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# Volunteering Policy

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Pitt Rivers Museum Policy and Planning  
Committee, February 2015



**PittRivers**  
MUSEUM

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**Volunteering Policy**  
**Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford**

**Governing body:** The Visitors of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

**Date approved by governing body:** 20 April 2015 (via circulation)

**Date at which policy is due for review:** April 2020

**Mission**

“The Pitt Rivers Museum aspires to be the best university museum of anthropology and archaeology in the world, using its unique galleries as a focus for exemplary teaching and research and as an inspirational forum for the sharing of cultural knowledge amongst the widest possible public.”

**1 Introduction**

This policy gives guidance to staff on the recruitment, induction and supervision of volunteers undertaking work for or on behalf of the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM). It is written in accordance with the Oxford University Joint Museums Volunteer Service, which operates across the seven University Museums and Collections to recruit and support volunteers in a wide variety of roles.

The policy does not apply to work experience students, visiting researchers or internships.

**1.1 Definition of Volunteering**

Volunteering is defined as ‘any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual’ (Volunteering England).

**2 Volunteering at the Pitt Rivers Museum**

The Museum aims to ensure that all volunteering experiences are rewarding, meaningful and safe for volunteers. The Museum recognises the valuable contribution volunteers make and strives to offer the appropriate support, guidance and training as required.

Volunteer roles should complement the work of paid staff. Volunteers should not be used in place of paid staff and will not be used to cover sick or annual leave. A volunteer is not bound contractually and should not therefore be under obligation to work. Equally, the Museum is not obliged to provide volunteering opportunities. A volunteer is not required to give a notice period should they wish to stop volunteering for the Museum, although this would be helpful where possible.

Volunteering positions should be of benefit to the Museum and its visitors. Although a person might volunteer in order to learn and gain work experience, the main focus for undertaking volunteer work would usually be to benefit others.

If a member of University staff works for the Museum for free, in a role outside of their normal job description, then s/he is a volunteer and needs to be treated accordingly.

If a University student carries out work for the Museum which is outside of the requirements of their course, then s/he is a volunteer and needs to be treated accordingly.

Students enrolled on the Visual Material and Museum Anthropology Masters programme (VMMA) with the University's Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology (ISCA) are considered to be embedded in the Museum and are encouraged to contribute to the work of the Museum on a voluntary basis to enhance their learning. Therefore, any duties or work undertaken for the PRM by VMMA students is considered to be part of their course.

## **2.1 Public Engagement Volunteers**

Public Engagement Volunteers provide support to staff at drop-in family friendly events, late night events, community and outreach events and school visits. These events are ad-hoc and free for the public to attend. Public Engagement Volunteers are also recruited to deliver more specific roles on a rota basis, for which they are offered training and support from staff. These might include object handling sessions, guided tours and school sessions.

## **2.2 Collections Volunteers**

Collections Volunteers support the work of staff in relation to the Museum's collections. Collections Volunteers might assist in the cataloguing, photographing, researching and care of objects to the benefit of the Museum's visitors (both physical and virtual) by helping to enhance knowledge of the collections and enable greater dissemination of this to the public. Volunteers may also be involved in other work behind-the-scenes including activity planning and ad-hoc administrative tasks.

## **3 Insurance**

The University provides insurance cover for volunteers, provided they are treated in the same way as employees in relation to vetting, training, risk assessment etc. and given the appropriate supervision for the tasks being undertaken and the competence of the individuals.

Whilst it is not a requirement to maintain a register of the volunteer details, in order for the insurance to apply the vetting procedure must take place and evidence of this be documented and easily accessible. The Insurance Services at the University advise that the register maintained by the Joint Museums Volunteers Service is helpful in this regard and it is therefore important that PRM volunteers, however they are recruited, follow the JMVS procedure for registration.

### **3.1 Transport**

Volunteers are covered to travel as passengers in Museum vans. Staff who travel for work purposes in their own cars need to get their own business insurance, which will then cover volunteers travelling with them.

