British Science Association Volunteer Policy

A British Science Association volunteer is someone who gives their time freely to help the British Science Association achieve its aims and objectives.

1. Introduction

The British Science Association (BSA) is a charity whose vision is of a world where science is a fundamental part of our society and culture. We want to support, grow and diversify the community of people who are interested in and involved in science, technology, engineering and maths; and who contribute to its impact on UK culture, our society and the economy.

In line with this mission, the BSA seeks to involve volunteers because we believe that they are the best people to connect locally, and we wish to give them the opportunity to share their enthusiasm for science. Our volunteers are highly valued, and we seek to offer a rewarding volunteering experience.

Our volunteer policy is underpinned by the following principles. The BSA will:

- ensure that volunteers are appropriately integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to our aims
- not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff
- expect all staff to work positively with volunteers
- recognise that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs.

2. Practice Guidelines

2.1. Recruitment and equal opportunities

The BSA recognises that managing diversity means valuing people as individuals. In relation to volunteers, it is about ensuring that all volunteers have the opportunity to maximise their potential and enhance their self-development and their contribution to the BSA.

The BSA operates an equal opportunities policy for both staff and volunteers. We recruit volunteers based on their skills and experience and will not discriminate on other grounds, including age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

In most circumstances, people interested in volunteering approach the BSA expressing their interest. Potential volunteers will be provided with more information about the BSA, our aims and our volunteer opportunities. Those interested in volunteering with a branch will be directed to fill out a branch contact form, which will be sent to a representative of the branch who will be in contact with available opportunities.
Occasionally active recruitment for specific volunteer roles is required. Roles will be advertised on relevant mailing lists, at local volunteer centres, on the BSA website and via other appropriate networks.

As with all volunteering organisations in the UK, we can only involve foreign volunteers who have a visa which allows volunteering.

2.2. Expenses

All volunteers will be reimbursed for travel expenses and other expenses associated with their volunteering role. Expenses should be agreed upon with the appropriate staff contact before being incurred, and when possible volunteers are encouraged to have invoices sent to Head Office so that they are not out-of-pocket. Details of what can be claimed and the limits of reimbursement are outlined on the Expenses Claim Form, which will be provided when applicable.

2.3. Induction and training

All volunteers will receive introductory information into the BSA and information about the role they’re interested in. Guidance and support from BSA Head Office will be provided as necessary to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles. Where appropriate, volunteers may receive additional training. Many of our roles involve peer support provided through a committee structure.

2.4. Grievance policy

All volunteers are welcome to feed back on progress and discuss future development and any areas of concern.

The BSA recognises that from time to time volunteers may have a grievance relating to their position. As such, the BSA seeks to encourage communication between all volunteers and their staff contact to ensure that any problems that arise during the course of volunteering may be aired and, where possible, resolved quickly and to the satisfaction of all concerned. Our grievance procedure has been developed to facilitate this and should be followed in all grievance cases, except those which constitute an appeal against a disciplinary decision; in these cases matters should be taken up in accordance with the dispute resolution procedure (see section 3.4). The BSA’s Grievance Procedure is available here (for the purposes of volunteers, “employee” should be read as “volunteer”, and “line manager” should be read as “staff contact”).

2.5. Whistleblowing

It is important to the BSA that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by staff, volunteers or others working on behalf of the BSA is reported and properly dealt with. The BSA therefore requires all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others involved with the BSA or the way in which the BSA is run. The BSA’s Whistleblowing Policy is available here (for the purposes of volunteers, “worker” should be read as “volunteer”, and “line manager” should be read as “staff contact”).

2.6. Data protection

All volunteers are expected to comply with the BSA’s Data Protection policies. The BSA takes personal data very seriously and expects all volunteers to handle any personal data they may encounter or have access to with appropriate caution and care. Guidance on how to handle personal data can be found here. It includes important information on how to obtain consent before collecting personal data, how to securely store data and what to do in the event of a data breach. If you’re aware of a data breach (loss or theft of any personal data), you must let the BSA know as soon as possible, at least within 48 hours. The BSA’s Data Protection
policy in full can be found here. If you have any questions about data you handle or the data the BSA holds on you, you should contact regions@britishscienceassociation.org.

2.7. Insurance

BSA volunteers and any other private individuals who are helping at an event on a voluntary basis, on the BSA's behalf, are covered by the BSA's public liability insurance.

Individuals who are with, or volunteering on behalf of, a third-party organisation (charity, public or private sector) must be covered by their organisation's Public and Employer’s liability insurance.

If you use your personal car whilst volunteering, please check you are covered for it on your insurance. Most insurers will cover volunteering activity for free; however, if there is a claim during volunteering time which has not been cleared by your insurer you could be deemed uninsured.

2.8. Health and safety

Volunteers are reminded that they have a duty to take reasonable care for their health and safety and that of their fellow volunteers whilst volunteering. We ask you to cooperate in carrying out any duty or requirement relating to health and safety matters that is advised by the BSA. The BSA's Health and Safety Policy is available here.

2.9. Copyright

Volunteers by law own the copyright to materials they produce. However, if the materials are produced as part of their role at the BSA, we assume the volunteer is happy for us to use the material as we see fit. If a volunteer is commissioned to produce materials, copyright should be outlined in the contract for service.

2.10. Reward and recognition

The BSA values the contribution its volunteers make to the aims of the organisation. We will strive to reward and personally recognise outstanding contributions via award schemes and activities that celebrate volunteers’ achievements.

3. Volunteer Conduct

3.1. Attendance and timekeeping

This is applicable to volunteers working directly with a member of BSA staff, either at head office or at a BSA event, such as the British Science Festival. We hope volunteers will alert their staff contact in advance should they need to be absent from or late to their placement for any reason. The BSA recognises that there may be times when this is not possible, and in these instances it would be helpful for the volunteer to contact their staff contact at the earliest opportunity.

3.2. Personal appearance

Whilst representing the BSA, volunteers’ dress should be appropriate. The BSA wishes to convey an impression of efficiency and organisation. Therefore, without wishing to impose unreasonable obligations, volunteers are requested to look smart in appearance. Some roles will include provision of a branded t-shirt or name badge.
3.3. Confidentiality

Volunteering is a partnership of trust between the volunteer and volunteer-involving organisation. As such, we trust our volunteers to keep confidential any information or materials relating to the affairs of the BSA which are by nature confidential, both during and after volunteering. This does not include anything which is published by the BSA or which comes into the public domain by another means. A known breach of confidentiality will initiate our dispute resolution procedure (see below).

3.4. Dispute resolution

If a member of BSA staff is concerned about the conduct of a volunteer, an informal discussion will be held with the volunteer, in confidence, to explain the problem and to attempt to identify practical solutions and a timescale for implementing these solutions.

A formal warning will be issued in the case of a first incident of misconduct (but not gross misconduct), or if the volunteer has already received an informal warning. Cases of misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- unsatisfactory performance of a volunteering activity
- acts of discrimination against any member of the public or of the BSA on the grounds of age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- breach of confidentiality
- breach of the BSA’s regulations or rules.

If there has been no improvement after the formal warning, or if the individual has committed gross misconduct, the BSA may terminate the voluntary placement with immediate effect. A period of suspension from voluntary duties may be necessary if a case needs further investigation. Cases of gross misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- theft, fraud and deliberate falsification of records
- physical violence
- bullying or harassment
- being under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst volunteering for the BSA
- serious negligence which causes or might cause unacceptable loss, damage or injury actions or behaviour that may damage the reputation of the BSA.

Please note: election to the General Committee or Council, whilst still a voluntary position, is a stand-alone position, even when election was derived as being a representative of a branch, section or other volunteer programme. Should a volunteer be asked to leave his or her volunteer position, any additional elected voluntary role on General Committee or Council will be independently reviewed by Council.

3.5. Safeguarding children

The BSA is committed to safeguarding children from harm. The BSA’s staff, Trustees and volunteers uphold the position that the welfare of the child is paramount and that all children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. Any concerns and allegations of abuse will be responded to swiftly and with sensitivity (this may require a referral to children’s services or in an emergency, the police).

We are committed to the safe recruitment, selection and vetting of paid and volunteer staff. Each new role created will be reviewed against Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) guidance to ascertain whether the role delivers regulated activities. Any staff member or volunteer in a role delivering regulated activities to
young people will undergo an enhanced DBS check. All disclosures will be reported to the Director of Strategy & Operations. The BSA will undertake regular DBS checks for roles which deliver regulated activities. This will usually be every three years. All adult volunteers who work regularly or closely with children or young people are asked to register with the STEM Ambassador scheme. The scheme includes a DBS check where applicable and training.

Children’s and young people’s contact details, audio recordings and images will be treated with respect. They will be used only by staff and volunteers who have a legitimate need to do so. The BSA requires that staff and volunteers actively seek agreement to use children’s photos, videos or audio recordings from parents/guardians or those acting on their behalf. The BSA will take reasonable steps to ensure that media from partner organisations has the appropriate permissions. Children or young people and their parents can ask for data which identifies them/their children to be deleted at any time.

Any concerns over child protection should be reported without delay either to the Chief Executive or the Director of Strategy & Operations. If neither is appropriate or available, the concern should be reported to the Chair. Where appropriate an investigation will be undertaken under the BSA’s Whistleblowing procedure. Written, dated notes should be kept of any incident(s). Guidance on what may be considered as child abuse is available from the NSPCC website: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/studentambassadors/assets/documents/NSPCCDefinitionsandsignsofchildabuse.pdf

3.6. Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest is any situation in which a volunteer’s personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen to, prevent the volunteer from making a decision only in the best interests of the BSA. Volunteers are expected to act at all times in the best interest of the BSA and not for personal or third-party gain. Volunteers will also not accept gifts or any other item of value from any person or entity as a direct or indirect inducement to provide special treatment to such donor with respect to matters pertaining to the BSA without fully disclosing such items to the BSA in advance. When encountering potential conflict of interest, volunteers should identify the conflict and report it to the regions@britishscienceassociation.org.

Please tick the box below to confirm that you have read, understood and agree to the volunteer policy.

☐ I have read, understood and agree to the British Science Association volunteer policy.

First name__________________________________________________________

Last name__________________________________________________________

Email address_____________________________________________________

☐ I am a UK/EU/EEZ citizen

☐ I am a foreign national with eligibility to volunteer in the UK