Staff Volunteering Leave Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) Macquarie is a university of service and engagement with an established focus on sustainability and developing deep partnerships with corporate and community institutions. This Procedure documents the University's commitment to providing staff with community volunteering leave in order to contribute to just, inclusive, and sustainable communities through volunteering activities.

Scope

(2) This Procedure applies to all continuing full-time and part-time academic and professional staff seeking to access community volunteering leave in accordance with the provisions of the respective University Enterprise Agreements.

(3) Staff volunteering leave is available for volunteer activities undertaken with charitable groups, and not-for-profit organisations.

Section 2 - Policy

(4) Nil.

Section 3 - Procedures

Responsibilities and Required Actions

(5) There is a Staff Volunteering Leave Procedure Flowchart available for this Procedure.

Volunteering Leave Requirements

(6) All continuing staff (academic and professional) can apply for paid leave in order to volunteer with registered charitable groups and not-for-profit organisations provided the volunteering activity:

a. is for the public benefit / common good;
b. does not provide the volunteer with financial gain;
c. is in a nominated volunteer position;
d. does not conflict with broader employment obligations or the University's values; and
e. is not considered a high-risk activity – contact Risk and Assurance if in doubt via risk@mq.edu.au.

(7) The University provides two (2) days (pro-rata) paid personal leave each calendar year for volunteer activities with approved organisations or groups. Volunteering leave must be taken on a workday and does not accumulate from year to year.

(8) Volunteering activities are often considered as contributing to community wellbeing and cover all sectors of society including, but not limited to:

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a. animal welfare;
b. children and youth;
c. environment;
d. health;
e. international aid / development; and
f. welfare / community.

(9) The University has a dedicated website (Community Volunteering) to assist with undertaking volunteering, including prepared volunteering activity packages for individuals and teams. There are also a number of external websites that staff can use to find volunteering activities, such as GoVolunteer and Volunteering Australia.

(10) Staff are not permitted to use their volunteering leave to volunteer for an organisation which is:

a. primarily for sporting, social or recreational purposes (e.g. child's soccer club or tennis club);
b. related to school activities (e.g. canteen / fete, classroom reading);
c. primarily for political, lobbying or promotional purposes;
d. illegal or against public policy;
e. carrying on a commercial enterprise to generate surpluses / profit; or
f. an organisation whose principles conflict with the University's values (e.g. an organisation that incites hatred or violence).

(11) Staff are encouraged to volunteer with a charitable group or not-for-profit organisation of their choice and may employ existing expertise in their voluntary activities. There are several different types of volunteering that staff can partake in:

a. Skilled: Sometimes there is a need for charitable groups and not-for-profit organisations to complete a task or gain advice from someone who is experienced in a particular field. Therefore, a skilled volunteer can be defined as an individual that has training or experience in a specific area. For example, an accountant volunteering with a charity to assist with some financial planning.
b. Episodic: Also referred to as project-based volunteering, usually occurs around the time available to give, with an organisation of interest, undertaking a directed activity. An example is donating a day preparing meals for delivery to the needy.
c. Virtual: A growing trend where individuals volunteer online to assist a charitable group or not-for-profit organisation. This type of volunteering overcomes the physical engagement barrier as it can be done anywhere of convenience to the volunteer. An example could be posting information to appropriate online communities such as newsgroups and lists.
d. Governance: Associated with volunteering on a charitable group or not-for-profit organisation's Board or management committee or giving time to assist such a group or organisation to develop critical governance structures. For example, assisting a charitable group or not-for-profit organisation with accreditation / policy development / management or organisational review projects.
e. Emergency: Emergency volunteering involves short-term responses to natural disasters and other emergencies. For example, if you are part of a rural bushfire team, you may be called upon to respond to a natural disaster. This leave does not fall under the provisions of this Procedure and is dealt with separately in the relevant University Enterprise Agreements.

(12) Staff who utilise their volunteering leave are covered under Macquarie University's workers compensation provisions. Staff must still ensure that the charitable group engages in safe work practices and provides health and safety information.