### **3.2 Young Volunteers**

The University Insurance only covers volunteers who are 16 years old and over.

### **3.3 University Student Societies**

Student societies that are registered with the University Proctors are also covered by insurance. Members of a student society mounting a performance or activity at a Museum event are covered by University insurance.

Students enrolled on the VMMA programme with ISCA do not need to go through this registration process if it can be demonstrated that the voluntary work they are carrying out is related to their studies, and therefore covered by University insurance. They are free to register to hear about other opportunities to volunteer more generally across the University Museums and Collections.

## **4 Recruitment process**

Most volunteers are recruited through the Joint Museums Volunteer Service, which advertises new opportunities for volunteers on the Joint Museums website, at Freshers' Fair, at community and outreach events and via the University email system. Other volunteers contact the Museum directly and may be passed on to the Volunteer Service.

Museum staff may come into contact with individual volunteers with specific skills or interests that are of benefit to their work. In this instance, the volunteer may be taken on without advertising the role more widely, but the same registration, referencing and induction process must take place, as specified in points 4.1, 4.2 and 5. The volunteer is only covered by the University's insurance to carry out work on behalf of the museum once this process is completed (see point 3).

### **4.1 Registration**

Volunteers wishing to take up a role at the PRM should register online with the Joint Museums Volunteers Service: <http://www.museums.ox.ac.uk/volunteers>

### **4.2 References**

Prospective volunteers should provide two referees when they register online (these should be people who have known the applicant for more than a year and are not related to them). The references must be provided before the volunteer begins a role. It may be decided in

exceptional circumstances that one valid reference is sufficient, although every effort should be made to seek two.

## **5 Induction process**

Every volunteer is invited either to an individual or to a group induction, specific to their role. Inductions are a chance for the volunteer to hear more about volunteering for the University museums in general or more about a particular role they have signed up for.

Inductions for Public Engagement Volunteers are organised by the Joint Museum Volunteer Service. Public Engagement Volunteers will be asked to sign a copy of the General Volunteer Guidelines (public engagement) (Appendix 1).

Inductions for Collections Volunteers may take place with the individual member of staff who will be acting as supervisor. Collections Volunteers will be asked to sign a copy of the Induction Checklist for Collections Volunteers (Appendix 2).

### **5.1 Health and Safety induction**

The PRM is committed to safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of its visitors, staff and volunteers. It is essential that volunteers attend a Health and Safety induction, specific to the PRM, with a trained member of staff from the PRM administration. This may take place on the first day of the volunteering period.

### **5.2 DBS checks**

Volunteers registering with the Joint Museums Volunteers Service will be asked to give their consent to a Disclosure and Barring Service check (formerly known as Criminal Records Bureau check), if their role requires it.

## **6 Supervision and Support**

Public Engagement Volunteers will be supervised by the member of staff organising and delivering the ad-hoc event or activity. They will receive the appropriate briefing and training required for the role in advance. The Joint Museums Volunteer Service is always available to offer advice to both volunteers and staff.

Collections Volunteers will be supervised by a member of staff in the relevant department (collections, conservation etc). They should receive the appropriate training and support necessary to carry out the task.

Volunteers should be checked on regularly to ensure that they are comfortable and happy with the task they are undertaking.

## **7 Diversity**

The Museum is committed to encouraging an inclusive environment which promotes equality and values diversity. No volunteer will face discrimination on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, nationality, age, disability or racial group.

## **8 Equal opportunities**

New volunteering opportunities should be advertised to the registered list of potential volunteers, and more widely wherever possible and as necessary. In the case of more volunteers applying for a particular role than are needed, a fair and open selection process will take place.

As detailed under point 4, occasionally Museum staff may meet volunteers independently who have specific skills or interests that are of benefit to their work. In this instance, the volunteer may be taken on without advertising the role more widely but an interview is advised before directing the volunteer to follow the registration process.

