

Heritage Quay Volunteer Policy



By 2018 Heritage Quay will have developed an engaging volunteer programme that recruits, trains and recognises volunteers from any background. The programme will be sustainable, contribute to the aims and objectives of the archive service, and provide a meaningful experience for participants.

1. Introduction

This document outlines how Heritage Quay will recruit and manage volunteers, who are defined as people who spend unpaid time working on defined activities for the benefit of the University of Huddersfield as part of the Heritage Quay archive. The purpose of developing a policy is to enable Heritage Quay and the University to think about the value of its volunteers, and to achieve clear, workable principles within which volunteers and supervisors can operate.

The policy also recognises the value of volunteers to Heritage Quay and the commitment they give to it. The University aims to support volunteers to achieve their full potential and work towards building a good and successful relationship between volunteers and the people who engage with them. Both staff and volunteers work together to deliver on the core aims of the University of Huddersfield, Computing and Library Services and Heritage Quay. This includes the following Mission Statement:

Delivering an inspiring information environment for the digital age

We proactively support the University's mission to deliver an accessible and inspirational learning experience, to encourage innovative research, to undertake pioneering professional practice, and to engage fully with the community. The information environment depends on the preservation of those institutional records of evidential value, managing non-institutional collections that support teaching and research and providing wider public benefit through access for audiences outside the University.

This policy provides a basis for the expansion, if required, of volunteer involvement. It sees volunteer involvement not as a replacement or alternative to paid staff, but as a way of extending the service as an archive and the voluntary sector in general.

2. Background

The University Archives and Special Collections were formed in 1991, just as Huddersfield Polytechnic was becoming the University of Huddersfield. Our main function is to maintain the institutional archive of the University, from its beginnings as a Mechanics Institute in the 1820s to today. The archive is also home to a number of special collections of international importance including the British Music Collection and the archive of the Rugby Football League.

A recent £1.5m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund has resulted in Heritage Quay, a brand new repository, learning and exploration space, which will expand our ability to facilitate research and learning across all sectors of the local and research communities. This will allow us to document, preserve and care for our collections in the long term according to international standards, and growth within the staff team will facilitate new ideas and ways of working to bring local heritage to more diverse audiences in interesting and creative ways. Volunteers are a key part of this new way of working and our ambition is to provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to get involved in what we do.

In addition to encouraging participation in the service through voluntary programming groups, the project will have several opportunities for volunteers to play a part. Volunteers will help the Collections Access Officer to catalogue, index and rehouse a number of collections and others will assist the participation officers in the delivery of the learning programmes. In addition the project will support a number of opportunities for interns during the programme.

3. Application process

In order to ensure that all prospective applicants for volunteer positions are treated equally, the application process will mirror very closely the systems used to recruit new members of staff. All volunteers will have a specific role and a role description will be in place for each of these roles for us to aid in the recruitment process.

Volunteers will be recruited as and when required for both Engagement and Collections roles. Heritage Quay commits to advertising volunteering opportunities as widely as possible. People who wish to volunteer with Heritage Quay will be dealt with as quickly as possible from the moment of first contact.

All applicants will be asked to fill out an application form. This allows us to:

- Gain personal information about the applicants such as address and contact details
- Ensure emergency contact details are up to date
- Find out when they are available and what their skills are

References will be requested where this is necessary at the discretion of the Heritage Quay team (references are not usually required for Collections Volunteer roles). Where a reference is deemed necessary, one referee will be sufficient. Referees should not be related to the applicant, and will be contacted before any role can commence.

a) Engagement Volunteers

- After the application deadline has passed, anyone interested in being an Engagement Volunteer will be invited to an informal interview at Heritage Quay, which will be conducted by two members of the Heritage Quay team.
- Following the interviews, all applicants will be contacted within a week to be advised on the result.
- Successful applicants will be recruited to a pool of volunteers who will be contacted on a monthly basis with a list of opportunities they can participate in.
- Unsuccessful candidates are welcome to discuss the result with the Participation and Engagement Officer who will provide feedback and, where appropriate, advice on future applications.
- After 3 volunteering experiences, all Engagement Volunteers will have an informal review with the Participation and Engagement Officer to assess their experience so far and whether they are suited to the work they are doing. This will act as a trial period for new volunteers.
- Engagement Volunteers will usually be expected to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (these used to be called CRB) check as their role may involve working with children, young people or vulnerable adults. If a volunteer is concerned about this they are welcome to contact the Participation and Engagement Officer for an informal chat before applying. DBS checks are free for volunteers so there will be no cost to the volunteer.

