

International Volunteering Guidance

Volunteering abroad can be a great opportunity to apply your skills to make a difference, learn about other cultures, and broaden your horizons!

Our guidance is here to help you make an informed choice about whether international volunteering is right for you, to find an opportunity which is mutually beneficial for you and the community in which you volunteer, and to ensure you have resources to plan a safe and enjoyable trip.

Is International Volunteering right for you?

What motivates you to volunteer internationally?

- What do you want to achieve from volunteering? Is volunteering abroad the only way to achieve this, or can volunteering locally also achieve your aims?
- If you have no previous volunteer experience, consider volunteering locally first to find out what you enjoy, and to develop some experience which can be applied to an international role.
- You can find volunteering opportunities across London through QMSU here: [Browse Opportunities](#)

Is international volunteering ethical?

Some argue that the long-term impact of a volunteer's short-term activity is often limited, and that funds being spent on the volunteers' experience may diminish capacity to make a real difference. You can read the following articles to find out more about the ethics of international volunteering:

- [Responsible Volunteering Abroad](#)
- [What is Voluntourism?](#)

We advise you to carry out your own research to make a judgement on whether an organisation's volunteer opportunities are ethical.

How to find an International Volunteering Opportunity

Finding an opportunity which suits you:

- What skills and experience can you bring to a volunteer role?
- What skills and experience do you want to gain through international volunteering?
- How much time do you have to volunteer?
- How much money do you have to spend on volunteering abroad? Do you need to fundraise for a certain amount and is this realistically achievable?

Researching a volunteer organisation:

- Ensure the organisation can provide a clear description of the volunteer role and responsibilities

- Research the reputation of the volunteer organisation:
 - What are their values and how do they implement these?
 - Are their volunteers having a positive experience and impact on the community?
 - If you will be volunteering with under-18s or vulnerable adults, does the organisation provide safeguarding training?
 - Has the organisation involved the local community in setting up the volunteering project to ensure it is addressing local issues?
 - Who will be providing your food and accommodation, and will this be at a cost to the local community?
 - Are the volunteering projects disrupting the local job market by providing free resources?
- Research the country you will be volunteering in:
 - Find out about the culture, the climate and the area in which you will be volunteering
 - Check that the country is safe: consult the [Foreign Travel Advice on the Foreign Office Website](#)

Planning your trip

Travel health:

- Once you know where you are going to volunteer, book an appointment with your doctor to get medical advice.
- You may need to get vaccinations to protect yourself against disease. Visit the NHS website for [Travel vaccination advice](#).

Insurance:

- Make sure you have travel insurance in case anything goes wrong while you're abroad.
- The type and level of travel insurance you need depends on where you are going and what you intend to do. [Find out more about getting travel insurance](#).

Other considerations:

- Make sure you familiarise yourself with the guidance provided by the volunteering organisation.
- Make sure you pack appropriately for your trip!

If you have additional questions, please contact us at su-volunteering@qmul.ac.uk

