

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

UL Global Buddy Programme

AUTUMN 2024



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Welcome to the Buddy Programme

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING!

Moving to a new country and starting in a new university can be a very daunting experience. We have students travelling to UL from all around the globe, enrolling in various programmes including Erasmus, Study Abroad, Exchange, and full-time Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes. Your role, as a UL Buddy, is to help make their transition to life in Limerick that bit easier. After all, you will be the first UL student they will meet and that will mean something to them! So, make sure to put on a friendly face and help answer any questions that they may have. Thank you in advance for volunteering with the UL Global Buddy Programme and helping our students to feel at home here in Limerick and Ireland!

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The Programme

WHAT IS THE UL GLOBAL BUDDY PROGRAMME?

The Buddy Programme is an important initiative set up to help international students feel at home and part of the UL community. Every year, over 2,000 new international students enrol in UL on a wide variety of programmes: Students may be doing full-time undergraduate or postgraduate programmes, or partaking in Erasmus, Study Abroad or Exchange programmes for one to two semesters. Every semester, the Buddy Programme matches a volunteer with 3 to 4 newly arrived international students, to help them adjust to life in a new college and country.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAMME WORK?

The University of Limerick Buddy Programme runs in both the Autumn and Spring semesters. Once all volunteers have been accepted to the programme, the Buddy Programme Administrator begins to process the applications from new international students and match them with a UL student. We match buddies according to their area of study, hobbies and language capabilities. We endeavour to match specific requests where possible. Once matched, an email will be sent to you, the volunteer, with the details of your international buddies. From there, you will reach out to your international buddies and organise your first meeting; this will be before the term begins. Once you have emailed your buddies, you will be required to email the Buddy Programme to let us know that initial contact has been made. Throughout the semester, get to know your buddy, check-in with them weekly and attend various events organised by the Buddy Programme.

BENEFITS OF BEING A BUDDY

The Buddy Programme is a chance for you to practise your language skills, learn about new cultures and make international connections for the future. It is also a great opportunity to help students from a different background and develop your communication skills. At the end of the semester, you will be able to earn a President's Volunteer Award, which is displayed on your UL transcript. Not to mention, it is also a great addition to your CV.



Your Role as a Volunteer

HOURS

Volunteers are expected to commit 12-20 hours per semester in total. Weekly, volunteers should spend 1-2 hours assisting and checking-in with their buddies. We understand that volunteers may commit more than 20 hours to the programme. Please note, if more than 30 hours are logged, it is protocol for the Buddy Programme Administrator to follow up for more information. For this reason, please ensure to keep track of volunteered hours throughout the semester. Overall, time spent volunteering should not interfere with your own academic studies.

YOUR ROLE

The role of as a volunteer is to be a friendly face to new international students and make their transition to UL a little bit easier. It can be daunting to come to a new country and so any advice that you can give your buddies about what to pack and insider tips about campus and Irish culture will significantly help them to settle in. Students who feel they have a buddy they can get advice from will feel less homesick or lonely. Answer their questions, help them make friends, and just spend time with them. You'll be amazed by the difference your friendship will make!

RESPONSIBILITIES & REQUIREMENTS

The UL Global Buddy Programme is an independent volunteering opportunity. We understand that students relate best to other students, and so throughout the semester it is up to you how you wish to engage with your group (e.g. you may wish to set up a WhatsApp group chat to check in weekly, or go for coffee etc.). You have a lot of flexibility, however, there are some things you will be required to do as a volunteer:

Requirements:

- Volunteers will need to check their emails weekly throughout August in advance of the academic semester, as the Buddy Programme administrator will be sending updates on the programme, along with the details of your buddies during this time.
- You are required to contact your buddies within a week of receiving their information to introduce yourself.
- Once complete, you must then email buddyprogramme@ul.ie to confirm that you have emailed your group. (Please note, you will not be allowed to continue on as a volunteer if you do not confirm you have reached out to your buddies).
- You must initiate a meeting with your international buddies upon their arrival in Limerick (this can be virtual or in-person).
- Weekly check in's with your buddies and answer queries they may have.
- Take part in at least three events/meet-ups with your buddies during the semester.
- Notify your buddies about all events organised by the Buddy Programme.
- Sign-up for and collect any necessary tickets for Buddy Programme events on behalf of your buddies.
- You are not required to answer queries about selecting modules, forming timetables, accommodation, visas or any complex matters.