Applying for Volunteering Leave

(13) Staff must ensure that the intended volunteering activity is with a charitable group or not-for-profit organisation as defined in Section 5 – Definitions. Staff must discuss their intention to volunteer with their Manager / Supervisor and provide further details of the specific volunteer activity in which they seek to participate.

(14) Staff must apply for volunteer leave through Workday prior to the intended leave day. Staff must complete either a whole or part day leave request, depending on the length of the volunteering activity, using the 'Leave Code' (Personal Leave – Other) and then selecting (MQ Cont. Staff Only-Volunteering Max 2 Days/Yr) under the 'Reason' pull-down menu. Staff must provide details of the charitable group or not-for-profit organisation that they will be volunteering with in the 'Comments' box and follow the survey link to provide information about their proposed volunteering activity.

(15) Where an eligible staff member believes that the proposed volunteering activity aligns with the intent of this Procedure but the organisation does not meet the charity and / or not-for-profit definition, they may apply for consideration of exceptional circumstances to volunteer with the organisation. In such instances the staff member must email volunteering@mq.edu.au explaining the proposed activity; the group or organisation involved and where the proposed activity will occur; the benefits to undertaking the proposed activity; and why exceptional circumstances should be approved. In these cases, judgement on whether the proposed activity meets the intention of University volunteering leave will be at the absolute discretion of the Chief People Officer and the Director, Sustainability (or appropriate nominees).

Approving Volunteering Leave

(16) Managers / Supervisors are encouraged to actively support staff seeking to access their volunteering leave, in alignment with the University's commitment to service and engagement.

(17) Managers / Supervisors must review the volunteering leave request and assess whether the organisation and proposed volunteering activity fits the University's volunteering leave requirements as specified in this Procedure.

(18) Volunteering leave may only be refused if the volunteer activity does not meet University requirements (e.g. activity is not with a charitable group or not-for-profit organisation) or the requested date/s for leave conflicts with specific organisational demands.

(19) If the volunteering leave request is rejected on the basis of specific organisational demands, the Manager / Supervisor must provide the staff member with the grounds for refusal and must discuss an alternative period when volunteering leave can be used. Staff can request a review of any refused volunteering leave application through their next in line supervisory level and may contact the Chief People Officer and / or Director, Sustainability for support if there are ongoing concerns.

(20) If a staff member has applied for consideration of exceptional circumstances to undertake a proposed activity with a group or organisation outside the defined charity and / or not-for-profit requirements, and has emailed volunteering@mq.edu.au for an outcome, the determination of approval or non-approval will be provided within three (3) working days of receipt of email. The decision is final and will not be subject to review.

Participating and Reporting

(21) Staff who participate in approved volunteering leave are encouraged to share their experience with their Manager / Supervisor and other colleagues, including taking photos where permissible. Staff are also encouraged to contact volunteering@mq.edu.au to provide feedback on the experience.

(22) Reporting on the volunteering activity provides an opportunity to highlight the benefits of the experience for the participant, the charitable group or not-for-profit organisation, and the University more broadly, while also

encouraging other staff to make use of volunteering leave provisions.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(23) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(24) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Procedure:

a. Charitable group means a group meeting the Australian Tax Office (ATO) definition of a charity. To be a charity the organisation must:
    i. exist for the public benefit or the relief of poverty;
    ii. have a charitable purpose within the legal sense of that term; and
    iii. be not-for-profit.

    The Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) Find a Charity Register can be used to confirm an organisation's charitable status.

b. Not-for-profit / not-for-profit organisation means an organisation that does not operate for the profit, personal gain or other benefit of particular people (for example, its members, the people who run it or their friends or relatives). The definition of not-for-profit applies both while the organisation is operating and if it 'winds up' (closes down) (as defined by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC)).

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Responsible Executive	Eric Knight Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Operations)
Responsible Officer	David Ward Chief People Officer
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