b) Collection Volunteers

- After the application deadline has passed, anyone interested in being a Collections Volunteer will be invited to an informal phone interview, which will be conducted by two members of the Heritage Quay team.
- During the interview, members of the Heritage Quay team will provide more detail about the specific Collections Volunteer projects that are available and the candidate will have the opportunity to ask any questions that they may have about the role.
- Following the interviews, all applicants will be contacted within a week to be advised on the result.
- Successful applicants will be recruited to a specific project with agreed objectives and time scales.
- Unsuccessful candidates are welcome to discuss the result with the Assistant Archivist & Records Manager who will provide feedback and, where appropriate, advice on future applications.

4. The volunteer's role and expectations

The University commits to the principle that volunteering opportunities will complement, rather than replace, the work of paid staff at Heritage Quay. Where a paid member of staff has a 'Job Description' a volunteer works from a 'Role Description' which will have clearly defined objectives.

The University will not usually expect a regular commitment from volunteers, unless a role specifically demands it. Where this is required it will be specified in advance through the Role Description. Volunteers can give as much or as little time as they feel is appropriate for them. Whatever commitment the volunteer can give is a great asset for Heritage Quay. However, we would ask that Volunteers do consider this as 'a commitment' and if unable to attend for one reason or another, a supervisor should be informed. In the same way, the University considers the management of volunteers to have equal importance to that of managing paid staff. Therefore this will be carried out with the same level of professionalism. Volunteers can expect to be treated fairly, professionally and above all, as an equal to members of paid staff working alongside them.

5. Supervision and Support

Supervision of the volunteers will be split between different members of the Heritage Quay team. Collections Volunteers will be supervised by the Assistant Archivist & Records Manager and Engagement Volunteers by the Participation and Engagement Officer. If the supervising staff member is not available, another nominated member of staff will deputise.

These 'volunteer coordinators' will be responsible for recruiting, contacting and supporting the volunteers, including regular meetings and informal chats if necessary.

If a volunteer feels they are not being adequately supervised, there is an issue with their post, or if the volunteer has any problems, they will be encouraged to discuss this first with their supervisor or the Archive Manager if that is not possible or appropriate. Private meeting facilities are available at all times, and volunteers can bring a friend if they feel they would like extra support.

A record of all volunteers will be kept. Once the volunteer has stopped working with us or has not volunteered for 12 months the file will be disposed of after three years.

6. Expenses

Unfortunately the University of Huddersfield is unable to provide expenses for volunteers. However, any travel costs incurred as the result of Heritage Quay activity (such as travel from the University to a community location) will be covered.

7. Rights and Responsibilities

In involving volunteers we will be guided by the best practice guidelines of the Archives and Records Association and Volunteering England. The recruitment and supervision elements will conform to the University of Huddersfield's Equality & Diversity and Health & Safety policies. The University of Huddersfield will insure volunteers to complete their tasks within the organisation.

The following rights and responsibilities for volunteers will be listed in the volunteer handbook and are as follows:

Volunteer rights

- To know what is expected and to be given clear information and instruction
- To have clearly specified lines of supervision
- To receive induction, support and training appropriate to the role
- To know what to do if things go wrong
- To be and feel like a member of the Heritage Quay team
- To have safe working conditions
- To not be subject to any discrimination
- To have the right to say no, and to be able to withdraw or refuse voluntary work without prejudicing chances of taking up future opportunities
- Associate membership of the University Library service
- To attend the Heritage Quay team meeting (monthly)

Volunteer responsibilities

- To fill in an application form providing personal details and to let the University know of any changes
- To give referees where applicable
- To give a reasonable and sustainable level of commitment
- To be reliable and safe
- To be honest if there are any problems
- To comply with existing policies and procedures
- To take responsibility for their own health and safety

Heritage Quay/University of Huddersfield responsibilities

- Enquiries and volunteering offers will be dealt with quickly and efficiently, and volunteer placements will match the volunteer's skills and interests
- Each volunteer will have a Volunteer Agreement and Handbook
- Training will be provided for every task allocated
- Volunteers will be treated in line with the University of Huddersfield's Equality and Diversity policies
- Each volunteer will be managed by a nominated member of staff within the Heritage Quay team