

Volunteers and Health and Safety

WHS-PRO-INFO-004c

This information sheet provides information about volunteers and health and safety requirements only under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011.

James Cook University has specific obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act* with regard to the health and safety of volunteers whilst they are undertaking work at a University workplace.

Under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 definition, a person is a worker if the person carries out work in any capacity for the University and includes working as a volunteer.

A **volunteer** is a person who is acting on a voluntary basis for the University (irrespective if the person receives out of pocket expenses).

A **workplace** is any location for the purpose of work, study or research that is conducted by JCU staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students and volunteers at various sites which are on-campus and off-campus. This includes urban, rural (terrestrial), freshwater or marine locations.

In accordance with Section 28 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, while at work a volunteer as a worker must:

- a. Take reasonable care for his or her own health and safety; and
- b. Take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons; and
- c. Comply, so far as the worker is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by the University to allow the University to comply with the Act; and
- d. Co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure of the University relating to health or safety at the workplace that has been notified to workers.

The University must ensure the health and safety of its volunteers, consult with them on WHS matters; and provide them with the necessary information, training and supervision.

The University must also ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace is without risks to the health and safety of any person, including volunteers.

Risk Management

To assist JCU to fulfil its duty under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 the WHS-PRO-002 Work Health and Safety Risk Management Procedure, which can be found in the JCU Policy library, applies to all staff, students, contractors, volunteers, adjuncts and visitors involved in JCU business operations and activities.

Risk management strategies for JCU workers documented in policies, standards, procedures or work instructions, are to be applied to volunteers as far as reasonably practicable and include:

- identifying and responding to health and safety hazards for any activities undertaken and recorded through the risk assessment using RiskWare
- reporting and recording of volunteer accidents/injuries using RiskWare
- guidelines for the safe use of equipment
- Induction and Training
- Identifying minimum qualifications/skill level required to conduct activities undertaken
- Requirements for engaging in field activities including boating and diving and including volunteers' details in these systems

Where not managed through existing health and safety controls, areas must develop and implement risk management strategies for specific volunteer risks, for example for fieldtrips or events; or security measures for volunteers involved in work activities outside normal working hours.

Induction and Training

Each business unit needs to ensure that volunteers:

- Are informed of their rights and responsibilities;
- Undertake a comprehensive health and safety induction (either paper-based or JCU WHS Online Induction);
- Receive any specialised induction and training in relation to risks associated with their volunteer duties;
- Understand and are able to appropriately respond to matters concerning their health and safety;
- As a minimum, are inducted into the following:
 - Work area and other people;
 - Explain the volunteers role and responsibilities;
 - Code of Conduct;
 - Hazards and risk;
 - Project/work risk assessments ;
 - Key procedures/policies (including consultation, confidentiality, grievance, emergency, incident reporting);
 - Emergency procedures;
 - Reporting mechanisms;
 - Supervision requirements;
 - Key personnel and their roles.

Each business unit must formally keep a training register of inducted volunteers and a register of volunteer details that have been engaged. ([See suggestion example](#))

Consultation

- JCU will consult with its volunteers so far as is reasonably practicable;
- Divisions/Colleges and business unit engaging volunteers are responsible for developing and implementing processes for consulting with their volunteer workers;
- Consultation may include the involvement of an elected Health Safety Representative where appropriate.

Insurance

- Volunteers (unpaid) are not considered 'workers' for workers' compensation purposes, as per the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003. The University has in place a group personal accident policy for volunteer workers conducting authorised University activities. For further information refer to the 'Insurance' information on the JCU website (<https://www.jcu.edu.au/chancellery/legal-and-assurance/insurance/volunteers>)

Obligations of Volunteers Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteer rights:

- Receive adequate information of what is expected and to understand why they are doing the duties;
- Be assigned a suitable project and/or duty;
- To be provided with support to carry out duty;
- Receive respect and support from their co-workers as well as recognition and feedback for their work;
- Provide feedback, suggestions and recommendations regarding their duty or the wider program;
- Have their personal details kept in a confidential manner;
- Work in a safe and healthy environment;
- Be provided with suitable tools, materials and support.

Volunteer responsibilities:

- Be reliable and commit, where possible to the duties and times required;
- Keep JCU informed of changes of address and phone number;
- To ask for support when needed;
- Appreciate and respect the confidential nature of information that may be acquired during course of duties;
- Discuss any problems with the supervisor;
- Agree to work in a safe and healthy way and not jeopardise the health and safety of others;
- Inform the Supervisor of any pre-existing medical conditions or special needs that the University should be aware of that might affect the volunteer's ability to undertake certain duties;
- Report any injury immediately to the Supervisor;
- Participate in an induction and any relevant training programs;
- Only undertake duties the volunteer is authorised to perform;
- Comply with JCU policies and procedures.

Further information:

Work Health and Safety Unit:

Phone - 07 4781 5290

Email – safety@jcu.edu.au

Volunteer Register Example (suggestion only)

An example of a volunteer register of volunteers that have been engaged.

Full Name	Contact Details phone and address	Emergency Contact Details	Division/College/Business Unit	Name and Position of Supervisor	Period of Engagement (Hours to be worked or days to be worked)	Role	Activities to undertake (brief details of work/activity in which volunteer will be engaged)	Training Required/Provided (copy sighted)	Comments