

Graduate Volunteer (Alumni) Policy

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Overview

Definitions

Term	Definition
Nightline Alumni	Refers to former students, who were volunteers for their university's Nightline whilst studying but have now graduated from the university.
Graduate Volunteer	Refers to former Nightline volunteer who has graduated from the university, but still continues to volunteer for that Nightline e.g. continues to take shifts.

Background

Involving Nightline Alumni as part of the volunteer base may be especially beneficial during times where volunteer capacity may be limited. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on universities and on Nightline services. With universities closed for much of 2020 and 2021, Nightline services have adapted their approach in order to continue to provide anonymous, non-judgemental listening services to their university communities.

This example policy and procedure has been developed by the Nightline Association Policy Team to provide Nightlines with a template and guide for developing a policy and procedure.

Good Practice Guidelines

The Good Practice Guidelines do not make any specifications about Graduate Volunteers. However, having a clear policy in place provides transparency for volunteers and stakeholders. The below guidance is therefore not prescriptive but should be used as points for discussion when creating your own policy.

Purpose

The longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic mean that it is difficult to predict the extent to which universities will be able to reopen over the next few years. However, it may be beneficial to think ahead and plan for a time when Nightline services will be able to reopen. The pandemic has posed significant challenges in terms of maintaining Nightlines' volunteer base and ensuring that current volunteers have the skills they need to deliver a full Nightline service. For example, many current volunteers may have no experience of call taking.

Scope

Some Nightlines may wish to involve graduate volunteers in order to mitigate these effects. Now is an appropriate time to consider introducing a Graduate Volunteer Policy to maintain your Nightline's volunteer base, training programmes or supply of income. Individual Nightlines may decide to involve graduate volunteers in their volunteer base in different ways. This decision will be informed by:

- The impact COVID-19 may be having on your Nightline service's capacity.
- The size and scope of the Nightline service.
- Discussions with your stakeholders, your committee and your volunteer body.

Research

The Impact Team (impact@nightline.ac.uk) has spoken to a number of Nightlines who already have a Graduate Volunteers in place (see Appendix 1). The approach taken varies significantly from service to service, with some Nightlines implementing a clear Graduate Volunteer Policy, while others do not make use of graduate volunteers at all.

Graduate volunteers can be particularly useful when it comes to training new volunteers. Many Nightlines operate a training model that relies heavily on newer recruits having the opportunity to observe and shadow more experienced volunteers. The benefits of practice-based learning in a Social Work environment have long been recognised, forming a key part of Social Work qualifications in the UK (Le Riche, 2006; Parker, Hughes and Rutter, 2006). The same benefits can be applied to Nightline Volunteering, with shadowing providing new volunteers with knowledge and experience of the implicit skills involved in effective active listening, for example. As such, at a time when many current volunteers will not have had the opportunity to take a call or drop-in, Nightlines may wish to rely on graduate volunteers to deliver this training.

References

Le Riche, Pat (2006). *Practicing Observation in Shadowing: Curriculum Innovation and Learning Outcomes in the BA Social Work*. *Social Work Education*, 25(8), 771-784.

Parker, Jonathan, Hughes, Mel & Rutter, Lynne (2021). 'Shadowing' and its place in preparing students for practice learning. *The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning*, 7(3), 49-69.

Policy Considerations

'For students by students'

Nightlines are set up on the principle that the service is for students and run by students. Thus, your service must make it clear that some of your volunteers will be graduates who are no longer students; this must also be written in your constitution.

Your Nightline might decide to include a note about this on your website. For example:

"Our service is run by students, for students. During the pandemic, we have also been leveraging support from our alumni to ensure that we can mitigate any potential impacts of the pandemic and keep the service running".

Stakeholders

Many of the decisions your Nightline will need to make when developing your Graduate Volunteer Policy will rely on your stakeholders. As such, you should involve stakeholders in these discussions. Some areas that you may need to explore include:

- Your Student Union or University's views on graduate volunteer involvement. They are likely to already have a policy in place, which you will need to follow.
- Whether graduate volunteers will be able to access any areas of your university that they need to access in order to fulfil their role (eg. your Nightline office).
- Whether the welfare structures in place for student volunteers can be accessed by graduate volunteers

When developing your Graduate Volunteer policy, you must consider the terms of any insurance policies that cover your Nightline service to ensure graduate volunteers are covered. Your Nightline may have its own insurance policy, or you may be covered by your Student Union or university.

