



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

**PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER**

**EFFECTIVE:** March 19, 2015

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**AUTHORITY:** Executive Director, PSC      **RATIFIED BY:** Executive Council

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**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 safe space.

**3.00 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- (1) *Listen:* the PSC is a space in which students can meet with a peer support volunteer and share their experiences regardless if they are sharing personal experiences, questions about resources on campus, concerns about their circumstances, success stories or any other matter of the student's concern.

- i. The peer 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 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.

- Refer:* the PSC will be a space in which peer volunteers have the knowledge and skill set to, if necessary, suggest a professional service on campus.

- ii. After training, the peer volunteer will have extensive knowledge of the myriad services available to students at Western University, and will be able to refer student visitors to resources on campus that best fit their needs. Peer Support Volunteers are expected to keep up to date on campus resource knowledge throughout the duration of their role and consult with a supervisor regarding referrals when appropriate.



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

### PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 2 of 5

- (3) Work within the Peer Support Centre during the hours designated by the Peer Support Centre Supervisor at the start of each semester.
  - i. All volunteers are required to send their class schedule to the Peer Support Centre Coordinator/supervisor no later than August 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - ii. Give 48 notice if you cannot attend your shift. In the case of emergency or sudden illness please notify the Peer Support Centre Supervisor as soon as possible.
- (4) Work in conjunction with USC support services on campus to provide the campus greater outreach.
- (5) Attend all mandatory training and supervision sessions. This is non-negotiable.
- (6) Adhere to USC bylaws, policies, and procedures.

#### **4.00 QUALIFICATIONS:**

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

- (1) **Interpersonal Communication:** Given the need to work concurrently with a number of project stakeholders, a Peer Support Centre Volunteer requires strong interpersonal communication skills. They must also be able to provide constructive feedback through written and oral mediums.
- (2) **Inclusivity:** A volunteer must value inclusivity and foster an inclusive, safe environment that respects diversity in all its forms.
- (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:** 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 ability to apply the utmost attention to confidentiality.



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

### PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 3 of 5

- (6) Positivity: a Peer Support Centre volunteer requires unmitigated positivity in order to effectively listen, affirm, and refer.
- (7) Creativity: A volunteer should always offer an avenue to a potential solution, never losing hope that there is opportunity for situational improvement.

#### **5.00 TIME COMMITMENT:**

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

- (1) Average time commitment: 2-5 hours per week, plus a minimum of 1 hour of supervision per 'supervision block'. This amounts to a total minimum of 3 hours of supervision per academic term.
- (2) Mandatory time commitment for training sessions:
  - i. August 29<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>: Approximately 28 hours in total
  - ii. September: SafeTalk (4 hours)
  - iii. Periodic training "refreshers," once per term (2 hours)
- (3) The Peer Support Centre will open for regular operations on Thursday September 7<sup>th</sup> 2017.

#### **6.00 TRAINING/SUPPORT:**

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

- (1) SafeTalk training (or equivalent)
- (2) The philosophy and values of peer support
- (3) The role of the Peer Support Volunteer



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

### PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 4 of 5

- i. Ethics, confidentiality and appropriate boundary setting in peer support understanding privilege when in a supportive role.

(4) Operational training (e-systems, shift schedule, centre opening and closing)

(5) Self-care and self-awareness -- recognizing the difficult nature of being a peer support volunteer and encouraging self-care

(6) Listening skills, communication skills and understanding empathy

- i. Scenario and role-playing workshops -- will yield opportunities to apply knowledge gained in training to practical scenarios

Responding to psychological distress

Campus resource training

#### **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 of the peer 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.



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

### PEER SUPPORT CENTER VOLUNTEER

PAGE | 5 of 5

- (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 Supervisor as well as by the training supervisor. 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.
  - 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: Peer Support Centre Supervisor.
  - i. Executive oversight: Student Programs Officer.
- (2) Secondary support and supervision in the provision of peer support services: Elyse Dodd, Student Development Centre Registered Psychotherapist.
- (3) Tertiary support: Volunteer Resources Manager and Coordinator.