## Appendix 1 – General guidelines for museum volunteers (Public Engagement)



### General Guidelines for Museum Volunteers (Public Engagement)

**UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD  
MUSEUMS & COLLECTIONS**

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at the Oxford University Museums and Collections. This sheet gives important information relating to volunteering. Please read it carefully, sign it, and return it to the Joint Museums Volunteer Service at the address on the reverse.

#### **Entering and Leaving the Building**

- To ensure that museum staff know who is working in the building (for evacuation reasons), please report to your supervisor on arrival and also when you leave.
- Volunteer badges should be worn at all times. This should help you avoid awkward questions from visitors who assume that you are staff and will therefore know everything. It also reassures staff that you are helping in an official capacity.

#### **Dress**

- Please wear what you feel comfortable in, bearing in mind that many roles require e.g. bending down to talk to young children or lifting objects, i.e. tight clothes or low-cut tops are inadvisable.
- Thin-heeled shoes can mark some museum floors so should also be avoided.
- Please dress for the weather when helping with outdoor activities.

**First Aid:** Should a first-aid incident occur, please report to a member of staff as quickly as possible.

**Evacuation:** Should the fire/evacuation alarm be triggered, you will be treated as a member of the public. Please leave the building via the nearest exit. The muster point after evacuation is generally in front of the building.

**Visitor Belongings:** The Ashmolean is the only museum to have a cloakroom. In the other museums, visitors may sometimes leave pushchairs or umbrellas by the entrance at their own risk, but please refer enquiries to Front of House staff. Please do not look after visitors' belongings – you are not responsible for them.

**Your Own Belongings:** These can be kept in a designated locker or locked office. Please keep the locker key with you or ask a member of staff to open the office door for you.

#### **Working with Children**

- Volunteers at public events are there to facilitate activities, NOT supervise children.
- For your own protection, as well as that of the children, NEVER accept children for activities without a supervising adult present.
- Volunteers should NOT accept responsibility for looking after children whilst their parents or guardians are elsewhere, even if "only for a few minutes".
- Avoid inappropriate physical contact with children or being in situations where you are alone with a child, i.e. do not offer to take a child to the toilet or to another gallery.
- If you come across a lost child, alert another volunteer or a member of staff as quickly as possible in order to share the responsibility for that child.

**Young Volunteers (16 & 17 year olds)** are only eligible for some roles, and must not directly supervise other volunteers or visitors. You will be supervised by a DBS-checked staff member or volunteer.



**Any Other Problems on the Day:** Please refer to the member of staff supervising you or to Front of House staff.

**References and DBS (Safeguarding) Checks**

- Thank you for providing the names of two referees. We will send for both references prior to you starting volunteering, and you can start volunteering once both have been received.
- Most events are supervised by a member of staff; you will not need a DBS check to help with these events. However, some roles do require you to be DBS checked and we will advise you if this is the case.
- The Volunteer Service can provide a reference for you once you have completed a minimum of 3 event placements. Please email the Volunteer Service for more information.

**More Opportunities:** You will hear about the opportunities you expressed an interest in when you registered via email. These opportunities are listed on the Joint Museums website: [www.museums.ox.ac.uk/volunteers](http://www.museums.ox.ac.uk/volunteers). If you would like to amend your selection, please email the Volunteer Service.

**Cancelling:** If you are no longer able to help on the day, please contact the Volunteer Service and/or the member of staff supervising you as soon as possible. If you cannot get hold of them, then please contact the museum.

**Expenses:** We have a limited, small budget for volunteer travel expenses. If you need your travel expenses reimbursed (up to £4 for each event), please present your receipts to the Volunteer Service or ask for a claim form to be emailed to you.

**Working with Staff and Other Volunteers:** Our events are the result of a great team effort between volunteers and museum staff. We will aim to treat you with respect and courtesy and will expect the same from you.

