

VSO volunteers to receive Harper Adams UK qualifications

<http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/news/article.cfm?ID=201387>

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Hundreds of volunteers are set to start work abroad with a Harper Adams-accredited qualification, thanks to a new partnership between the University College and VSO.

The newly-validated University College Foundation Certificate in Professional Skills for International Development will be awarded to VSO volunteers on completion of their pre-departure training – before they spend between three months and two years fighting poverty and disadvantage in communities across the globe.

In a second strand of this new partnership, Harper Adams will accredit the work of 18-22 year olds on the Global Xchange programme. Through work placement, structured training, Global Citizenship study days and community action days, youth volunteers will be able to gain a University College Foundation Certificate.

The partnership between Harper Adams and VSO was secured thanks to two University College employees having long-standing links with the volunteer organisation.

Emma Tappin, Associate Head of the Rural Affairs and Environment Department and Postgraduate Programmes Manager at Harper Adams, said: “The concept of accrediting VSO training originated from staff in our department with experience of VSO and its training. Having undertaken three volunteer placements over the last 10 years, in Tuvalu in the Pacific, Tanzania and Papua New Guinea, I have been involved in VSO’s training of volunteers before they depart overseas.

“The opportunity to accredit VSO training was explored by myself and colleague Izzy Warren-Smith, a volunteer in Nigeria 30 years ago. After meeting with the VSO team last year, we have developed accreditation for two strands of VSO training.”

Under the first strand, Harper Adams is expected to accredit the training of professionally-skilled volunteers from a range of sectors - the key areas VSO are currently recruiting in are education, health, business, fundraising and IT. The average age of these volunteers is 42 and they range from retired senior managers to a small number of recent graduates – including one from the University College.

The second strand is accreditation for the Global Xchange programme. Global Xchange is a partnership between VSO and the British Council and this year forms a significant part of the UK Government’s pilot International Citizen Service Scheme. Up to 60 volunteers on Global Xchange will be accredited for their participation on the six- month Youth Xchange programme. The programme brings together 20 young people from the UK and a developing country to live, learn and volunteer together in a UK and host community.

Emily Lomax, Volunteer Journey Manager at VSO says: “Accreditation of volunteer training has been an important step for VSO, in both reflecting the quality of the blended learning programme we already provide and in being able to offer our volunteers a tangible qualification to benefit their future prospects. The response from volunteers so far has been really enthusiastic and we’re looking forward to continued work with Harper Adams in the future.”

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One of the volunteers involved on the programme has said: 'I think this is a great idea. I was already considering taking a course in international development ... and am delighted to be offered the opportunity through VSO. I believe that the practical experience that volunteers gain in the field means they have much to offer in the debate on international development this provides the ideal opportunity to further develop their knowledge and skills in this area.'

Harper Adams University College is based in Shropshire, UK

Visit the Harper Adams website at <http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/>

Visit the VSO website at <http://www.vso.org.uk/>

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