

# Volunteering policies

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This document describes the policies to be followed in volunteer activities within Aalto University Student Union (hereinafter referred to as AYY). The policies outline the volunteer 'lifecycle' from recruitment to role completion and evaluation, and define the relationship between the recruiter, the recruited individual, and AYY's permanent organisation, as well as the support provided for volunteer activities.

This document may be updated by decision of the AYY Board when necessary.

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## Introduction

Volunteers are the heart of the Student Union. The volunteering policies define how AYY prepares for and coordinates volunteer activities. In addition, the policies explain how AYY ensures orientation, training, and communication of the student union's practices and processes. The purpose of this document is to ensure that volunteers feel valued as members of the community, and that volunteer teams are supported in their daily activities in accordance with the volunteering policies. The document serves as a guideline for the Board, employees, and volunteers. Each party may refer to this document if they feel the community is not acting in accordance with these policies.

Volunteers participate in the organisation's activities voluntarily because they feel involved. Shared values and appreciation, strong involvement of individual members in decision-making, and a focus on guiding and leading activities rather than directing them from above are key factors in creating and maintaining the motivation of volunteers. In managing various volunteer organisations, equal emphasis is placed on leadership and guidance, as well as on the distinction between managing volunteer activities (issues) and managing volunteers (people).

AYY's work community consists of people who are committed to the organisation either full-time or part-time, whose duty to the organisation is based on an employment contract or a position of trust. A good work community respects all its members as individuals, trusts its members, and is both productive and pleasant.

AYY's operations should continue to be developed so that everyone has the opportunity to influence the content and goals of their own work, and so that volunteers at AYY are seen as participants in the work of the permanent organisation rather than as separate actors doing their own "volunteer stuff".

The starting point for volunteering is that it should be fun for volunteers. This does not mean that everything volunteers do will necessarily be fun. Sometimes boring or unpleasant duties are unfortunately part of the role, but they should be fewer than the fun activities. Efforts should be made to remove unpleasant tasks from volunteers' responsibilities.

## Documents guiding volunteering

AYY's volunteer activities are governed by legislation, AYY's regulations, and guidelines. The following documents specifically concern volunteer activities within AYY.

### Finnish legislation:

- Universities Act
- Act on Equality between Women and Men
- Non-Discrimination Act
- Occupational Safety and Health Act – as prescribed by section 55

### Documents approved by the Representative Council

- AYY's constitution

- The Board's rules of procedure
- Administrative and economic regulation
- Language policy
- Strategy
- Teekkari assembly regulation
- Plan of action

### **Documents approved by the Board**

- Safer space policy
- Strategic events
- Ecological sustainability policy
- Volunteering policies (this document)

Every AYY volunteer is expected to comply with the decisions and bylaws that guide operations. Ultimately, the employee and board member responsible for volunteers ensure that these guidelines are followed. The documents are publicly available online, and the easiest way to find them is to enter the name of the document into a search engine. If it is AYY's document, type "AYY [name of the document]" in the search field.

## **AYY's organisation**

Aalto University Student Union is a service and advocacy organisation, and all its activities are aimed at providing the best student life in the world for its members.

### **Representative Council**

The Representative Council holds the highest authority within the student union. The Representative Council is elected for a two-year term, and all AYY members are eligible to vote and to stand as candidates in the Representative Council election held every other year. The Representative Council comprises 45 representatives, all of whom must be members of AYY.

Among other responsibilities, the Representative Council decides on AYY's budget, financial statements, loans, construction projects, and regulations. The Representative Council also appoints the Student Union Board, the Chair of the Board, the Chairs of the Representative Council, the Executive Director, and the CFO. Many of the decisions and policies prepared by the Representative Council also guide volunteer activities.

### **Board**

The Student Union Board consists of a minimum of six (6) and a maximum of ten (10) members, including the Chair. The Representative Council appoints the former of the Board, who interviews the board member candidates and submits a proposal to the Representative Council on the board members.

