students and staff from across UCL, and people within community partner organisations,

We will identify groups who are under-represented amongst our existing volunteers and/or who might experience barriers to volunteering. We will monitor our work to help ensure that these groups are reached.

We will cover equal opportunities and diversity issues within our training and handbook for project leaders.

We are committed to working in partnership with a diverse range of organisations. We will not work with organisations that tolerate discriminatory behaviour.

## Working in partnership

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The VSU will follow the following principles in deciding which community partnerships it will develop:

- We will offer a wide range of types of volunteering opportunities, gauged in terms of setting, type of organisation, level of responsibility, time commitment, opening times and client group.
- Taken as a whole, the organisations registered with us will serve a diverse range of communities and beneficiaries.
- The opportunities we offer should realistically reflect the skills, needs and expectations of students and staff at UCL.
- We expect organisations to be transparent in their aims and objectives and to have good standards in volunteer management.
- We will not refer students to organisations involved in activities which breach any VSU or UCLU policies or which might bring disrepute to the VSU or UCLU.
- We will only register an organisation if we judge that there is a realistic chance of them recruiting UCL student volunteers. When assessing whether to register, we will look at how many similar opportunities we have, the geographical location, and time commitment, and appeal and suitability of the roles for UCL students.

All projects registering with the VSU will sign a set of service standards, outlining the policies and procedures that they must have in place, and the levels of service they can expect from the VSU. A copy of the service standards will be sent to them each year with their re-registration packs.

All projects must have the following policies and procedures in place:

- A written Health & Safety policy.

- A written Equal Opportunities statement or policy.
- A Fire Safety procedure.
- An Accident Book and First Aid kit.
- All activities and premises that volunteers will be involved in must have been adequately risk assessed.

Where organisations do not have the required policies and procedures, the VSU can offer guidance.

## Faith Organisations

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The VSU welcomes the opportunity to work with volunteering projects that are based within or set up by faith organisations. However, we cannot be involved with any project that is used in any way to recruit members - from their clients or their volunteers - to any religious organisation, nor any project that is used to promote the tenets of a particular faith.

## Campaigning Organisations

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The VSU welcomes the opportunity to work with campaigning organisations. We will not refer students to organisations that are closely connected with any political party.

## Induction & Training

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- The VSU expects our partner organisations to provide appropriate induction and training to volunteers. We will provide prospective volunteers with a checklist of what constitutes proper induction.
- The VSU will ensure appropriate induction and training is provided for volunteers on all internally run projects including student-led projects.
- All Project Leaders will be strongly encouraged to attend Project Leader training.
- All students on projects working with children or young people will be required to attend 'Volunteering with Children' training.
- Student projects will be able to apply for funding from the VSU Grants Panel to provide training for their volunteers; VSU staff will be able to advise on appropriate training.
- The VSU will offer training opportunities to enhance students' volunteering experiences, such as 'Volunteering and Your CV', and will promote relevant training provided by others that we are aware of.
- The VSU's strand of the Global Citizenship Programme will include a taught element to help students make a success of their projects.

## Expenses

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- The VSU expects all externally run Partner Projects to pay for volunteers' travel expenses. The VSU will notify prospective volunteers about the expenses policy of projects.
- The VSU may in certain circumstances provide expenses to enable an individual to take part in externally run Partner Projects.
- The VSU will pay travel expenses for volunteers participating in one-off events, and for all volunteering opportunities within the London Borough of Newham.

For internally run projects, the VSU will pay the following expenses to UCL volunteers:

- reasonable travel expenses within London (inside the M25)

- care costs, where a volunteer would otherwise not be able to take part in the volunteering opportunity
- taxi use is only allowed:
  - a) if it is a cheaper option than public transport (all names need to be provided on the petty cash form so taxi use can be monitored) and/or if volunteers are transporting heavy equipment, and;
  - b) it has been agreed in advance with the Volunteering Manager.

All volunteers must have their expenses agreed before incurring any costs. All receipts must be provided in order to claim expenses, as well as any activity logs filled in.

The VSU will encourage volunteers to claim expenses by regular reminders in the VSU newsletter, as well as in the welcome email and in other communications.

## Students with disabilities

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- The VSU will cover travel expenses or special equipment for disabled students to enable them to volunteer. We will liaise with the UCL Disability Office and the UCLU Students with Disabilities Officer.
- We will help to identify accessible volunteering opportunities.
- We will monitor uptake of volunteering by students with disabilities.

## Supervision & Support

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The VSU expects all projects on our database to have a named supervisor to provide appropriate supervision to volunteers. We will monitor this through the organisation registration from and through our contact with volunteers.

The VSU expects our partner organisations to inform volunteers about the supervisory arrangements for the projects.

The VSU will provide supervision for all project leaders on Internal Projects. We will agree appropriate supervision and support procedures for each project.

The VSU will promote other forms of support that students might use to maintain and improve their well-being, such as UCL's Students Psychological Service or UCLU's Rights & Advice Service.

## Insurance

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All volunteers will be covered by appropriate insurance or other provision whilst volunteering with internally run projects and externally run Partner Projects.

### For Externally Run projects:

The VSU will ensure that the project organisations on our database accept liability for all UCL volunteers placed on their project and have made provision to meet those liabilities.

### For Internally Run projects:

The VSU will ensure that the projects are covered by UCLU insurance or additional cover if necessary. UCLU insurance only covers UCL students and UCLU staff. Other groups cannot volunteer on internally run projects.



## Health & Safety

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The Health & Safety of volunteers is of paramount importance to the VSU.

External Partner Organisations:

- The VSU will require that all projects on our database provide adequate Health & Safety training and procedures for volunteers. The VSU will monitor this through the registration process and through ongoing volunteer questionnaires and feedback.
- All volunteers will be strongly encouraged to report any concerns they have about Health & Safety to the VSU.

Internal Projects:

- All Project Leaders will be asked to sign a declaration confirming that they have read and understood the Health & Safety section of the Project Leader's handbook. No activities can proceed this has taken place.
- Project Leaders will complete a risk assessment; they will not be able to undertake any volunteering activity until the risk assessment has been approved by the Volunteering Manager.
- All internally run projects will follow VSU Health & Safety procedures.
- If the risk assessment requires the project leader or activity leaders to complete specific training, then the VSU will ensure that this is completed before any activities take place.
- The VSU will monitor Health & Safety through activity logs and evaluations.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

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- The VSU will contact all volunteers during their placement, or, in the case of one-offs, within a month of the event taking place.
- We will send an end-of-year survey to all students on our database, including both volunteers and non-volunteers.
- Evaluation forms will be given out at the end of training courses.
- We will send an end-of-year survey to all Partner Projects.
- The VSU requires all Student Project Leaders to complete an evaluation at the end of the project.
- All GC Volunteering participants will be encouraged to feed back in many ways: online form, comment cards, in person, by email etc.

## Complaints Procedure

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### For externally-run projects:

If a volunteer wishes to make a complaint about the organisation they are volunteering with, they should follow the organisations' complaints procedure. The VSU can support the volunteer, and can mediate if requested to do so by both parties.

### For internally-run projects:

If a volunteer wishes to make a complaint about the student-led project they are volunteering with, they should contact the VSU. The complaint should be taken down in writing, either by the volunteer or by a VSU staff member. A member of the VSU will investigate the complaints and our findings and the action we propose to take will be reported back to the volunteer. The VSU will mediate if requested to do so by both parties. If the volunteer is not happy with the outcome of our investigation, then he/she can appeal in writing to the Membership Services Manager.

If anyone wishes to make a complaint about the work of the VSU, they should follow the UCL Union complaints procedure, as outlined in section 13 of the Union's Bye-Laws. These can be found at [https://uclu.org/sites/uclu.org/files/u80586/documents/bye-laws\\_-\\_august\\_2014\\_.pdf](https://uclu.org/sites/uclu.org/files/u80586/documents/bye-laws_-_august_2014_.pdf) or by contacting the Sabbatical Officers on the fourth floor of the main UCL Union building, 25 Gordon Street.

## Disciplinary Procedure

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### For externally-run projects:

The organisation's own disciplinary procedures apply. The VSU will mediate if requested to do so by both parties and provide appropriate support if requested by either party.

Where a volunteer's behaviour on an externally-run project is of a sufficiently serious nature, the internal disciplinary procedure may also be invoked.

### For internally-run projects:

Volunteers who behave inappropriately may be subject to disciplinary procedure.

Inappropriate behaviour includes but is not limited to:

- Racial harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Verbal abuse
- Threatening and intimidating behaviour
- Disregard for Health & Safety
- Theft

In such instances, UCL Union's disciplinary procedure will be followed, as outlined in section 14 of the UCLU Bye-Laws:

[https://uclu.org/sites/uclu.org/files/u80586/documents/bye-laws\\_-\\_august\\_2014\\_.pdf](https://uclu.org/sites/uclu.org/files/u80586/documents/bye-laws_-_august_2014_.pdf)