Responsibilities:

- Encourage your buddies to get involved with the UL community.
- Email buddyprogramme@ul.ie if you think your buddy is struggling to adapt to life at UL, feeling lonely and/or suffering from extreme home sickness.

When to know it's your job

Your role as a buddy is to offer advice about life at UL and Ireland as a student; for example, you should help with questions like:

- What bus brings me into Limerick city?
- What is the difference between the 304 and the 304A bus?
- What does the following building and room code stand for: C1061/HSG00BA?
- What deli makes the best chicken fillet roll??
- How do I take out/return a book from the library?

You are not required to answer queries about selecting modules, forming timetables, accommodation, visas or any complex matters. If your buddy has any questions in relation to VISA / accommodation / having difficulty choosing their modules or building their timetable etc. please get them to contact the UL Global team who are on hand to help with these queries. Your buddy can email the office at ulglobal@ul.ie. Alternatively, they can email buddyprogramme@ul.ie and we will pass on the information to the correct team. Should your buddy require further information on academic/medical support provided by UL, they can get in touch using the following:

Academic Supports	Website/Information	Contact Details
Science Learning Centre	Website here	slc@ul.ie
Regional Writing Centre	Website here	writingcentre@ul.ie
Language Learning Hub	Website here	catherine.jeanneau@ul.ie
Maths Learning Centre	Website here	Director: Olivia.Fitzmaurice@ul.ie Manager: Richard.Walsh@ul.ie Educational Developer: Aoife.Guerin@ul.ie
Accommodation Services	Website/Information	Contact Details
Accommodation Service	Website here	Accommodation@ul.ie

Student Life Services & Supports	Website/Information	Contact Details
Student President	Website here	studentpresident@ul.ie
Student Welfare Officer	Website here	studentcentre@ul.ie
Student Academic Officer	Website here	studentcentre@ul.ie
Student Communities	Website here	studentcentre@ul.ie
Student Support services	<p>Website here</p> <p>The Student support services will try help you to resolve you problem, or connect you with the right person to talk to. Students can find support for accommodation, accessing mental health support services, managing financial issues, resolving exam, lecture, or assessment issues, and complaints, academic affairs and welfare.</p>	<p>Website here - find the correct section you are looking to seek support on via the website for further information!</p>
Student Health Centre	Website here	
UL Counselling and Well-Being	<p>Website here</p> <p>All information on how to avail of the UL Counselling service can be found above, along with contact details to other important services.</p>	counselling@ul.ie
UL Global Office	<u>WEBSITE HERE</u>	

Events & Activities

BUDDY PROGRAMME EVENTS

Each semester, UL Global organises a number of events for you and your buddies to attend. By signing up for the Buddy Programme, you have been added to our mailing list and will be notified of all events we have planned. You are not obliged to attend all of these events but you are required to notify your buddy of them, as the responsibility is on you to collect their tickets for such events, even if you do not plan to go. The full list of events will be emailed to the volunteer at the beginning of each semester.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Outside the Buddy Programme events, we encourage you to organise other ways in which you can meet and get to know your buddies. Here are a couple of ideas to get you started:

- **Have a game night:** Play a few rounds of cards, or play various board games
- **Take a walk:** Explore the UL campus together; there's plenty of trails to take!
- **Coffee/Tea break:** Meet for a cup of coffee/tea at one of UL's many café's/restaurants
- **Tuesday Market:** Grab a coffee or lunch together at the Tuesday market that comes to the UL Courtyard
- **Start a Book Club:** Pick a favourite book and then meet up to discuss the story and themes together
- **Join a club/society:** Go through the various clubs and societies that UL has to offer and encourage your buddy to join! Even bring them along to a society/club in which you are a member of
- **Go for lunch:** Grab a bite to eat together
- **Share your culture:** Share an element of your culture with your buddy. A fun idea is to get together for dinner and each person brings a dish which best represents their home country
- **Explore the city:** Show them what Limerick city has to offer!