The Board consists of AYY members who serve in AYY's position of trust. Board members receive a fee and practically have a full-time job at AYY. However, board members are not in an employment

relationship and have no specific working hours. Volunteers should take this into account when working with board members.

Each volunteer team is assigned a board member responsible for communication between the volunteer team and the Board. In accordance with the Board's rules of procedure, each volunteer team submits a memo or the minutes of the meeting to inform the Board. The appointed board member is responsible for submitting the minutes and memos to the Board.

### **Volunteer field**

The AYY Board establishes all volunteer teams and appoints their chair, vice chair if needed, members, as well as the board member and employee in charge.

### **Sections**

Sections operate under the Board and are guided by the Board's policies. Sections are the highest bodies in the volunteer field. They serve as support groups for their members and may lead their own committees. Section members are recruited volunteers appointed by the AYY Board, and applications for section members are open.

### **Committees**

Committees may operate under the Board or under sections. If a committee operates under a section, its chair(s) are members of that section. A committee operating under a section is accountable to both the section and the Board for its actions. An independent committee is accountable only to the Board. Committees may be either recruited or convening.

**Recruited committee** members are recruited volunteers appointed by the AYY Board, and applications for committee members are open.

**Convening committee** members are appointed from subject association representatives nominated by subject associations. The AYY Board appoints them based on the proposal of the board member responsible for volunteers. The Board may either approve or reject the proposal in whole or in part. An association may, through its own announcement, request that a committee member they have nominated be exempted from the committee's duties. After the announcement, the AYY Board will address the matter at its meeting.

A convening committee may either serve as a liaison committee or participate in the student union's operations. Members of convening committees are AYY's volunteers, but their rights and responsibilities differ from those of recruited volunteers.

### **Other working groups**

**The Board** may establish working groups to prepare issues or carry out other projects. A working group's term is defined at the time of appointment. Thus, the term may differ from a calendar year. Working groups are established as needed and do not function on an annual basis. The same practices that apply to other working groups also apply to volunteer teams. When appointing a working group, it is specified whether it operates at the section or committee level, which determines the working group's rights and responsibilities.

## Rights and responsibilities

In volunteering, it is important that both the permanent organisation and volunteers have clearly defined rights and responsibilities. Volunteers have rights and responsibilities for certain matters, just as AYY has the responsibility to provide certain support and the right to expect certain matters.

In other words, everyone has the *responsibility* to actively contribute certain matters and the passive *right* to expect certain matters to happen. At the beginning of each position, it is reviewed how the various rights and responsibilities are implemented in that role. Responsibilities do not mean that they must be carried out at the expense of one's own wellbeing. The most important starting point is that volunteers have fun and enjoy the volunteer work they are doing. If this is not the case, the recruiter has the responsibility to help resolve the situation.

	<b>RECRUITED PERSON/ VOLUNTEER</b>	<b>RECRUITER/ AYY</b>
<b>RIGHTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence the content of the position and participate in discussions related to the role within the guidelines</li> <li>• Receive adequate resources to carry out the position</li> <li>• Receive compensation for pre-agreed expenses related to the position</li> <li>• Receive sufficient orientation for the position</li> <li>• Not be subjected to unnecessary mental pressure</li> <li>• Report any grievances to the volunteer trustee</li> <li>• Develop the position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select, nominate, and if necessary, dismiss volunteers from their duties</li> <li>• Assign tasks and set goals within the framework of the position</li> <li>• Guide volunteer activities to achieve objectives</li> <li>• Benefit from volunteering</li> <li>• Develop the position</li> </ul>
<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have fun</li> <li>• Participate in training for the position</li> <li>• Carry out tasks agreed upon</li> <li>• Comply with AYY's policies</li> <li>• Commit to AYY's values and guidelines</li> <li>• Document the essential content of the position</li> <li>• Provide orientation for one's successor</li> <li>• Develop the position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support, as well as adequate training and guidance, to succeed in the position</li> <li>• Guide volunteer activities to achieve objectives</li> <li>• Hold position, development, and closing discussions</li> <li>• Evaluate the success of the position</li> <li>• Reward and give thanks to volunteers</li> <li>• Address any grievances</li> <li>• Provide adequate resources for fulfilling the position</li> <li>• Develop the position</li> </ul>

## Life cycle of volunteer groups and positions

### Needs assessment and establishment

A volunteer group or position may be established if there is a clear need in the operating environment or at AYY for work suitable for volunteers. A new volunteer position should not be created lightly: every volunteer is important and always requires some time from the permanent organisation. On the other hand, we should not hesitate to establish positions, as each additional member within AYY's active operations strengthens the members' voice in the activities.