The Role

Your Nightline must decide how graduate volunteers will be treated differently - if at all.

- For example, your Nightline may wish to exclude graduate volunteers from committee roles to open up the opportunity to current and more recent volunteers.
- You may also need to consider how graduate volunteers will manage time commitments if they are working alongside their volunteering role.
- You may also want to consider how graduate volunteers may best fit into your service whether this be in a listening role, involved in training new volunteers or involved in fundraising and publicity.
- During the current COVID-19 pandemic, it may be that graduate volunteers will be a useful resource in filling shifts. They will have the experience of taking calls, up to date training and a good knowledge of how the system works which can be invaluable if providing a remote service.

Time Duration

You should provide a clear time limit for graduate volunteers i.e. how long they can continue to volunteer with the service as a graduate.

- We do not recommend that they continue to volunteer indefinitely. This duration will be dependent upon your services' need and demand for graduate volunteers.
- You should also ensure that priority is given to current student volunteers when booking shifts, so that your current volunteer base's skills do not lapse.
- Graduate volunteers should also have *recently* been a student, to ensure that the service remains in line with the 'for students by students' sentiment. For this reason, we recommend setting a limit of volunteering no more than 2 years after graduation.

Training

You must ensure graduate volunteers receive the same level of training (including refresher training) as all other volunteers. They must not be treated differently in this regard e.g. assumed to have more expertise or knowledge due to their time in the service. This is also important so that your Nightline service remains GPG compliant. For further information and guidance on training, please contact the Training Team at training@nightline.ac.uk

Welfare

Welfare is at the centre of what we do, and is essential to providing an effective Nightline service. Therefore, your Nightline must consider how graduate volunteers will access welfare support within the service. Ensuring that graduate volunteers receive the same level of welfare support as all other volunteers (including wellbeing and safety) is crucial for supporting your volunteers, volunteer retention and service delivery. This may involve discussions with your stakeholders if support is provided externally e.g. through your university's wellbeing/mental health services. Other considerations might be whether graduate volunteers are able to attend socials, meetings and in-person welfare support to ensure they feel sufficiently supported.

Exclusions

Nightlines may need to consider if there are any alumni they may wish to exclude from volunteering. This may be due to a conflict of interest, for example, if their job or personal circumstances would prevent them from providing an adequate or an unbiased service.

Graduate Coordinators

Some Nightlines may consider the idea of their coordinator being a graduate volunteer. When electing your coordinator, it is important to assess whether it is suitable for them to take on this position. As a graduate volunteer, there may be additional considerations to take into account e.g. will they have the time and capacity to take on such a responsibility whilst having a full time job or other commitments.

Responsibilities Considerations

Your Nightline might wish to mention a range of committee members in the 'Responsibilities' section, depending on their committee structure. Some Nightlines have a dedicated Alumni Officer who is in charge of the current graduate volunteers and developing a strategy for engaging Nightline Alumni.

Your committee may wish to ensure that the following responsibilities are covered, either by a dedicated Alumni Officer, or by other members of the committee:

- Ensuring that your Nightline's Graduate Volunteer Policy is implemented.
- Raising awareness of the graduate volunteer role.
- Ensuring all graduate volunteers are aware of their role.
- Being the first point of contact for graduate volunteers in the organisation.
- Developing a strategy for working with Nightline alumni in the future.
- Organising events for Nightline alumni.
- Contacting final year students before they graduate to check:
 - if they want to become a graduate volunteer;
 - if they want to join the alumni social media groups;
 - if they want to join the alumni mailing list.
- Maintaining an alumni mailing list and sending regular updates about your Nightline
- Maintaining a skills/careers database for Nightline alumni and facilitate career networking between current and former Nightline volunteers
- Exploring opportunities for fundraising and training using Nightline alumni

Legal Considerations

Data Protection and Privacy

If your Nightline service wishes to retain data on its graduate volunteers, e.g. contact details, then this should be done in a way that is consistent with the service's collection of data on its student volunteers. If your service has not previously used graduate volunteers, you should review your data collection processes to ensure that any consent given by volunteers for your service to hold their data remains valid once they have graduated. At all stages, you must ensure that your data collection complies with the General Data Protection Regulation.

