UL Global Buddy Programme Process Spring 25

Purpose:

The Buddy Programme key business processes relate to the effective running of the programme, recruitment of volunteers and support of all international student buddies. The processes incorporate stakeholder management, volunteer and student recruitment, event and budget management, sign-posting, social media coverage and training new administration team members through the year.

Process Map:

April: Recruit New Volunteers for coming academic year

May/June: Recruit New Buddies and build new initiatives/events

July: Matching and Event/Budget Planning

Aug: Virtual first contact for New Buddies & Reminder for Volunteers

Sept: Orientation and first coffee event, Event email for volunteers, prep PVA email for new opportunity, unresponsive buddies.

Oct: Manage unresponsive Buddies, Table Quiz Event and ticket collections

Nov: Board Games event, confirm new volunteers for spring term and confirm with teams the allocations of new buddies, send sign-up links, confirm UCH tickets and event plans for new term

Dec: Matching and introductions

Jan: Buddies virtual first contact, Orientation and first in-person coffee

Feb: Manage unresponsive Buddies, Table Quiz Event and ticket collection

Mar: Board Games event and semester wrap-up, recruit new BP Admin and review handover docs and processes

Processes

1. Planning
   The International Student Engagement Manager, International Student Engagement Officer and Buddy Programme Administrator develop an activity plan on an annual basis. The plan outlines the intended events, recruitment, supports and development that the programme will undertake over the year from April – March. Plans are reviewed and adapted to take into consideration fluctuating student numbers, budgets and the success of each element during the previous year.

2. Event Management
   Events are undertaken and communicated to Buddy Programme participants towards the start of the semester and held frequently throughout the semester from Week 1 to 9. Students receive communications from the Buddy Programme Administrator to sign-up for events. Volunteers are expected to participate in at least three events throughout the semester to earn the Presidents Volunteer Award and are expected to log their hours to earn this. The Buddy Programme Administrator works with PVA to ensure that Volunteer hours are verified and applied to their award.

3. Student Support
   The Buddy Programme is designed to encourage student friendships, networking opportunities and engagement with events on campus and in Limerick. The programme provides events, free of charge, throughout the semester to achieve this aim. Volunteers are clearly encouraged to divert any students in distress to the Buddy Programme Administrator and Student Engagement Officer to sign-post to appropriate supports and services. Volunteers are supported to develop intercultural skills and to articulate these in professional contexts.

Records

All records are stored on SharePoint for the time required by the process. The ULG Buddy Programme operates in accordance with the University's Records Management and Retention Policy. Any personal data that is used as part of this process is processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) / Data Protection Acts 1988-2018, the University of Limerick Data Protection Policy and privacy notices.

Process Effectiveness

The process has previously been monitored for effectiveness and improvement through student testimonials and staff feedback but a brief survey will be put in place for future cohorts.

Further Details of the Buddy Programme Process

Goals of the Buddy Programme:

The Buddy Programme offers a new incoming student the opportunity to be matched with a volunteer (who may have up to 4 buddies) to start to build a friendship/reliable connection before arrival and during their time at UL. Buddies can ask volunteers questions around life in Limerick, what it is like to be a student at UL and for tips that only locals would know. This personal and cultural scaffolding helps the new student to develop their identity as a UL student, build their resilience and confidence in a new community and develop intercultural awareness. It also helps the volunteer to earn the Presidents Volunteer Award, share their culture, learn about new cultures and develop some transferrable skills and competencies that are vital to a modern workplace.

1. Create a strong sense of safety and community for new incoming students
2. Give local/domestic students a way to develop international experiences, intercultural awareness and earn an award for volunteering
3. Support a strong inclusive community at UL
4. Front-load support and manage resources
5. Grow the programme in the coming years to 200 volunteers and run a pilot programme for PhD candidates

How:

1. Domestic students hear about the programme and can apply through the PVA and an opportunity posted on volunteer.ie
2. Volunteers and buddies are matched by the Buddy Programme Administrator
3. UL Global advertise the fortnightly events that they can sign-up for (Coffee morning, Table Quiz, Visits to King John's Castle, Movie at the UCH, Board Games in The Globe)
4. UL Global teams use these opportunities to create social media content
5. Volunteers sign-up for these events, log the hours spent with their buddies (must do a min of 3)
6. UL PVA, Global staff and admin approves these hours, and the admin monitors the email account throughout the semester for any issues raised
7. The BP team recruits new volunteers in late March, early April for Aug/Sept start
8. The BP team recruits a new admin and trains them over the summer handover period