Places to show your Buddy

AROUND CAMPUS

- Campus buildings; especially the ones where their classes will be held
- The UL Arena
- Glucksman Library
- Student Courtyard and what can be found there (Stables, Scholars, Student Life Centre, O'Mahoney's Book Shop etc.)
- Medical Centre
- Print Room
- Red Raisins
- Where to eat/grab a coffee on campus
- Stables bus stop
- Regional Writing Centre

OFF CAMPUS

- Banks/ATMs in the local area
- Grocery Stores (Aldi, Lidl, Supervalu etc.)
- Shopping Malls (Parkway, Crescent etc.)
- Restaurants in the area (Locke Burger, La cucina, Supermacs, McDonalds, Kilmurry Lodge Hotel etc.) (Introduce them also to Deliveroo/ Uber Eats/ Just Eat etc.)
- Medical Centres which are off campus e.g. doctor offices, dentists etc.
- Cafes
- Pharmacy's nearby



Be Mindful!

BE MINDFUL OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

One of the things many volunteers may have difficulty with is communicating with your buddy. Here are some tips on overcoming this barrier:

Speak Clearly & Slowly, not Loudly! Ask your partner if you are speaking too fast. Enunciate and speak clearly, but there is no need to raise your voice.

Be Aware of Slang and Idioms: If you use a phrase that cannot be translated literally into your partner's language, write it down and ask your partner if they know it. Do not rely too heavily on slang or colloquialisms.

Show Interest: Express interest when talking with your buddy to show that you are actively listening. Include other buddies in the conversation by asking, "What do you think?"

Be Culturally Sensitive: If you do not know if your question is appropriate, you may say, "Is it okay if I ask...?" You may find that your buddy has different expectations for what topics are considered appropriate.

Don't Overcorrect: Overcorrecting can hinder the development of fluency, so only correct errors that block communication.

Don't Interrupt! Don't finish your partner's sentences. Let them learn and grow by practicing.

Be Patient: Expect delayed reactions; it may take time for your partner to think of the appropriate words. Avoid filling silence with chatter which may distract your partner.

Try New Things: Introduce them to the Irish culture, but also be open to getting to know more about your buddy's culture!

CULTURE SHOCK

It's possible that your buddy may experience culture shock when first moving to Ireland. Culture shock refers to the feeling of stress and anxiety. Other symptoms include:

- *withdrawal from people who are different from you*
- *extreme homesickness*
- *overeating or loss of appetite*
- *depression*
- *a need for excessive sleep*
- *headaches*
- *upset stomach*
- *loss of ability to work or study*
- *feeling sick much of the time*

If you think your buddy is struggling, then please bring this to the attention of the Buddy Programme administrator by emailing buddyprogramme@ul.ie

PVA Award & Logging Hours

THE PVA

The PVA is a unique higher education student volunteer award, which is included on the UL student transcript. You will need to have both your hours logged and PVA reflective portfolio submitted by the deadline (often in late Spring) if you wish to be eligible for the bronze, silver or gold President Volunteer Award. More information on all of this can be found on the PVA website [here](#)

LOGGING YOUR HOURS

The time you spend on various Buddy Programme activities can go towards the President's Volunteer Award. In order to log your hours, you first need to set up an account on www.studentvolunteer.ie if you do not already have one. From there, find the '[UL Global International Buddy Programme Autumn 2024](#)' volunteering opportunity, and apply to be a participant (you do not need to fill out the application in full, but simply state that you have already been accepted to the programme) and the Buddy Programme Administrator will then approve your application. From that point on, all you need to do is log the time you spend with your buddies (including your time spent emailing them, as well as the events you participate in) directly under the opportunity.

Important to note:

Some of you may experience the PVA department rejecting your hours; if this happens, this is because you have logged your hours under the "My Other Volunteering" section. This section is only for opportunities that are not advertised on the StudentVolunteer website. You will need to apply to the Buddy Programme opportunity and directly log your hours there.

If you have any questions/ run into any difficulties, please get in contact with the buddy programme or get in touch with pva@ul.ie



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PRESIDENT'S VOLUNTEER AWARD

Contacting Us

Welcome to the Buddy Programme Team!! Thank you again for taking time out to volunteer with us.

If you have any questions at any stage throughout the semester, please contact us by emailing buddyprogramme@ul.ie.



Email: buddyprogramme@ul.ie Website: www.ul.ie/international



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