

Volunteer Policy

1. What the Ri does

The Royal Institution (Ri) is at the forefront of public engagement with science. Our charitable purpose has always been to encourage people to think more deeply about the wonders and applications of science, and we continue to be guided by our founding ‘prospectus’ over 200 years ago:

“The speedy and general **diffusion of the knowledge** of all new and useful improvements in whatever quarter of the world they may originate; and **teaching the application of scientific discoveries** to the improvement of arts and manufactures in this country, and to the increase of domestic comfort and convenience.”

Over the last two centuries the Ri has been home to eminent scientists whose discoveries have helped to shape the modern world. The likes of Faraday, Davy, and Tyndall not only conducted their research at the Ri, but just as importantly shared this work with a wide public audience.

Today, scientists around the world are making equally ground-breaking discoveries that enrich our culture and have countless positive effects, but also possible consequences, that need to be discussed by wider society. This means that our relevance is greater than ever before – we must continue to open up the world of science and technology, not just by providing a platform for the public to gain access to credible information, but also by genuinely involving them in discovery, innovation and discussions about the future.

This commitment drives everything we do – from the intellectually stimulating public events and the world famous CHRISTMAS LECTURES to activities specifically tailored to capture the imagination and curiosity of young people. For example, our nationwide programme of problem-solving masterclasses in maths and engineering, our enquiry-led educational activities at the L’Oreal Young Scientist Centre and our policy discussions with science students.

Our critically acclaimed video platform, the Ri Channel, enables us to engage with people around the world. We make our own short films to tell the stories at the heart of cutting-edge science, as well as showcasing the very best science videos already on the web. Developing new and innovative partnerships with the world’s best scientists, institutions and film-makers, our mission to diffuse knowledge is now a truly global one.

2. Definition of a Volunteer

- A volunteer is a person who donates their time, skills and experience without receiving any form of financial compensation from the Royal Institution.

- A volunteer is not an employee of the Ri and there is no legally binding contractual relationship between the Ri and the volunteer
- A volunteer can be based at the head of office of the Ri (21 Albemarle Street, London) or be a representative of the Ri at one of the many regional based activities

3. Royal Institution's Approach to Volunteers

The Ri:

- Acknowledges that without volunteers the Ri would be less effective in accomplishing its aims.
- Intends volunteering to be an enjoyable activity meeting both the individual's and the Institution's needs.
- Commits to making volunteer roles meaningful.
- Sees volunteers as complementing not replacing staff.
- Invests in volunteer development and support.
- Treats all volunteers equally irrespective of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, religion, community background or political beliefs.

4. Benefits of volunteering at the Ri

The Ri offers the opportunity for volunteers to experience an exciting atmosphere of public engagement with science and informal science education. This is achieved through a variety of volunteering roles:

- to support our collections and heritage team
- to contribute to our programmes of events for the general public
- to support the continued programme of external education through the Mathematics, Engineering and Computer Science Masterclass Programme

Volunteers in the Collections and Heritage team are given an opportunity to gain and develop essential experience in practical library, archives and museum activities, and an insight into how a heritage department is involved in a major project in a world-renowned institution.

Volunteers in the Programmes team make a valued contribution to the activities of a leading science communication organisation, and an insight into the process of communicating science to non-specialists.

Volunteers within the Masterclass Programme can play a vital role in supporting students in their investigations and learning in order to allow them to benefit fully from the Masterclasses, or play a pivotal part as a local volunteer setting up and running a Masterclass series for their local community with the support of the Masterclass team at the Ri.

5. Responsibilities of Volunteering

We ask that as a volunteer you:

- Work with us to achieve our aims and objectives.
- Be reliable and honest.

- Fulfil the voluntary commitment you have taken on and ensure you realistically have the time to fulfil this commitment.
- Raise any problems/issues immediately with the designated appropriate person.
- Observe all of the Ri's Policies and Procedures (but in particular the Child Protection Policy, Equal Opportunities and Dignity at Work Policy, the Social Networking Policy and the Health and Safety Policy)
- Attend relevant development and training events.
- Maintain the Ri's good reputation.
- Where possible, provide notice of your intention to stop a volunteering role.
- Enjoy yourself!

The Royal Institution's Responsibilities to you as a Volunteer

As a volunteer you can expect:

- A clear volunteer support framework.
- To be given tasks that you are able to carry out and enjoy and that are of benefit to the Ri
- A clearly defined outline of the task/s we would like you to undertake.
- Guidelines to assist you in completing the task/s.
- To have a member of staff nominated as a key contact for the task involved.

The volunteer needs of each department and the tasks that individuals can become involved in vary across the Ri. Levels of participation and responsibility will be determined by the training and guidance given by each volunteer supervisor or by the Ri's external partner or officer.

All volunteers will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement outlining the commitment and expectations of the Ri and the role or specific tasks that the volunteer has offered to undertake. A representative of the Ri will also sign this agreement. The agreement is not a contract of employment; it is simply a guideline to help the volunteer feel supported and to understand their responsibilities. Volunteers will also receive a copy of the Volunteer Induction Pack to keep and refer to when necessary.

6. Expenses

Depending on the department and nature of the activity undertaken, the Ri may reimburse reasonable travel expenses with prior agreement. Volunteer supervisors will outline the expenses rules that apply to their specific department upon recruitment.

7. Volunteer induction and training

Volunteers will receive an appropriate induction, which will include information on the aims, background and organisational framework of the Ri. Appropriate Health & Safety and basic fire evacuation training will also be undertaken. Further training will be given depending on the activities the volunteer has agreed to participate in. This will be given by Ri in-house staff. External training will only be given if it is essential for the task or project.

8. Trial period

For longer term volunteering arrangements, a meeting will be held after a set trial period (to be agreed with the volunteer) to check that the volunteer and supervisor are happy with the arrangement. It is the intention, however, that the assigned supervisor constantly review volunteers' contribution to the Ri and review their participation as necessary.

9. Health & Safety

The Ri will make every effort to care for the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers. Volunteers will be provided with copies of relevant health and safety procedures and receive appropriate guidance. Onsite volunteers are expected to follow the Ri's Health & Safety procedures and policy.

All external programmes run or supported by Ri volunteers will need to adhere to the policy and procedures, both Health & Safety and Emergency response, of the location at which they are conducting their activity. It is essential that they familiarise themselves with any procedures prior to the activity starting.

Health and Safety is the responsibility of everyone.

10. Social Media

Volunteers are expected to abide by the Ri's Social Media Policy. It is not anticipated that volunteers would normally have to communicate through the Ri's official social media channels, however they may well end up identifying themselves as an Ri volunteer on their own social media channels or using social media to coordinate volunteering activity.

Volunteers should not use social media sites to befriend or communicate with young people who participate in Ri activities (e.g. Masterclasses) unless the communication is purely professional in nature and is linked directly to the activity in question.

Volunteers are free to say whatever they like about the Ri on social media, however they should bear in mind their responsibility to maintain the Ri's good reputation and also the difference between speaking **about** the Ri and speaking **on behalf of** the Ri. Volunteers should follow the nine principles outlined in the Social Media Policy, and in particular the use of a disclaimer is encouraged, e.g. 'Any views expressed on this account are my own and not that of the Ri'.

11. Insurance

Volunteers are insured for all activities undertaken on behalf of the Ri.