Contact

Query:	NLA Contact:	E-Mail Address:
Any questions relating to this policy	Policy Team	policy@nightline.ac.uk
Stakeholder issues	Sustainability Team	sustainability@nightline.ac.uk
Service Level Agreement (SLA) advice	SLA Sub-Team	sla@nightline.ac.uk
IT questions and issues	IT Department	it@nightline.ac.uk
Welfare support	Welfare Team	welfare@nightline.ac.uk
Training advice	Training Team	training@nightline.ac.uk
Research carried out for this policy	Impact Team	impact@nightline.ac.uk

Volunteering for the Nightline Association

If alumni still want to contribute to the Nightline cause, they can volunteer for the Nightline Association. It is a great way to stay involved and make a difference without being a frontline listening volunteer. This page should direct your alumni to the latest volunteering opportunities: <https://www.nightline.ac.uk/current-volunteering-opportunities/>

Model Graduate Volunteer Policy

Policy approved	June 2021 <i>[add details of relevant committee members, etc. if required]</i>
Policy review due	June 2022

Purpose

The use of this Policy should:

- Outline the role and limitations of graduate volunteers.
- Make it clear who graduate volunteers are responsible to.
- Outline the duration of volunteering for graduate volunteers and how this role should be ended.

In future, this policy may be amended by committee, should such amendments be required to better meet these aims.

Scope

[X] Nightline is a service that is run for students and by students. It is therefore expected that graduate volunteers should only be accepted if all other roles have been filled in by students i.e. on an ad hoc basis. If an alumni wishes to continue to volunteer with the Nightline they will be directed towards other ways of assisting the Nightline via the Nightline Association by the Alumni Officer. Graduate volunteers will be considered listening volunteers up to 1 year after graduation.

Definitions

Summarise definitions used, or use the table below:

Term	Definition
'Calls' and 'Callers'	Refers to all uses of Nightline's student support and information service whether in spoken or written communication.
Graduate Volunteer	Refers to a former Nightline volunteer who has graduated from the university, but still continues to volunteer for that Nightline e.g. continues to take shifts
Nightline Alumni	Refers to individuals who previously volunteered with the Nightline and have since graduated.

Policy

Roles

Graduate volunteers will be treated as student volunteers in all respects except that they will not be allowed to run for committee positions. This is to give more recent volunteers an opportunity to run and lead the service.

Duration

Graduate volunteers will be allowed to continue to volunteer with the Nightline for up to one year after their graduation. This is to uphold the principle of the service being run by students as noted above. If graduate volunteers would like to continue to be involved with the service

after this period of time, they will be directed to the Nightline Association which may offer a variety of roles to continue to lead the service.

LinkedIn & Public CVs

A volunteer can put Nightline on their CV at any point, including during volunteering, as long as the CV is not being seen by anyone who could be a potential caller. Once a volunteer has both stopped volunteering for a Nightline *and* has graduated from the university they are able to publicly discuss their previous role as a volunteer. This should be limited to their role as a volunteer and *general* descriptions of the role i.e. volunteering in a non-advisory and non-judgemental service. Volunteers must not disclose any call content that they have been involved with.

This allows the service to uphold its anonymity and confidentiality, to maintain trust of the service amongst its callers and ultimately to maintain the principles of Nightline.

Exclusions

[X] Nightline does not allow alumni who are currently staff at [X] University, or a member of the police force to continue to volunteer with the Nightline. This is due to conflict of interest between the services.

Responsibilities

The *Alumni Officer* is responsible for:

- Ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- Raising awareness of the graduate volunteer role.
- Ensuring all graduate volunteers are aware of their role.
- Being the first point of contact for graduate volunteers in the organisation.
- Keeping up to date of volunteers who are about to graduate.
- Developing a strategy for working with alumni in the future
- Organising events for alumni
- Contacting final year students before they graduate to check
 - o whether they want to remain a listening volunteer.
 - o whether they want to join the alumni social media groups.
 - o whether they want to join the alumni mailing list.
- Maintaining an alumni mailing list and writing a termly newsletter containing updates about [X] Nightline
- Maintaining a skills/careers database for alumni and facilitate career networking between current and former Nightline volunteers
- Working with other committee positions eg.
 - o Fundraising volunteers - collaborate on a fundraising strategy as alumni are a good source of income.
 - o Training volunteers - assess whether alumni working in third sector jobs can provide additional skills to [X] Nightline's volunteers.

