MD Volunteer Research Experience

Terms of Reference

For any questions and/or concerns please email deans.projects@usask.ca.

Primary Purpose
The MD Volunteer Research Experience, facilitated by the Office of the Vice Dean of Research (OVDR), is a year-round ongoing call created in response to feedback from medical students that they would like to increase research opportunities throughout the year. It is our hope that by helping to facilitate connections, we will encourage more students to participate in research projects. This is very important because of the vital role research plays in today’s health care.

Payment
While the OVDR is very supportive of facilitating research connections between College of Medicine faculty and MD students, we are unable to provide any payment to individuals wishing to participate in this program. All research would be done on a volunteer basis. However, if the faculty member wishes to pay the student, that is at their discretion. In such an event, the OVDR will facilitate this process.

Volunteering at the University Of Saskatchewan
Because there are many factors involved with volunteering, we will be utilizing the Memorandum of Understanding template below to ensure that expectations are clearly outlined for both student volunteers and supervisors. By doing this we can establish the scope of activity, duration, and supervisor as a matter of due diligence. E.g., reduce confusion, clarify duties, ensure volunteer understands reporting structure in case of problems, enable adequate supervision, etc.

In situations involving animals, laboratories, travel, field work, physical activities (for instance geological or archaeological digs), etc. the University is assuming significant risks. Many activities present a very real risk of injury and the decision to allow inexperienced persons to attend should not be taken without serious consideration. In these cases, approval from the Vice Dean Research is required. Please consider the following;

1. Is the activity primarily for the benefit of the individual, or does the U of S receive some benefit too? In some situations, the U of S involvement is strictly as a good ‘corporate citizen”. It would appear reasonable to request a waiver/release to protect the University from liability claims (we can supply if needed).
2. What experience does the volunteer have in the particular environment? What level of risk could the volunteer be exposed to? It is imperative that we do not expose the volunteer to any dangerous situations or exposures.
3. Any precautions, safety orientations, safety equipment and clothing, and supervision afforded to employees and registered students must be maintained with regards to a volunteer.
4. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that the volunteer is familiar with the premises, activities and processes. The level of supervision must be sufficient to ensure that the volunteer is not exposed to any situation whatsoever that they are not familiar with or that they cannot reasonably handle.

Please complete the attached Memorandum of Understanding form, describing fully the volunteer tasks and parameters. Please forward this to deans.projects@usask.ca for final approval.

Under no circumstance should volunteers be unsupervised, given keys to any U of S facility or drive on behalf of the University.

Research Project Availability
The OVDR will work to have the list of available projects updated regularly so that students will have an up-to-date list of volunteer research opportunities in the College of Medicine year-round. However, this will be dependent on whether or not College of Medicine faculty have any volunteer research opportunities in their lab.

Eligibility
The list will be available for all MD students to view. Projects posted on the list will be by College of Medicine faculty only. If your research interests lie outside of what the College of Medicine faculty have to offer, students are always welcome to contact faculty from other colleges. In order for faculty members to post projects on the list, they must have an appointment at the College of Medicine that lasts at least the duration of the proposed project.

Student/Supervisor responsibilities
The OVDR will be responsible for posting the list and keeping it as up-to-date as possible. The proposed supervisor’s contact information will be available and it is the responsibility of the student to contact the supervisor if they are interested in volunteering with them.

It is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that the student is added to all of the necessary ethics approvals. It is also the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that the student has all the safety training required to work on the proposed project. For more information on ethics approvals please see the OVDR funding initiatives website: (https://medicine.usask.ca/research/internal-funding-initiatives.php#UNDERGRADUATE).
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

To: Student Name

Date:

Re: Volunteer Activities

The following letter outlines the nature and conditions associated with your volunteer activities with the University of Saskatchewan, hereinafter referred to as “the University”. [Note: Contact the faculty member/research scientist in charge of the lab to ensure that appropriate documents are in place before entering into any volunteer arrangement and commencing activities. If the individual is a non-Canadian, the Human Resources Division will need to be consulted regarding immigration issues before the arrangement is finalized. All volunteer arrangements must be reported to the Administrative Assistant.]

Nature of Activities
The project will focus primarily on [insert description of activities].

In order to provide a meaningful experience and exchange of services, the activities associated with the project will be carried out at the following agreed to times/days: [list, including start and end dates and times of work]. Your services are voluntary and thus either party can end this arrangement at any time. However, if you are unable to continue to participate, as much notice as possible is appreciated.

There is no remuneration associated with the project and you are not an employee or agent of the University.

As volunteer participation in research activities during the academic year may impact your academic progress, you are required to receive confirmation that you are a student in good academic standing in the Undergraduate MD Program.

Worker’s Compensation and Disability Benefits
Volunteers do not qualify for Worker’s Compensation or any other University disability benefit in the event of injury sustained in the course of, or as a result of, their volunteer activity. As such, you are responsible to ensure that you have adequate personal injury, disability or life insurance coverage to meet your needs for the period that you will be assisting as a volunteer.

___________________________________________
Supervisor

___________________________________________
Department Head

___________________________________________
Manager, Undergraduate MD Program

I understand and accept the conditions and arrangements described above.

Date: ____________________ Signature of Volunteer: ____________________________

Print Name of Volunteer: ____________________________

Distribution: Original to Administrative Assistant, copies to supervisor/principal investigator and volunteer