Volunteer groups are always established by the Board. A new group may be established at the beginning of the year, based on the needs assessment of the previous year, or during the year. Existing sections and committee may propose the establishing of a new volunteer group, but the Board makes the final decision regarding its necessity. If a new volunteer group is to operate under a particular section, that section will be consulted before the decision.

### Termination of volunteer groups or positions

A volunteer group or position may be terminated by the Board on the initiative of a board member, employee, volunteer group, or the chair of a volunteer group. Termination usually takes place at the end of the year when new volunteer groups are being established. If it is decided not to continue a volunteer group for the following year, this must be mentioned separately in the Board's meeting minutes. Before making a termination decision, relevant parties are consulted, such as the volunteer group itself and section members if the group operates under a section.

### Recruitment and selection

At AYY, every volunteer must be selected through an open process in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Calls for applications must be published in the weekly newsletter and on the website. Open communication helps attract more and better applications and promotes diversity within the volunteer field.

In the recruitment of section chairs, applicants' names are made public.

### Recruited volunteers

The call for applications includes a description of the position, selection criteria, and matters considered beneficial. Applicants are selected for an interview based on their written applications, i.e. not all applicants are necessarily invited to an interview. The final proposal is prepared by the interviewer, i.e. the recruiter, the employee in charge, and the board member in charge, after which the selection proposal is submitted to the Board, which either approves or rejects it.

Requirements for all volunteer applicants:

- Willingness and enthusiasm to carry out the activities of the volunteer group or position
- Active and flexible attitude
- Enthusiasm for teamwork and a willingness to develop
- Availability of the time required for the position

- Commitment to AYY's volunteer policies

#### Advantages

- Previous experience in the area of responsibility for the applied position
- Realistic understanding of the position
- Ideas for development

The selection process takes into account the diversity of applicants and emphasises a diverse volunteer field. Applicants have the right to request and receive the grounds for the selection decision, whether or not they are selected.

In the chart below, chairs refer to the chair and vice chair of a volunteer group. If a volunteer group does not have a vice chair, chairs only refer to the chair.

RECRUITED PERSON	RECRUITER
Section chairs	Board member
Independent committee's chairs	Board member
Section member	Section chairs
Committee member	Committee chairs

The interviewer, employee in charge, or a board member in charge may, based on a needs assessment, propose changes to the composition or names of selected volunteer groups or positions during the recruitment process. Changes to composition must take into account the equal treatment of applicants. Based on the needs assessment, applicants may also be offered positions for which they did not apply. In such cases, it must be ensured that everyone whose work is affected by the change during the operational year is informed before the change is approved. Changes are approved when the Board appoints the volunteer groups.

#### Convening committees

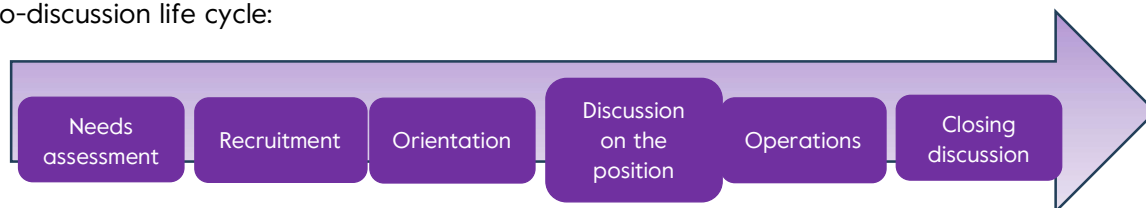
Members of convening committees are selected based on announcements from subject associations. Once new members have been chosen for an association, the subject association's representative fills out a form requesting the representatives for each committee. Committee composition is confirmed by the AYY Board based on a proposal from the chair of the committee, the employee in charge, or the board member in charge. The Board may either approve or reject the proposal in whole or in part. An association may, through its own announcement, request that a committee member they have nominated be exempted from the committee's duties. After such an announcement, the AYY Board will consider the matter at its meeting.