Legal Considerations

Insurance

[X] Nightline graduate volunteers are covered by [X] Nightline's insurance policy.

Data Protection and Privacy

[X] Nightline service retains data on its graduate volunteers in a way that is consistent with the service's collection of data on its student volunteers. Consent is given by [X] Nightline volunteers for the service to hold their data for [X] amount of years once they have graduated.

Reviews and amendments

This policy was amended on 20 June 2021: updated wording for 'Graduate Volunteer' definition.

Date: 20/06/2021 **Contact:** nightline.coordinator@university.ac.uk

Appendix 1: Case Studies

The following are examples of different approaches taken by Nightlines to engaging Alumni as graduate volunteers:

Nightline 1

This Nightline's graduated volunteers are allowed to volunteer until their training runs out i.e. from the point of graduation until late October. This is in keeping with the principle of the service being run by students and for students.

Nightline 2

This Nightline allows any alumni in 'good standing' (not defined) to apply to be an 'Honorary member' to offer advice, publicity & fundraising. Applications are accepted based on committee votes and their membership lasts until the following September. Honorary members can reapply; there does not seem to be a limit on when Honorary members can no longer continue to volunteer with the service. Honorary members who have completed a shift in the last two years can continue as a listening volunteer as long as they maintain their training.

Nightline 3

This Nightline allows alumni to continue to volunteer as an 'Associate Member' if they live in the local area. They provide no further guidance or limitations on the time or role of the volunteer.

Nightline 4

This Nightline allows alumni to take calls and participate as a committee member, up to one year after they have graduated. During this year, they must take part in the ongoing training practices that the Nightline offers. After this point, they become external to the organisation. According to their constitution, the coordinators have the authority to admit any new volunteers external to the university into the organisation, though this is rare in practice. They allow their volunteers to publicise their participation in Nightline on LinkedIn after they have graduated. They must continue to keep all aspects of our policies confidential, unless they have permission from the coordinators. A volunteer can put Nightline on their CV at any point, including during volunteering, as long as the CV is not being seen by anyone who could be a potential caller (i.e. within the university).

They also have an 'alumni relations' volunteer that organises big events, such as their 40th anniversary. They have some famous alumni that help promote their Nightline and host big events. The alumni relations volunteer also manages the Facebook group and writes quarterly newsletters updating all of their alumni.

Nightline 5

This Nightline does not currently have a policy for Nightline alumni. Their committee is unsure about it - their concern is that they cannot advertise themselves as a 'student led service' if they have non-students involved.

Nightline 6

This Nightline does not currently have any graduate volunteers but they have had some previously and treated them as a normal volunteer. They have an alumni Facebook group set up although they report that it's quite inactive.

Nightline 7

This Nightline allows alumni to continue to volunteer for up to two years after leaving an affiliated college, and then graduate volunteers staff the shifts for two nights a year during their ongoing training weekend for all current volunteers. They're re-trained and given a special handbook for graduate volunteers outlining any policy changes

They also have alumni on their external advisory board. This means students can join in their final year and still have time to work up to a trainer or coordinator, and students who join in their first year can end up with years of experience. They find that it's also easier to be a coordinator on top of a 9-5 job compared to doing it while in final year.

Nightline 8

This Nightline states that alumni can only volunteer if they remain local. Additionally, they would need extra training if they hadn't volunteered within the last year. Graduates would need a minimum of 3 extra training sessions and the trainer would have to say if they were allowed to go back on shift

Nightline 9

This Nightline does not currently have any approach to this. When a student volunteer leaves uni, they are removed from the facebook page and join a 'Nightline alumni' page. They are not allowed to volunteer after that.

Nightline 10

This Nightline has an alumni facebook group, but they believe it's a bit malnourished. They have recently elected a new committee role about outreach and relationships. They think they should probably be trying to do more.