IRELAND FELLOWS VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME

IRELAND FELLOWS PROGRAMME 2022/23

WELCOME!

*"Small acts,
when multiplied
by millions of people,
can transform the world."*
- Howard Zinn

Congratulations on taking a step towards becoming a truly global citizen by starting your new academic journey in Ireland! Moving to live and study in a new country can be challenging, especially learning its ins and outs, and getting accustomed to your new surroundings. Meeting new people, making friends and creating bonds, as well as building your daily routine can be challenging after any major life change, and especially with linguistic, social and cultural barriers standing in the way.

One way to become more comfortable in your new surroundings, expand your horizons, learn more about your host community, and create strong bonds is through volunteering. Ireland Fellows Volunteering Programme aims to do precisely this to help you get the most out of your time in Ireland.

WHAT IS THE IRELAND FELLOWS VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME?

Our small contribution for a better world!

The Ireland Fellows Volunteering Programme aims to encourage the Fellows to engage with their host communities during their study abroad period.

This programme will enrich your mobility experience by fostering active participation in the local community through volunteering activities that will allow you to understand the challenges that the community faces and contribute to solutions that bring about positive change.

The programme also aims to facilitate social participation and active citizenship, encourage intercultural exchange, and help you develop competencies that will allow you to proactively engage with and tackle challenges in your local community upon your return home from your studies in Ireland.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

Volunteering is a commitment of time and energy for the benefit of the community by an individual or a group. It is undertaken freely and by choice.

By participating in the volunteering programme, you can contribute to a variety of causes, make new connections, have fun, and experience Ireland from a different perspective! Volunteering is also a good way to:

Actively **participate** in community life,
understand the issues that the community faces,
and **contribute** to the way that the community is shaped,

Show **initiative** and **proactivity**,
develop various skills,
and develop innovative solutions for the issues
in your home community - **think globally, act locally**!

Meet new people,
befriend local and international students,
and develop a better bond with the community.

CAUSES

You are encouraged to participate in the volunteering activities connected to the causes that the Ireland Fellows Volunteer Programme stands behind:

CULTURE
Help create a safe space for intercultural exchange in the community and increase the consumption of cultural and natural heritage in Ireland

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION
Help raise awareness about the repercussions of people's current habits on the environment, and motivate them to make more conscious choices.
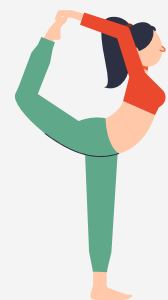
INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY
Help foster internationalisation and the creation of inclusive communities in Ireland, void of discrimination based on nationality, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
Help raise awareness about the healthy lifestyle in the community, rooted in both the physical and mental health of its members.

POVERTY
Help support community members who don't have access to food and other basic life necessities crucial for survival.

EDUCATION

Help ensure equal access to education and inclusive competency development processes, as well as an easy and equitable entrance into the labour market for all community members.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Help support children and youth in the community who are at risk of exclusion or marginalisation.

ELDERLY

Provide companionship and care to the elderly members in the community.

ANIMALS

Support abandoned pets, campaign for their welfare and rights, support wildlife conservation, fight against animal extinction, and help protect endangered species.

ACTIVITIES

There are two types of volunteering activities: **long-term and short-term activities**. Long-term activities require longer commitment – from a few weeks to up to a year – and they are usually role based, like a youth mentor or a team member at a festival. Short-term activities require shorter commitment – from a few hours to up to a day – and they are usually one-off activities. For example, you can help distribute food to the homeless or clean up a beach/park or another city surface.

Some volunteering activities, especially the ones revolving around working with children or other vulnerable persons, may require **Garda* vetting**. Garda vetting has to be arranged by the organisation providing volunteering activities and it implies going through a risk assessment process so a decision can be made whether the volunteer is in the position to take up the role they are being vetted for. This process can take quite a long time, which means you may not have a chance to conduct your volunteering activity during your stay in Ireland. If a volunteering opportunity requires Garda vetting, you are advised to contact the organisation providing the opportunity before applying and exposing yourself to the process.

*An Garda Siochana is the national police service of the Republic of Ireland

WHERE CAN I VOLUNTEER?