#### Life cycle of volunteer positions

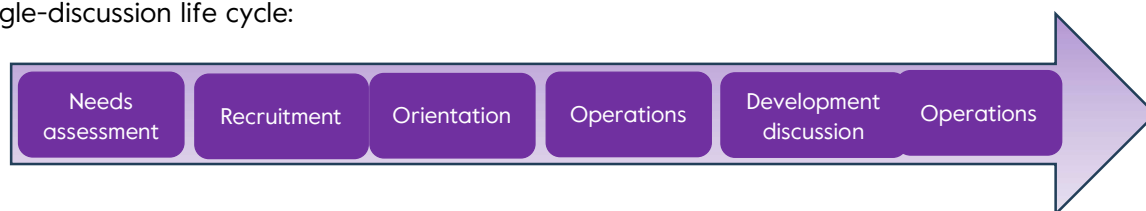
AYY's volunteers serve in positions with varying workloads and responsibilities. For this reason, the term of each volunteer is different. For many, activities follow specific phases, for example, if a volunteer organises major events (e.g. anniversary celebrations, Dipoli party). These guidelines are not set in stone but rather serve as a guideline to fit the needs of each position.

A model of either a single discussion or two discussions may be applied to volunteers. The chairs of the volunteer group, together with the recruiter, assess which model is most suitable for the volunteer group. The two-discussion model is better suited for positions with larger workloads and responsibilities. The single-discussion model is more suited for lighter positions, such as members of convening committees.

Two-discussion life cycle:



Single-discussion life cycle:



A development discussion may also be held in the two-discussion model in the middle of the term if considered necessary. A volunteer may request a discussion with their recruiter at any time. These requests should not be fully relied upon, as discussions held regularly at the recruiter's initiative allow issues to be addressed before they escalate. Often, volunteers only request a discussion once problems have reached an unbearable level.

### Orientation

Each volunteer must receive orientation for their position. The recruiter, together with the volunteer who held the position in the previous year and the employee in charge, are primarily responsible for arranging position-specific orientation. Simultaneous training needs (e.g., office practices or AYY's organisation) are considered for positions starting at the beginning of the year, and common training sessions are organised.

It is advisable to reserve plenty of time for orientation and to organise it face-to-face. Questions often arise both during and after orientation. Therefore, it is important to provide volunteers an easy way to discuss matters with previous operators. Many volunteer positions also include traditions or less formal orientation. These should be addressed separately from more factual orientations.

### Discussions

Position, development, and closing discussions are similar in format, but their content varies. The recruiter and the volunteer participate in the discussion. Others may also participate at the discretion. It is advisable to reserve about one hour for the discussion, unless scheduling requires it to be shorter. Typically, discussions last around half an hour, but they may take longer if the conversation develops further. Discussions are primarily held face-to-face, but they

can also be held informally, for example, during a walk, lunch, or having ice cream on a terrace. Creativity in implementation is allowed, as long as privacy is respected. Lunchtime, for example, is not ideal for discussing problems, and when on campus, acquaintances may easily interrupt. During the discussions, both parties provide feedback on each other's actions. The recruiter should ask how their own or the organisation's actions could be improved.

The purpose of the **position discussion** is to agree on common practices for the volunteer position and to review the wishes and expectations of both the recruiter and the volunteer. A good position discussion ensures that neither party is left with "unwritten expectations". Position discussions are held after orientation, once the volunteer has had some experience in the role.

