Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES
ON INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
VOLUNTEERING

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Trinity College Guidelines on International Development Volunteering and Service-Learning

Contents

Introduction

> **Trinity College Dublin is committed to promoting, encouraging and incentivizing greater local, national and international civic engagement by members of the College community. We value responsible, collaborative and sustainable engagements in international development which respect host cultures and communities, and respond to local needs. At the same time, meaningful international development volunteering and service-learning placements present significant educational experiences which encourage adaptability, ethical responsibility and global awareness among participants.**

The purpose of this document is to encourage best practice in this area, to minimise potential risks and to ensure meaningful and mutually beneficial experiences for volunteers/service-learners, community organisations and other   organisers and the host community.

These guidelines were developed further to an open consultation and subsequent focus group involving staff, student and volunteer-involving organisation representatives. In brief, it is recommended that the principles outlined in   Comhlámh's Volunteer Charter[1] and Code of Good Practice for Sending Organisations[2] are upheld.

Information for members of the College interested in International Development Volunteering and service-learning placements

Trinity College encourages responsible civic engagement and global citizenship by members of staff and students. It is recommended that any person embarking on an international development placement abroad reads, signs and complies with the principles of the Comhlámh Volunteer Charter. In doing so, the participant agrees to the following:

1. Reflect on motivations for and expectations of placement.

2. Familiarise oneself with the role description and host organisation before departure. This includes being mindful of safeguarding the interests of any children or vulnerable adults with whom you might be working as part of your role.

3. Respect local customs, cultural differences and sensitivities and adopt the role of learner and guest.

4. Act always in a professional manner and be flexible and adaptable while on placement.

5. Take due care of personal safety and physical and mental health (see below).

6. Channel the experiences and knowledge gained while overseas into Irish society.

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[1] Available online at https://comhlamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Volunteer-Charter.pdf
[2] Available online at https://comhlamh.org/code-of-good-practice/

Making a Decision
Before committing to any placement, an individual should reflect on the following:
- Personal motivation, skills and interests
- Personal resilience, physical and mental health
- Whether the engagement empowers or encourages dependency in the community it is intended to serve Whether a volunteering organisation is not-for-profit
- How a volunteering organisation addresses the issues articulated in the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice. The economic, social and environmental costs involved as compared with anticipated benefit for all stakeholders. Consider also what fees cover and personal capacity and support available for fundraising.[3]

Travel Advice and Visas
Department of Foreign Affairs travel advice should be considered before committing to a placement. It is not recommended to travel to any region where the level of warning exceeds "exercise caution."

It is the responsibility of the individual travelling to ensure he/she obtains the correct visa to enter their intended destination.

Insurance
Appropriate travel, medical, and personal liability insurance should be obtained. Read the terms and conditions of any policy to ensure that the planned destination and activities, and possible health risks and needs are covered. If an individual chooses of their own volition to travel to an area of political unrest, they should take care that there are no insurance restrictions on related situations which might arise e.g. acts of war, terrorism or kidnap and ransom.

Health
International development experiences can be both physically and psychologically demanding. Becoming ill while abroad can be particularly distressing for the individual, for his/her family, for others involved in the volunteer programme and for the host community. Before travelling, individuals should:
- Ensure he/she is physically and emotionally fit to participate.
- Obtain appropriate vaccinations
- Take medical advice on the need for anti-malarial medication
- Determine what health services are available in/near the host community[4]
- Be mindful of risks associated with drug and alcohol use, sexual health, road traffic accidents etc.

Coming Home
Many people experience "reverse culture shock" and encounter difficulty settling back in to day-to-day life after a placement. Comhlámh has workshops and resources for returned development workers, volunteers and service-learners to support this transition. In some cases, it may be helpful to avail of counselling services in order to process either the transition home or elements of the experience abroad which may have been particularly challenging or traumatic.[5]

It is also important to remember that the placement is not something to be consumed by the individual participant- global citizenship does not end on the completion of a placement abroad. Not everyone is in a position to avail of such opportunities and it is worth considering how you might share your insights with your peers and perhaps a wider audience. Ongoing involvement with the organisation or issue with which you

undertook your placement can occur at home through fundraising, advocacy, promotion and continued volunteering.

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3 See Comhlámh's Supports & Services for guides and advice https://comhlamh.org/supports-and-services/.
4 The College Health maintains a full stock of all travel health vaccinations at a reduced cost.
5 The Student Counselling Service and Employee Assistance Programme can provide support for Trinity students and staff respectively.

Resources

- Further information is available on http://www.tcd.ie/Community/.
- Student Volunteer has a database of volunteer opportunities at https://www.studentvolunteer.ie/trinity.
- Comhlámh maintains a database of international volunteering opportunities which can be accessed through https://comhlamh.org/volunteering-opportunities-overseas/
- Travel advice by country is available at https://www.dfa.ie/travel/
- HSE Travel Health Information and further links are available at https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/t/travel-health/

Promoting External Opportunities

This section refers to international volunteering which is delivered through an organisation which is external to the University but which may be promoted to students and staff within the University e.g. at the Annual Volunteer Fair, through a departmental email etc..