**Representing the Oxford University Museums and Collections:** Please remember that when volunteering, you are the 'Face of the Museum'. Please take care not to represent your own opinions as those of the institution, or to behave in a way that reflects badly on it.

**Bribery and Fraud:** In accordance with University policy, you must not offer bribes, allow yourself to be bribed or behave in a fraudulent manner.

**Support for You:** The Volunteer Service advocates for volunteers across the Museums and Collections. If you encounter any problems or have any concerns please get in touch with us. We coordinate a large number of volunteers so, unfortunately, cannot routinely review each individual volunteer. However, if you feel that you would like to chat to us about your volunteering at any time, then we are always happy to do so. Please let us know when you are available and we will arrange a mutually convenient time to meet. If you ever feel uncomfortable about a task you have been asked to do, please tell the person supervising you or get in touch with the Volunteer Service.

**Stopping Volunteering:** Please let the Volunteer Service know if you are no longer available to volunteer or if you no longer want to receive emails. We will then take your name off the 'Active Volunteer' list.

**Please sign and date this form and return it to the address below:**

I have read and understood the above

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not hesitate to contact the Joint Museums Volunteer Service if you have any queries or comments.

Joint Museums Volunteer Service, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW; volunteers@oum.ox.ac.uk; 01865 282456

**Thank you very much for giving your time, and we hope you enjoy volunteering with us.**

1. *Last updated October 2013*

## **Appendix 2 – Induction Checklist for Museum volunteers (Collections Roles)**

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at Pitt Rivers Museum. This sheet gives important information relating to volunteering. Please read it carefully, sign it, and return it to the Joint Museums Volunteer Service at the address on the reverse.

### **Entering and Leaving the Building**

- To ensure that staff know who is working in the building (for evacuation reasons), please sign in at Reception when you arrive and then report to your supervisor. Please sign out with Reception when you leave.
- Volunteer badges should be worn at all times. This reassures staff that you are helping in an official capacity.

**Dress:** Please wear what you feel comfortable in. If the task you are doing requires safety equipment, e.g. goggles or gloves, your supervisor will provide them for you. Appropriate footwear must be worn at all times.

**Your Belongings:** Unattended belongings are easily stolen or could cause a security scare. Please keep your belongings with you or ask your supervisor to show you where you can store them securely.

**Refreshments:** Volunteers are welcome to use the Staff Common Room for breaks. Please help yourself to tea and coffee, which are free for volunteers. Please do not eat in any room except the Staff Common Room.

### **Museum Security**

- Your volunteering will have been arranged in advance with your supervisor. You may not stay in the museum outside agreed hours without your supervisor being present.
- Your supervisor will manage your access to the areas of the museum where you need to be. If you wish to let anyone (including friends and family) into any rooms that are not normally open to the public, you must always ask your supervisor first.
- Close all doors behind you. Doors between public areas and behind-the-scenes rooms must be kept locked at all times.

**Young Volunteers (16&17 years)** are only eligible for some roles, which are supervised by a Disclosure Scotland-checked staff member or volunteer.

### **Health and Safety**

- Your supervisor will have carried out a risk assessment for the work you will be doing. Please only do the tasks set by your supervisor.
- The museum has strict requirements on Manual Handling. You must not lift heavy items without first asking your supervisor. If your supervisor agrees, s/he will make sure you are trained to do this safely.
- If you ever feel uncomfortable about a task you have been asked to do, please tell your supervisor.

**First Aid:** Should a first-aid incident occur, please report to a member of staff as quickly as possible.

### **Fire**

- Before you start volunteering, your supervisor will show you the fire exits. Please note where they are.

- In the event of the fire alarm sounding, make your way out of the building at the nearest fire exit, go to the assembly point at the end of Robinson Close at the junction with South Parks Road, and stand with your supervisor. (Regular fire alarm tests take place outside of normal public opening hours; your supervisor will advise you if you are in at this time).
- If you discover a fire, press the break glass of the nearest Call Point (red square box on wall). Then immediately leave the building at the nearest fire exit and report the fire's location to your supervisor. **Do not attempt to tackle the fire; you are not trained to do so.**
- Do not play music through headphones too loudly; **you need to be able to hear the fire alarms.**

**Any Other Problems:** Please refer to the member of staff supervising you, if present, or another member of staff.

**References:**

- Thank you for providing the names of two referees. We will send for both references prior to you starting volunteering, and you can start volunteering once both have been received.
- The museum can provide a reference for you once you have completed a minimum of 20 volunteer hours. Please discuss this with your supervisor.

**More Volunteer Opportunities:** You will hear about the opportunities you expressed an interest in when you registered via email. These opportunities are listed on the Joint Museums website: [www.museums.ox.ac.uk/volunteers](http://www.museums.ox.ac.uk/volunteers).

If you would like to amend your selection, please email the Volunteer Service.

**Cancelling:** If you are no longer able to help on a planned day, please contact your supervisor as soon as possible, or, if unsuccessful, contact Reception (613000). If your supervisor needs to cancel, s/he will be in touch with as much advance notice as possible.

**Hours:** A record of the number of hours you volunteer will be kept and will be reported anonymously in quarterly and annual statistics and in relevant funding bids.

**Expenses:** Whilst the museum aspires to be able to reimburse travel expenses to volunteers, it does not currently have the budget to do so. Some particular projects may have budgets that allow for this, and this will be stated when the opportunity is advertised. If you think that you will be prohibited from volunteering by not being able to have your travel expenses reimbursed, please talk to the supervisory member of staff.

**Working with Staff and Other Volunteers:** Collections work requires volunteers to work in a team with museum staff. We will aim to treat you with respect and courtesy and will expect the same from you.

**Representing the Oxford University Museums and Collections:** Please remember that when volunteering, you are the 'face of the museum'. Please take care not to represent your own opinions as those of the institution, or to behave in a way that reflects badly on it.

**Bribery and Fraud:** In accordance with University policy, you must not offer bribes, allow yourself to be bribed or behave in a fraudulent manner.

**Support for You:** Your supervisor is your first point of contact for any volunteering issues. However, the Joint Museums Volunteer Service advocates for volunteers across the Museums and Collections. If you encounter any problems or have any concerns, please get in touch with us. We coordinate a large number of volunteers so, unfortunately, cannot routinely review each individual volunteer. However, if you feel that you would like to chat to us about your volunteering at any time, then we are always happy to do so. Please let us know when you are available and we will arrange a mutually convenient time to meet.

**Stopping Volunteering:** Please let your supervisor and the Volunteer Service know if you are no longer available to volunteer, or if you no longer want to receive emails.

**Please sign and date this form and return it to the address below:**

I have read and understood the above

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not hesitate to contact the Joint Museums Volunteer Service if you have any queries or comments: Joint Museums Volunteer Service, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW; volunteers@oum.ox.ac.uk; 01865 282456

**Thank you very much for giving your time, and we hope you enjoy volunteering with us.**

**Note to Supervisors of Collections Volunteers**

Please go through this induction document carefully with your volunteers and make sure they understand its contents. Volunteers should be given a copy that they can refer to while they are working in the Museum.

Supervisors have a duty of care to anyone working in their areas and are required to undertake a risk assessment for all volunteers prior to them starting. This should look at both the work they intend to undertake as well as any potential hazards they may come in contact with, e.g. chemicals, radiation, sharps, and excessive noise. The Deputy Departmental Safety Officer will be happy to advise on this.

**It is essential that this form be completed and returned to the Joint Museum Volunteer Service before the volunteer undertakes any work for you.** A copy should also be retained for your own records.

Cathleen Wright  
Administrator  
Pitt Rivers Museum  
January 2015