**Development discussions** are held mid-term. They review how the first part of the position has been and identify areas for improvement for the remainder of the term. Development discussions are also an excellent opportunity to collect feedback for potential organisational changes in the coming year.

**The closing discussion** is held at the end of the position. Successes and challenges from the year are reviewed during the discussion. Development ideas may be gathered from the closing discussion for the following year, although proposals for organisational changes should be collected earlier. A useful question for a closing discussion is: 'What would you have done differently?' It is advisable to record the answers and share them with the successor during orientation, and, if necessary, include them in the volunteer's testament.

### **End of the term**

A volunteer's term ends according to the decision made at the time of appointment. After the actual term concludes, sufficient time must be allowed for the successor's orientation, finalising the volunteer's testament, and archiving. This ensures that the successor can continue the work on a solid foundation.

In some cases, however, the term may be terminated prematurely. A volunteer may, if they wish, suspend their term after discussing the matter with the recruiter or the employee in charge, after which the Board may dismiss the volunteer by decision of a board meeting.

The AYY Board may also dismiss a volunteer on the initiative of a board member, employee, chairperson, or member of a volunteer group. AYY may terminate a volunteer's term only for proper and compelling reasons, which must always be justified to the volunteer. Such a reason may include, for example, repeated unwillingness or inability to comply with bylaws, guidelines, and policies governing AYY's operations, or inappropriate conduct related to the performance of the position or directed at other members of AYY's work community or a member of the Aalto community. Volunteers are usually not dismissed without the opportunity to correct their actions. Initially, a written warning is issued, after which the matter may be referred to the Board. Each step may be taken by the employee in charge or the board member in charge, following joint discussions.

In exceptional cases and for very compelling reasons, a matter may be addressed immediately at a board meeting. For instance, if the person in question poses a clear risk to other members of the community.

An association may, through its own announcement, request that the committee member it has nominated be released from the duties of a collective committee. After such an announcement, the AYY Board will consider the matter at its meeting.

If a term ends prematurely, an agreement must also be made on how to proceed. Depending on the situation and available resources, responsibility for the duties may be temporarily assigned to the recruiter, another member of the volunteer group, or the employee in charge of the volunteer group. Alternatively, the duties may be permanently transferred to another member or the chair of the volunteer group. At the same time, it should be considered whether a new volunteer should be recruited for the remainder of the term. If so, the call for applications will be opened in accordance with the standard recruitment process.

## **Serving in the position and available resources**

The most important (and most rewarding) aspect of volunteering is the work itself. Volunteers should be provided with support and security, have opportunities to both give and receive feedback, and, of course, **have fun**. Ensuring this is generally the responsibility of the recruiter, in cooperation with the employee in charge.

AYY's volunteers have access to various resources and other benefits to support them in their roles. The use of these individual benefits and resources depends on their availability, such as the booking situation. The specific benefits in each position are outlined in more detail in the chart below. Resources available to a section or committee also apply to section and committee chairs. AYY's resources and other benefits are intended solely for use in AYY's volunteer positions.

				Free use of AYY's rental facilities	Free use of the car and van	Free use of other resources	AYY account	Training at AYY	Key to AYY office	Borrowing storage space keys	Designated employee	Opportunity to participate	Responsibility to participate in sector development	Budget for self-organised recreation	Recreation for volunteers	Staff recreation and morning meetings	Mentoring	
Section chairs				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		
Sections	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x				
Committee chairs				x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x				
Recruited committee	x	x	x	(x)	x	(x)	x	x	x			x	x	x				
Convening committee	x	x	x		(x)				x	x			x	x				

## Employees and board members in volunteering

The most important aspect of the relationship between volunteers and employees is a shared commitment to common policies. This is a key part of position discussions, orientation, and service in the position. Volunteers bring a unique perspective on student union activities, making it important to consider their fresh insights on the activities of the permanent organisation. The best results are achieved through open interaction and dialogue that values both parties.

