

# **Prospective Literacy Volunteer Handbook**

Sunshine Coast Libraries  
Literacy Services



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#### **Acknowledgements**

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#### **Disclaimer**

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## Message from Literacy Services Supervisor

Thank you for your interest in this course. Read this handbook carefully as it details the time commitment for training, frequently asked questions, course information and other general and specific information about Literacy Services programs.

If, after reading this information, you wish to be considered for a position in the Course in Literacy Volunteering, submit an expression of interest online.

Once we receive your application we will contact you to confirm receipt. Places in each course are limited and there is a selection process to shortlist for interview. Shortlisted applicants will then be informed of interview dates.

If you require any more information contact Literacy Services staff by **phone: 5499 5414** or **email: [literacy.services@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au](mailto:literacy.services@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au)**.

Literacy Services Supervisor  
Sunshine Coast Libraries

## General Information

In 2011-12 the most recent international survey was conducted; the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). This compared key skills in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology rich environments. It reported in Australia that 44% of men and 45% of women had literacy skills below the level of everyday functional literacy. It also reported that 49% of men and 59% of women had numeracy skills below the level of everyday functional numeracy.

### Aims of the Read and Write for Life Program

The Sunshine Coast Libraries Read and Write for Life program has been operating since 1989. Funding for the program is provided by Sunshine Coast Council.

We offer a flexible program to eligible adults to assist them to improve their language, literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to participate independently in their own community.

The scope and scale of adult learners' needs in this program may include:-

**Workplace literacy:** to increase their chances of remaining in or advancing in their current job.

**Social and family literacy support:** to improve their participation in these areas of their lives.

**Community access requirements:** literacy tuition to enable them to engage effectively within the community.

**Pre-training requirements for training/jobs:** assistance to provide them with the necessary literacy/ numeracy skills required to enrol in training courses or apply for a job.

**Technology requirements:** in particular, computer/digital skills.

### Modes of Provision

**Read and Write for Life classes** are held weekly during school terms at Caloundra, Beerwah, Kawana, Maroochydore and Maleny Libraries as well as online. These classes incorporate elements of individual work, planned according to each learner's personal needs and goals, plus an element of group work in each session.

**Individual 1:1** sessions are also provided at any Sunshine Coast Council run library. These sessions are more flexible, arranged at days and times to suit the literacy volunteers and learners and may suit those unable to attend the classes for a variety of reasons, e.g. work or family commitments. These sessions run once a week, usually 1.5 - 2 hours in duration.

**Conversation Circles** are held online and in Maroochydore Library during school terms and are open to anyone who does not have English as their first language. No initial assessment or bookings are required. The focus is speaking and listening, using language in the everyday Australian context.

Volunteers can be required in any of the settings, subject to availability, volunteer preferences and the needs of the service.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Qualifications

Formal teaching qualifications are not required to be a successful literacy volunteer. It is much more important to be tolerant, patient, flexible, a really good listener, have a sense of humour and to be understanding, as well as having good literacy skills. An interest in people and a wish to help is essential. Literacy volunteers are required to undertake a short non-accredited course – Course in Literacy Volunteering.

### Where will I tutor?

In the interests of Workplace Health and Safety, literacy volunteers work with learners in one of the Sunshine Coast Library buildings. Volunteers either work in a class or one-on-one with a learner. The library provides immediate and useful access to library resources and staff.

### How often will I tutor?

For 1:1 volunteers, this is negotiable between you and your learner. Most volunteers work with one learner, and others tutor more than one. It is usual to arrange one and a half to two hours per lesson once per week. Lesson planning will also take at least an hour for each session.

Read and Write for Life classes are for three hours once a week. Class teachers prepare lesson plans for the learners in their class. Literacy volunteers support individual learners in the class.

Conversation Circles are for two hours per week. The teacher plans for the learners and literacy volunteers support individuals in the circle.

### How long will I tutor?

**A commitment of at least one year is desirable after training.** Most learners have limited skills and will need long term tutoring. Depending on your learner's goals, this could require a commitment from you of several months or even years.

### Does this mean that I can't take holidays?

Most literacy volunteers will arrange tasks for their learners if they have to go away. Unexpected events happen to all of us and changes to tutoring times can be negotiated between student, tutor and Literacy Services staff. If a volunteer is away for a lengthy period, staff can arrange a temporary cover if necessary. Breaks are normally taken during the school holidays.

### What teaching material is available?

Sunshine Coast Libraries has specialist literacy books and materials designed for literacy tuition. In addition, most volunteers will use any resource material relevant to the learner's needs such as recipes, bus timetables, junk-mail, work or leisure oriented magazines, newspapers and the non-fiction section of the children's library. During training, volunteers will also be given information on relevant, useful websites.

Literacy Services staff are available to help 1:1 volunteers with lesson and program planning.

## Self-assessment guide for prospective literacy volunteers

You may wish to ask yourself the following questions to determine whether tutoring is for you.

- Am I really committed to tutoring?
- Do I have a good knowledge of English language skills?
- Am I empathetic and do I respect people for what and who they are?
- Am I able to communicate clearly and effectively?
- Am I able to listen and learn from my student?
- Am I able to offer praise and encouragement to the learner for small successes?
- Am I able to adapt my learning style to address the learner's needs and abilities?
- Am I creative and flexible so that I can plan and present a variety of approaches?
- Am I able to establish a comfortable, non-threatening atmosphere so that the learner won't feel anxious and afraid?
- Am I able to respect the learner's confidences?
- Am I able to be a facilitator, and model behaviour that will encourage the learner to view learning as a life-long experience?
- Do I enjoy meeting and working with people?
- Do I have perseverance even when I confront problems?
- Do I enjoy challenges?
- Am I patient?
- Am I motivated to learn?
- What are my attitudes toward reading and writing?
- Who do I think can teach reading?
- Can I teach? Can I learn? Can I change?

### **Literacy volunteers / teachers are not perfect.**

These questions are a small indication of what may be involved in tutoring adult learners. You will not have all the answers at this stage (or ever). However, use the questions to help you understand something of the tutoring environment. The course provides a supportive environment to develop the skills and confidence to be an effective literacy volunteer.

# Course in Literacy Volunteering

## Entry requirements

- Demonstrated competence in English literacy skills
- Basic digital literacy skills
- Personal qualities eg patience, flexibility, interpersonal skills, enthusiasm for learning
- Willingness to attend further training and commit to ongoing tutoring for at least 12 months
- Spelling and grammatical accuracy on application
- Availability/flexibility to meet the needs of the Literacy Services programs (time, location etc)
- Demonstrated empathy for ethos of the Read and Write for Life program
- Qualifications, experience and recency of practice, together with any practical experience in individual support, are taken into account at interview

## Attendance

- Training will be held at scheduled times
- If a class is cancelled trainees will be contacted by the trainer/Literacy Services staff
- Trainees are required to attend training regularly. Please contact your trainer if you cannot attend
- All trainees are expected to observe and obey any lawful direction given by a staff member

## Training delivery

All modules must be completed. If you are unable to attend a training session you will need to complete work in consultation with the trainer.

Tasks may include the following :

- Practical demonstration
- Peer evaluation
- