



**University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario Position
Description**

PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

EFFECTIVE: March 6, 2018

AUTHORITY: Executive Director, Peer Support Centre **RATIFIED BY:** Executive Council

PAGE | 1 of 4

1.00 POSITION TITLE: PEER SUPPORT CENTRE VOLUNTEER

2.00 POSITION OVERVIEW:

- (1) Provide students with non-professional support that is rooted in the shared experience as Western University undergraduate students. The Volunteer will be accessible, welcoming, accommodating to their peers, and provide a safer space.

3.00 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- (1) *Listen:* the PSC is a space in which students can meet and chat with a Peer Support Volunteer. Such conversation may include sharing personal experiences, asking questions about resources on campus, voicing concerns about their personal circumstances, success stories or any other matter of the student's concern.
 - i. The Peer Support Volunteer will employ appropriate listening and communication skills to provide support to students without judgement.
- (2) *Affirm:* the PSC is a space in which student visitors can have their experiences, questions, concerns, and/or stories validated by a peer.
 - i. The Peer Support Volunteer will affirm and validate the student visitor's liberty to experience emotions fluidly and will work to ensure that the student visitor knows that every emotional experience is valid.
- (3) *Refer:* the PSC will be a space in which Peer Support Volunteers have the knowledge and skill set to explore referral options with students, including professional services on campus.
 - i. After training, the peer volunteer will have extensive knowledge of the myriad services available to students at Western University, and will be able to facilitate



University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario Position Description

PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 2 of 6

discussion about campus resources that may best fit their needs. Peer Support Volunteers are required to keep up to date on campus resource knowledge throughout the duration of their role and consult with a supervisor regarding referrals when appropriate.

- (4) Abide by the Peer Support Centre Principles of Practice and Guidelines of Ethical Practice with respect to ethical issues, confidentiality and appropriate boundaries.
- (5) Work within the Peer Support Centre operating hours. Volunteers are required to provide a minimum of 6 hours of weekly availability (during operating hours) during which their shift may be scheduled.
 - i. All volunteers are required to send their availability and class schedule to the Associate, Peer Support Centre no later than August 1st. Shift schedules and supervision schedules will consider volunteer class schedules but cannot accommodate all extra-curricular or work schedules.
 - ii. All volunteers are required to give a minimum of 48 notice if you cannot attend your shift or supervision. In the case of emergency or sudden illness, a medical note may be required.
- (6) Work in conjunction with USC support services on campus to provide the campus greater outreach.
- (7) Attend all mandatory training and supervision sessions. This is non-negotiable.
- (8) Adhere to USC bylaws, policies, and procedures as well as the Western University Student Code of Conduct.

4.00 QUALIFICATIONS:

4.01 Qualified candidates for this position must be a current undergraduate student of Western University and will have aptitudes in the following areas:

- (1) Interpersonal Communication: Given the need to communicate with others the primary aspect of the role, a Peer Support Centre Volunteer is personable, friendly, and requires strong interpersonal communication skills. They must also be able to provide constructive feedback through written and oral mediums.
- (2) Respect: A volunteer must demonstrate respect for others, foster inclusivity and contribute to an inclusive, safe environment that respects diversity in all its forms.



University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario Position Description

PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 3 of 6

- (3) High degree of Empathy: Given the sensitive nature of the role and the intimate nature of the personal disclosures that may occur a Peer Support Centre Volunteer must be able to relate emotionally to the lived experiences of others.
- (4) Adaptability and Critical Thinking: a Peer Support Centre Volunteer should be able to think quickly on their feet and adapt recommendations based on information received during meetings with Centre visitors.
- (5) Sensitivity: a Peer Support Centre Volunteer requires the utmost attention to confidentiality and ethical practice.
- (6) Positivity: a Peer Support Centre Volunteer requires unmitigated positivity in order to effectively listen, affirm, and refer.
- (7) Creativity: A Peer Support Volunteer required creativity in exploring options with their peers and conveying hope even when a solution is not clear and concrete.
- (8) Value Self-Determination: A Peer Support Volunteer fosters, value, and respects self-determination in others and refrains from giving advice to others.

5.00 TIME COMMITMENT:

5.01 Expected time commitment for the position will vary over the term:

- (1) Average time commitment: 3-6 hours per week
- (2) Attending group supervision is a mandatory aspect of the program. This amounts to a total minimum of 4-5 hours of group supervision per academic term. Additional hours of individual supervision may be required 'as needed' as determined by the PSC supervisor.
- (3) **Mandatory time commitment for training sessions:**
 - i. 4-Day Training Week: August 28th- August 31st 2018:
(approx. 28 hours)
 - ii. September: SafeTalk (4 hours)
 - iii. September of August: Anti- Oppression Training (4 hours)
 - iv. Additional training refreshers or supervision (2-12 hours)



University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario Position Description

PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 4 of 6

- (4) The Peer Support Centre will open for regular operations during **O-Week (September 4th – September 7th)**.

6.00 TRAINING/SUPPORT:

6.01 Peer Support Centre Volunteer training will include but is not limited to:

- (1) SafeTalk training
- (2) Western University Anti-Oppression Training
- (3) The Peer Support Centre Training Week
 - i. The philosophy and values of peer support
 - ii. The role of the Peer Support Volunteer
 - iii. Ethics, confidentiality and appropriate boundary setting in peer support
 - iv. Cultural Competency
 - v. Listening skills, communication skills, roadblocks to communication and understanding empathy
 - vi. Multi-dimensional model of wellness
 - vii. Self-care and self-awareness -- recognizing the difficult nature of being a peer support volunteer and encouraging self-care
 - viii. Experiential learning including role-playing workshops – including multiple opportunities to apply knowledge gained in training to practical scenarios
 - ix. Responding to students in distress
 - x. Campus resource orientation
- (4) Operational training (e-systems, shift schedule, centre opening and closing)



University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario Position Description

PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 5 of 6

7.00 LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- (1) Volunteers will learn appropriate means of operating in a sensitive, potentially high-intensity setting.
- (2) Volunteers will become familiar with the nuances of human interaction, and experience working directly with students seeking assistance, all within a safer and inclusive environment.
- (3) Upon program completion, a volunteer will acquire listening and communication skills, validate the experiences of visitors, and will have resource knowledge to help refer students to campus or community resources.
- (4) The volunteer will also learn about ethics and boundaries in their role as well as maintaining confidentiality and understanding the limits of confidentiality.

8.00 COMMUNITY IMPACT:

- (1) If successful, the Peer Support Centre Volunteer will have a direct and tangible impact on community members, thus impacting the community as a whole.
- (2) Through supporting students in their experiences and learning about the different aspects and elements of wellness, volunteers will play a meaningful and substantive role in fostering a culture that aspires to support peers.
- (3) The Volunteer will work to provide an opportunity to positively affect the Western University student community.

9.00 EVALUATION:

- (1) Volunteer performance will be monitored by the Peer Support Centre Associate as well as by the Student Experience Trainers/Supervisors. This monitoring may include private one-on-one interviews, group interviews, emails, the logging of hours, and the recording of completed tasks.
 - i. The Peer Support Centre Volunteer will participate actively with their supervisors in conducting formative performance assessments.



University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario Position Description

PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 6 of 6

- ii. Formative Assessment is an ongoing process of dialogue and informal feedback in which Supervisors and volunteers determine their level of satisfaction in the position and identify further learning needs for successful job completion.
- iii. This review process may include private one-on-one interviews with supervisors, group interviews, and surveys, the feedback from which will be taken into consideration when strategically planning the program's future.

10.00 SUPERVISION:

- (1) Primary supervision and managerial support: Associate, Peer Support Centre.
 - i. Executive oversight: Student Programs Officer.
- (2) Secondary support with respect to supervision of peer support practice and training: Elyse Dodd of The Student Development Centre, Student Experience, at Western University. Secondary support may come for other mental health professionals from this area as well.
- (3) Tertiary support: Volunteer Resources Manager and Coordinator.