In most instances, members of the college community will be signposting or advertising international development volunteering opportunities or facilitating the same. In the interests of good practice and appropriate support for volunteers, a member of College staff who is promoting such volunteering opportunities in their professional capacity should check the following:

a. The organisation is a signatory of Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Sending Organisations. [6]
b. The organisation does not allow volunteers to participate without appropriate insurance coverage. This includes travel, medical and personal liability.
c. The organisation operates on a not-for-profit basis.
d. Any promotional communication, material or activity should also provide volunteers with the College's "**Information for members of the College interested in International Development volunteering and learning placements to Volunteer Abroad**" as contained in the previous section of these guidelines.
e. The College Civic Engagement Officer (scamero@tcd.ie) is notified of the opportunity and any action taken to promote it. This is to aid wider communication of the opportunity and tracking of community engagement as appropriate.

Where members of the College community interested in volunteering are put in contact with external community voluntary organizations through any College office, club or society, the external organisation has full responsibility for ensuring that appropriate safeguarding policies and practices are in place. Screening, vetting or background checks will not be conducted by Trinity for this purpose and irrespective of any referral, it remains the responsibility of the volunteer-involving organization to operate safe recruitment procedures and take all due care to ensure that any volunteers accepted are suited to the roles assigned, particularly where the volunteers have access to children.

Partnership Activities

This section covers instances of international development placements where Trinity College Dublin is actively involved in recruitment, direct support and/or delivery of an international development volunteering or service-learning programme e.g. an active agreement with a charity to send a cohort of student volunteers, the delivery of a particular project in a host community, accredited student placement with a host organisation in a developing country facilitated by a School of the University as part of the curriculum. Where this is the case, the programme should:

a. Operate on a not-for-profit basis,

b. Require participants to have travel, medical, and personal liability insurance**,**
c. Ensure participants familiarise themselves the College's "Information for members of the College interested in   International Development volunteering and learning placements to Volunteer Abroad" above and
d. Require participants to read, sign and comply with the Comhlámh Volunteer Charter.

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6 A list of signatories is available online at https://comhlamh.org/code-of-good-practice/.

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In addition, the programme should **either** be a signatory of Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Sending Organisations **or** those members of the College leading the programme in Trinity should work in partnership with the host organisation to ensure the following standards are met:

1. The programme is based on realistic aims and objectives with appropriate and useful participant roles which are responsive to the needs of the host community.

2. Sufficient resources and support are provided to run the programme in an efficient and sustainable manner including appropriate financial transparency.

3. Clear expressions of programme aims, ethos and values are provided and marketing and imagery is consistent with good practice.[7]

4. Potential participants receive free, fair and unbiased information on the host organisation and placement.

5. Fair, consistent and transparent recruitment procedures are in place.

6. The programme provides for the varying support needs of participants.

7. Participants should participate in appropriate preparation, training and induction.[8]

8. In so far as possible, the protection, safety and well being of participants and those they work with should be provided for. Where a necessary and regular part of the programme consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children/vulnerable persons, a vetting disclosure must be sought from the National Vetting Bureau through Human Resources in the case of a member of staff and Admissions in the case of a student. Once a College Child Protection Officer has been appointed, s/he should be consulted in this process.

9. Returned participants in volunteering and Service-learning programmes should be provided with a debriefing.

10. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the programme should be put in place.

11. Participants should be given appropriate recognition for their work e.g. through the Dean of Students' Roll of Honour in the case of students doing extra-curricular volunteer work.

These principles are based on the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for Sending Organisations which was developed in close consultation with volunteer sending and host organisations with many years experience. The Code includes the rationale behind each principle and offers a template to assist programme organisers to self-audit their programmes. This template can be used to guide programme development as it breaks each principle down into specific indicators.

Acting as referee for prospective volunteers

Should a member of College staff explicitly act as a referee in support of the application of a person to volunteer with an external community voluntary organisation, this reference should be understood as reflecting the referee's personal interactions with the applicant only and is not indicative of the position of Trinity College as a whole.

In accordance with the College Child Protection Policy, any member of College staff providing a reference for another member of the College community, including any student, who is seeking to engage in voluntary work or activity, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children/vulnerable persons must consult with the College Child Protection Officer (once appointed) before providing such a reference.

Review

These guidelines shall be reviewed after one year and every three years thereafter. The Civic Engagement Officer shall convene a review group of student, staff and community organisation representatives with an active involvement in   international development volunteering or service-learning. Reviews occurring every three years shall include a   consultation event open to all students, staff and international development organisations that send volunteers abroad.

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[7] See Dóchas code of Conduct on Images and Messages available online at <http://www.dochas.ie/code/>.
[8] Comhlámh can support in the development and delivery of appropriate pre-departure training and debriefing on return home.