The relationship between volunteers, employees, and board members differs from their relationship with other AYY volunteers. Employees (not board members) have fixed working hours and cannot be expected to be flexible beyond the terms of their employment contract. On the other hand, employees can perform tasks that volunteers may not have sufficient time of expertise for, such as arrangements during office hours, tasks requiring extensive professional skills (e.g., permits), as well as tasks related to contracts and cost monitoring. Ultimately, the employee and board member designated to a volunteer group are responsible for the team's activities and for reporting volunteers' decisions to the Board and, thus, to the Representative Council. For this reason, planned changes and new ideas should always be discussed with the employee.

Employees have the right to expect volunteers to fulfil the commitments they have made, but they also have an obligation to understand the volunteers' limited time resources. In most cases, employees do not act as leaders of volunteers: they should guide rather than give orders. However, if necessary, they may also issue instructions. For instance, in case of guidelines, it is ultimately the employee's responsibility and right to ensure compliance.

Volunteers have the right to expect employees to fulfil their commitments, while also respecting the employees' other work duties and conditions. Volunteers should recognise that an

experienced employee is a valuable resource, and in good cooperation, they can achieve more than they would working alone on a project. Employees also provide important assistance and support in the execution of activities and events.

## **Volunteer trustees**

Volunteer trustees are employees of AYY's organisation. It is their responsibility to ensure that volunteers are familiar with the policies and adhere to them. Trustees also assist in conflict situations involving volunteers. Conflicts may occur between volunteers or between a volunteer and an employee or board member.

Trustees ensure that volunteers are treated fairly and equally and, when necessary, provide guidance and support to volunteers during times of change or in resolving potential problems. The trustees consult with the recruiter and the employee in charge on matters concerning volunteers and actively participate in developing the work community with volunteers and recruiters.

As part of AYY's permanent organisation, trustees have fixed working hours like other employees. They cannot be required to be flexible beyond their working hours, and their working conditions are determined by their employment contract. Trustees are entitled to allocate a reasonable amount of time to carry out their duties, provided that this does not compromise their own work responsibilities.

Cases of harassment are addressed in accordance with the Safer Space Policy and AYY's harassment contact persons provide guidance in such situations.

## **Thanking and rewarding volunteers**

The reward of volunteering is the positive feeling that comes from the duties done and the appreciation received for it. The volunteer organisation's reward is appreciation, and no paydays should be skipped. Thanking is most effective when done in the presence of others, but one-on-one recognition is also rewarding. Thanking should be a routine: whenever a task is done well, volunteers should be thanked. This is particularly important when someone has completed a challenging or unpleasant task. Work does not need to be perfect to deserve a thank you.

When a volunteer has made an exceptional effort or delivered outstanding work, it may also be a great opportunity to consider rewarding. A suitable reward for outstanding work could be, for example, a surprise pizza, a box of chocolates, or doing an activity together. However, rewards should not be confused with bribery: poor leadership cannot be compensated with treats, but by acknowledging and correcting one's mistakes.

Acknowledgements are awarded to many volunteers at AYY's annual ball. If AYY's volunteer has worked hard for AYY and deserves recognition, please remember to submit their nomination to the acknowledgment working group.

## Glossary

Many different concepts are used in these policies. The key concepts are defined and clarified in the following chart.

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Position	A volunteer position with a defined start and end date. The volunteer holding the position, the agreed tasks and forms of support, and the recruiter are related to the position.
Recruiter	The recruiter is the volunteer's supervisor who leads the volunteer group, guides volunteers in their work, and ensures that volunteers have the prerequisites to perform their tasks. The recruiter conducts the required discussions with the volunteer.
Volunteer	A volunteer is anyone who volunteers for AYY. A volunteer always holds a position. A recruited volunteer has applied through a separate call for applications.
Employee	An employee is a full-time or part-time member of AYY's permanent organisation with an employment relationship at AYY.
Board member	A board member is a person in AYY's permanent organisation and part of the Board appointed by AYY's Representative Council. A board member holds a position of trust and has no specific working hours. Board members change annually.
Chairs	A volunteer group's chair and vice chair. If the group has only a chair, this term refers only to the chair.