1   STUDENT CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

You can learn more about the **clubs and societies** available on your college campus on the website of your higher education institution as well as the website of your **Students' Union**, or stop by the clubs and societies office on the campus to ask for more information – a staff member at the office will recommend you sources where you can find necessary information. Afterwards, you can follow your preferred clubs and societies on social media to keep up with their work, contact them directly or pay attention to the opportunities posted on bulletin boards on the campus.

2   NGOs AND CHARITIES

You can also participate in volunteering activities organised by **organisations and charities** in your city. You can find more information about available volunteering opportunities in your community at your **local volunteer centre** *(link)* or in the **national volunteering database** *(link)*. You can also check some organisations and charities recommended by ICOS in the annex.

Through the year, ICOS will be organising volunteering activities in collaboration with other organisations and charities that you will be able to participate in. You will be informed about these activities in due time.

HOW CAN I JOIN A VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY?

Usually, you have to register for a volunteering activity you would like to participate in. If you saw the opportunity online or on a poster/leaflet at the bulletin board, joining information should be stated there. If you have heard about the opportunity from someone, you can ask them if they know how you can join the activity or where to find more information.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO BEFORE I START VOLUNTEERING?

If you don't have to be vetted by the Gardaí, then all you need to do is apply for and prepare to participate in the activity of your choice. However, before embarking on your volunteering journey and applying for a specific volunteering activity, **you should reflect on why you want to volunteer** in the first place and what you want to get out of this experience. To make sure your engagement is beneficial for both you and your community, you should answer the following questions for yourself:

1   How much time do I want to invest into volunteering?

2   When are you free to volunteer, e.g. are you free during the week or only on weekends, are you usually free in the mornings or in the afternoon?

3   Do you have an easy and accessible way of reaching your place of volunteering?

4   How can you contribute? What are your skills and interests?

5   Would you prefer to do something you have already done, utilising the skills you already have, or would you prefer to do something new to challenge yourself?

6   Would you like to volunteer as an individual or in a group?

RECORDING YOUR ACTIVITY

After your volunteering activity ends, you should add it to the **volunteering log**, an online form that allows you to record your volunteering activities in detail by providing general information about the activity itself and reflecting on your volunteering experience.

Please record each volunteering activity individually – we advise you to record the activity as soon as you come home, while you are still buzzing from the experience. Please record the volunteering activity only after you have completed it - if your volunteering activity takes a couple of days or weeks, you should record it on the form only after the activity is truly and fully over. It is your responsibility to track your activity, as well as the number of hours you have invested into volunteering.

In order for the volunteering activity to be eligible, it must meet the following criteria:

- The activity must take place in Ireland
- The activity must benefit people and/or communities in Ireland
- The activity must be done free of charge

You have to record your volunteering activities to be eligible for the **IFP Volunteering Awards**!

IFP VOLUNTEERING AWARDS

At the end of the academic year, we will have an **Award Ceremony** where we will celebrate your achievements and give you one loud **THANK YOU** for the time you have invested into volunteering throughout the year. You can work towards three different levels of awards based on the total number of volunteering hours accumulated over the course of the academic year, and the number of causes you contributed to:

1 **GOLD** - 75+ hours
2 **SIlVER** - up to 50 hours
3 **BRONZE** - up to 25 hours

However, we would like you to remember that this isn't a competition - when we volunteer, everyone wins! These awards are here to celebrate your achievements and contributions to your host community, and they are here to ensure that you have left your mark in Ireland. And time isn't the only way to measure the impact of the mark you left! Therefore, we will also have separate awards for Fellows who have shown a particular dedication to one of the following categories:

1 **CULTURE** - creation of safe spaces for the enrichment of community through cultural differences

2 **EDUCATION** - contributions to accessible education

3 **EQUALITY** - dismantling gender stereotypes and contributing to gender equality

4 **PEOPLE** - contributions to marginalised people and groups, as well as those experiencing poverty, hunger, discrimination, etc.

5 **PLANET** - preserving biodiversity, protecting ecosystems, and acting against climate change

6 **THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY** - finding solutions for global issues and contributing to one or more SDGs

Contact Us

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