## Confidentiality and Data Protection

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- The VSU will follow UCL's Data Protection Policy - [www.ucl.ac.uk/informationsecurity/policy/public-policy/Data\\_protection\\_policy\\_ISC\\_20110215](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/informationsecurity/policy/public-policy/Data_protection_policy_ISC_20110215)
- The information held on the VSU volunteer registration form is confidential and will only be used to find a suitable volunteering placement and for follow-up work. Information will be retained within the UCLU student database. Paper copies of forms will be destroyed within 1 year. For insurance purposes, all volunteers on internal will be regarded as members of 'The VSU Society', with numbers reported to UCLU Finance annually.
- Paper copies of VSU Partner Organisation Registration forms will be destroyed within 1 year. Information will be revised annually and removed five years after the organisation has de-registered.
- It will be stressed to all organisations that we work with that information they hold on UCL volunteers must be treated confidentially.
- It will be stressed to all projects leaders, VSU volunteers and student support staff that information they come into contact with must be treated confidentially.
- The VSU may become aware of sensitive information that we may need to disclose. Decision to disclose will be based on need to know considerations and relevant legislation.

## Reward and Recognition

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- All volunteers will receive an invitation to the VSU Awards Ceremony at the end of the academic year, where they will receive a certificate of thanks for their contribution.
- Project Leaders will be able to nominate their projects for recognition.
- The VSU will identify external awards to which we can put forward volunteers.
- The VSU will accredit students' volunteering upon UCL's Higher Education Achievement Report, where they are eligible and where they ask us to do so.

## Safeguarding Policy

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The VSU will work in reference to UCL's Safeguarding Policy: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/staff-support/child-protection>

The VSU will have clear procedures for Recruitment and Screening of Volunteers, detailed [elsewhere](#) in this document.

### Definitions

A child or young person is anyone under the age of 18.

If adults require 'regulated activity' they are defined as being vulnerable. Regulated activity is:

- Health care – any health care professional providing health care to an adult or anyone who provides health care to an adult under the supervision of a health care professional.
- Personal care – providing assistance, supervision or advice in relation to activities including eating and washing.
- Social care lives in residential accommodation including sheltered housing and a care home
- Assistance with cash, bills or shopping
- Assistance in the conduct of a persons own affairs
- Transporting an adult because of their age, disability or illness to or from their home and a place where they will receive health care, personal care or social care.

### For Student Led Projects

- Guidance will be issued for students working with vulnerable groups, covering appropriate behaviour, information on recognising abuse, and on how to report suspected abuse.
- All projects will be risk assessed, and any project working with vulnerable groups will be required to address safeguarding within their risk assessment.
- All volunteers on projects working with children or young people will be required to attend the VSU's 'Volunteering with Children' training, which will be organised on a frequent basis throughout terms 1 and 2. An exception will be made to this on agreement from the Volunteering Manager where alternative training of an equally high standard has been arranged by the project.
- All projects working with vulnerable adults will be required to arrange suitable training on how to work with their client group. Project Leaders can apply for funding for this training through the VSU Grants Panel.
- All projects will be required to complete a Partnership Agreement with each external organisation they work with. This document will include information about the safeguarding contact within the organisation, and the organisation's policy on DBS checks.

- Volunteers undertaking the following activities will be required to complete an Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check:
  - working unsupervised with children on a regular basis (once a week or more than 4 times in a 30 day period)
  - undertaking a regulated activity with adults as defined by Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- A DBS check will be required in other situations only where the partner organisation identifies one is necessary. This information will be recorded on the Partnership Agreement.
- If a safeguarding concern has come to the attention of a volunteer, they should contact the partner organisation's safeguarding contact. The volunteer should notify the VSU that they have raised a child protection issue with the Partner Organisation, but need not give us specifics.
- If the volunteer prefers to speak to the VSU about the issue, the VSU will notify the partner organisation's safeguarding contact of the concern with the consent of the volunteer. It is the responsibility of the safeguarding contact to notify Social Services or the police.
- If the safeguarding contact does not feel that there is any cause for concern but the volunteer disagrees, the VSU will refer the concern to the UCL Safeguarding Contact for further advice.
- If a volunteer does not wish to approach the organisation directly the VSU will refer the concern to the UCL Safeguarding Contact for further advice.

### **External placements**

- All partner organisations will confirm that they have a current safeguarding policy in place as a condition of registering with the VSU.

### **In the case of an allegation of abuse made against a volunteer**

- In the event of an allegation of abuse against a volunteer, it is anticipated that the partner organisation's safeguarding contact will lead on any action, and that the organisation's own safeguarding policies will be followed. However, where appropriate, the VSU Volunteering Manager will also participate in any action taken, and will notify a UCL Safeguarding Officer as per UCL's policy (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/staff-support/child-protection>)

Date of last review: August 2015