

Volunteering Service Partners Survey 2020-21

During July of 2021, the Volunteering Service conducted an online survey of community organisations that were registered with our Partnerships team to advertise volunteering opportunities.

We received 59 completed responses; 48 had definitely recruited volunteers, 4 didn't know how many volunteers they'd recruited, and 7 hadn't recruited any.

Roughly how many volunteers have you received through our service since 1st August 2020 (i.e. in the last academic year)?

1-3	10
4-10	17
11-20	15
21+	6
I don't know	4
None	7

98% of our partners who had recruited UCL student volunteers during 2020-21 felt that our students had made an impact. The most commonly cited impacts were improving people's mental health and wellbeing, creating connections within a community, and improving access to arts, culture & heritage.

UCL student volunteers have helped to improve ...% agreeing or agreeing strongly, n=52, VS community partners who had recruited student volunteers in 20-21.

People's mental health and well-being	87%
Connections within a community	83%
Access to arts, culture and heritage	62%
People's physical health	40%
People's access to digital services	35%
Under 18's access to good quality education	35%
Adults' access to lifelong learning	33%
People's political power, voice and influence	23%
The physical environment	19%
Access to sport	15%
People's financial security	13%

To get more of a feel for how students were contributing, we asked an open question: **Can you tell us a bit more about the impact our students have had on your organisation and your beneficiaries?** The following quotes are a representative sample of the 50 responses we received.

Many of the young people we support suffered with isolation and anxiety during the lockdowns and with consequent low confidence on the return to schools. UCL students have helped them to feel connected, to learn and to feel valued. Important for their educational attainment and their emotional wellbeing

They have enabled [our organisation] to deliver big projects related to sustainability. Without them some of the projects would not have been possible. They were active on all sides (operations, fund raising, communication, workshops deliveries, etc.)

We had a day session with the team and were very impressed by the engagement and level of insights they were able to provide in a short space of time. Following the Hackathon we have welcomed one of the students as an intern and he is making some great improvements to our website and online presence, which is in line with targets set on the day of the Hackathon.

UCL is one of our biggest volunteer partners and UCL students have volunteered regularly, particularly during the lockdown months. As students of a diverse number of subjects, they have proven to be great role models to the young people we work with.

We have a couple of regular volunteers who are UCL students, who help us run our weekly sessions to support children with additional needs to access sports and activities. We also had a positive experience with UCL volunteers as part of the social hackathon, who helped us come up with volunteer engagement strategies which we're hoping to implement in the autumn.

The students have been a great support to our clients. They have provided emotional support through telephone befriending. This support has been vital particularly during the time when many vulnerable older people became even more isolated when they were advised by the government to shield in order to avoid contracting Covid-19.

We have one volunteer from UCL who is doing exceptional work with developing marketing content to reach teachers and parents of disadvantaged primary aged school children in Latin America. In alignment with the marketing strategy and team, our volunteer has developed targeted messaging to ensure our initiatives reach as many children as possible.

Our content creators have helped to create and design accessible and engaging activities for our girls and girls' groups to participate in. The volunteers have brought a broad range of interests, skills and knowledge.

To help provide further context, we also asked an open question **Have you experienced any problems or other issues with your UCL student volunteers during the 2020/21 academic year?**

42 respondents answered this question, with 69% saying they hadn't had any issues. The comments were analysed and categorised as follows:

Have you experienced any problems or other issues with your UCL student volunteers during the 2020/21 academic year? Number of responses falling into category, n=42

No problems	29
Not enough applicants	1
Unreliability	4
Poor communication	3
Students not following up on interest	3
Impact of COVID on availability	3
Students can't give enough time	1
Too many enquiries about volunteering	1

A sample of comments:

Short-notice cancellations - due to being pinged, or other priorities. Many who wish to remain volunteers but do not want to come in until vaccinated. Lots of initial interest during recruitment, dropping out

after a couple of shifts. Short notice leaving the volunteer team or not telling us they have moved out of London until we chase up. These issues are to be expected - when volunteers do come in, they are great!

Not really, occasional cancellations of shifts at short notice, but we can cope with this. We were just extremely grateful for volunteers' time, especially at such a challenging period.

There has been the case where a few have shown interest but do not respond to forms or emails. In the past, few have not attended their events but this is typical with most volunteers in general.

Due to COVID-19 and the disruption it has caused to the football league fixtures has meant that Students availability has been restricted at times as it has clashed with exams, and other academic deadlines.

My main issue has been students communicating with me to try and find out about my opportunities. I have resolved this by changing my email address.

We don't have many applicants from UCL and would like more from the roles we advertise!

Finally, we asked partners how else we could help them. 33 answered this open question – a third of the answers were related to helping them advertise their roles, and 27% requested that we keep on providing our existing service. The comments were analysed and categorised as follows:

How else could the Volunteering Service support you in the coming year? Number of responses falling into category, n=33.

Help us advertise volunteer roles	11
Keep on doing what you're doing	9
More events	4
Help us recruit for specific roles	5
Share our content on social media	3
Improve recruitment processes	2
Promote our service to students as users	1
Help network with other organisations	1
Connect with UCL departments	1
Help us support our volunteers	1
Improve website functionality	1
Help us diversify our pool of volunteers	1

Some representative comments:

Advertising roles is the most important support at the moment.

If possible, we would like our volunteers to write blog posts that are shared with UCL networks to encourage more people to volunteer. We're particularly interested in recruiting more male volunteers. Currently 91% of all our student volunteers are female!

Advertising volunteering opportunities and sharing our social media posts/ website/ contact details with students who may need support out of hours.

We've appreciated the variety of initiatives on offer this past year (e.g. social hackathons and talks) in addition to advertising our existing volunteer roles through the VSU website. It would also be great to

know about any upcoming volunteer recruitment events (e.g. volunteer fairs) - either in-person or virtual, so that we can chat to prospective student volunteers about the roles we're offering.

We may need to look for more volunteers who can help us carry out some evaluation tasks towards 2nd half & end of the project. In that case we might recruit more volunteers.

Keep on bringing a positive and proactive attitude, and eagerness to learn.

The Volunteering Service is extremely helpful and we will continue using the online avenues, as well as the Welcome Fair.

To set up virtual bi-annual voluntary sector organisations' networking meetings to discuss potential collaborations, resource sharing, good practice etc.

Student volunteer social activities that we could point our volunteers towards.

Students' Union UCL Volunteering Service
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