



## LEAPS Student Volunteers, working with schools and pupils

Since the mid 1990's, **Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools** has been working with local secondary schools to provide pupils with information about higher education and student life. In particular LEAPS offers encouragement to pupils with academic ability but who might not otherwise considering applying to university.

In our view, the most effective way of making young people aware of the benefits and challenges of higher education is by providing them with the opportunity to meet university students and to visit local universities. As a 'LEAPS Student Volunteer' you could take part in any or all of the different activities listed below.

**SCHOOL WORKSHOPS** take place in local schools, last for a single period (approximately one hour) and are delivered between November and March. The age group varies from 14 to 18 year olds (S4-S6) and the different workshops cover themes such as 'myths and realities about student life', 'the typical student week' and 'getting by on a budget'. Transport is provided to and from the school. This year we expect to deliver about 60 school workshops. As a Volunteer you would work with a small group of pupils, completing a series of short, light-hearted activities.

Our **STUDENT FOR A DAY** events meanwhile are half-day, campus-based activities where S3 pupils (13-14 year olds) are challenged to answer a series of questions by exploring a university campus in the company of one or more Student Volunteers. Each group is provided with a Polaroid camera to document what they find, the results from which are used in a poster activity at the end of the visit. We typically deliver about 10 events of this kind each year, mostly in November, March and May.

The **LEAPS STUDENT CONFERENCE** meanwhile is aimed at S6 pupils (17-18 year olds) who have by this stage decided to submit an application to university. This event takes place in December each year and provides a range of information to help pupils enjoy a smooth transition into university. As a Student Volunteer you could help to lead workshops about student finance or be a member of the student panel that answers questions covering university-related themes.

Finally, in each February more than 200 S5 pupils (15-16 year olds) from more than 30 different schools take part in **STUDENT LIFE EXPERIENCE**, visiting a university of their choice.

Pupils can select any of the higher education institutions in the city where they will spend an afternoon attending a lecture, touring the campus and visiting the student union. The LEAPS Student Volunteer is there to act as a 'role model' and to talk about life on campus as well as answering questions about his or her course.

The key **qualities and skills** that an effective Volunteer possesses will include:

- a belief that the opportunity to participate in higher education should be open to all those who have appropriate academic potential
- enthusiasm for the 'student experience' and a willingness to share this with others
- the ability to relate to pupils of secondary school age (13-18 years old) including good listening and verbal skills
- currently be involved in higher education study at Year 2 or above (we welcome undergraduate, postgraduate, international and mature students as volunteers)
- a sense of humour is also useful!

In order to participate in any of our activities a student must attend an **Information and Training Session**, complete a registration form and provide two references, one of which must be from their place of study. All of our events take place in a staff-supervised environment nevertheless we may request that a Volunteer completes a Disclosure Scotland check.

**Students choose to become LEAPS Volunteers for a number of reasons.** Some (but by no means all) are considering a career in teaching and are looking to gain experience that will help them to decide if they are suited for such a path. These students and others normally recognise that the type of experience that volunteering offers will enhance a graduate job application. Another motivation that has been cited by students in the past is the desire 'to put something back in' or that they believe in the principle of higher education being open to all those who have the necessary talent.

What is common for nearly all LEAPS Volunteers is that they expect to find the experience enjoyable (which feedback subsequently proving them right) and they wish to share their positive experience of higher education. As a Student Volunteer you can opt into as many or as few events as you like, to suit your workload (we promise there is no arm twisting involved!) - this way we feel that every activity will be supported by Student Volunteers who are keen, focused and enthusiastic.

*If you would like to become a LEAPS Student Volunteer or would like to hear more about the valuable role played by our team of Student Volunteers please contact us in the LEAPS Office.*

**Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools**

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