

YUoR Community Champions – volunteer guidance

Contents

[What is the YUoR Community Champions scheme?](#)

[What will you be doing in the role?](#)

[What you should expect as a volunteer](#)

[What organisations expect from you](#)

[What if something changes and I can't volunteer anymore?](#)

[Volunteer training and resources](#)

What is the YUoR Community Champions scheme?

YUoR Community Champions is a student volunteer scheme, in which student volunteers support local community organisations in Berkshire. As a Community Champion, you will work with local community groups to support them with their tech or digital needs. For example, providing tech support to enable people to use Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp; writing blogs and marketing material; supporting use of social media, translating key documents/letters and/or helping with logistics/admin tasks.

All of the volunteering will be done remotely over phone and by email during the coronavirus pandemic and association restrictions. So you can still help even if you are not currently based in Reading.

What will you be doing in the role?

You will be helping community organisations remotely with any of the following skills:

- Technical support (using online software such as Zoom and Skype)
- Social media support
- Blog/communications writing
- Translating
- Logistics support (e.g. helping to plan rotas or arrange deliveries etc)
- Editing video content

What you should expect as a volunteer

How much time commitment do I need to give?

This will vary from organisation but we would not expect you to commit more than 2-4 hours per week, unless you are able to give more. It is up to you to consider your time carefully and be clear what you can commit to.

What skills do I need?

You will need to be able to help community organisations with digital/ tech support and logistical/admin support. Some of this might be very basic support, such as setting up and using Zoom or Skype or organising rotas. Some might be a little more complex, such as support to use social media or translation. The skills that you need for this opportunity are up to you – we will match you based on the skills you put on the volunteering form to the organisation you will best be able to benefit.

Support from the organisation

This volunteering scheme has to be remote at the moment because of the pandemic and physical distancing. This means you won't go into community organisations' offices or have face to face contact with anyone.

We expect that the organisation will assign someone to be your link to the community organisation and to explain and oversee your work by email or phone (and potentially by an online platform).

You should also be aware that the organisation may be under a huge amount of pressure during this time – especially those that support vulnerable people. Their workload has not only increased but also changed dramatically and staff (many of whom may be volunteers themselves) will have had to cope with working at home, as well as juggling childcare and home-schooling. They may be slower at getting back to you, or they may need to rearrange calls or meetings – please do bear with them and don't take it personally!

Please see the **Volunteer training and resources** section (below) for other forms of support you can expect.

What benefits will I get?

Firstly, this will count towards your RED Award. Through volunteering in this opportunity you will build-up hours that you can use to volunteering section or your Core Activity section. Taking part in this opportunity will also help to show key transferable skills to potential future employers and give a great demonstration of your ability to work on something remotely, which is a skill that is becoming increasingly important.

Secondly, in this time of separation and isolation, connecting with communities is very important. Helping others can make you feel happier and improve your mental health and wellbeing, and you never know, you might make some new friends, or develop some more interests.

What organisations expect from you

Organisations are very much in need of consistent and reliable help. They expect you to be committed, professional and honest with your skills and your time.

Community organisations are used to working with volunteers and will understand if you cannot commit all the time; they know you will be balancing academic commitments with volunteering. However if you commit to helping out a certain amount of hours a week, please try your best to complete those hours.

If things change, for example, you can't do as many hours one week due to another commitment, tell the community organisation as soon as possible. If you feel pressurised to take on more work, explain clearly that you cannot take it on due to other commitments.

What if something changes and I can't volunteer anymore?

Sometimes things change and you can't volunteer any longer. Please make sure you let the organisation know as soon as possible if things change for you. Please also tell Sarah Gardner, who is managing the scheme at the university, by emailing s.gardner@reading.ac.uk so she can find another volunteer to help instead. Letting the organisation and the university know as soon as possible will ensure there is no loss in support to the community organisation.

Volunteer training and resources

Remote support

This scheme has to be remotely delivered at the moment because of the pandemic and physical distancing. This means you may not get as much support and oversight from the community organisation as you would in normal circumstances. We are currently developing extra University support in the form of Student Peer Mentors, who are students with previous experience working in the community.

If you need mentoring support, or someone to talk to about your volunteering tasks, please contact Sarah Gardner at s.gardner@reading.ac.uk so she can help, or put you in touch with a Student Peer Mentor.

Managing boundaries

One of the trickiest things about volunteering can be around boundaries. Sometimes you feel under pressure to do more than you can, and to say 'yes' to an extra bit of work when you are already fully committed. This is a natural response if you are passionate about volunteering or you want to help.

However, it's vital that you only commit to what you can do – don't feel obliged to say you can work extra hours or to take on an extra piece of work if you don't have time to do it. This will only make things more difficult for the community organisation you are trying to help. Be honest and be clear with the community organisation about how much time you can commit. Don't feel afraid to say you can't help with work that is additional to the original agreement.

If you need some help balancing your commitments or you want to get some more advice, you can ask the University for support by contacting Sarah Gardner at s.gardner@reading.ac.uk so she can help, or put you in touch with a Student Peer Mentor.

Online training resources

We've gathered a range of online training resources which might help you during your volunteering, both to develop your own skills and to assist the organisations you are volunteering with:

- [LinkedIn Learning](#) – online educational platform available to current University of Reading students, using UoR login credentials.
- [HP Life](#) – business and IT online courses and resources.
- [Skillshare](#) – creative, business and marketing online classes.
- [Udacity](#) – skills tech online programmes.
- [General Assembly](#) – online web development, data, design and business skills.
- [BT Skills for Tomorrow](#) – free digital resources and life skills.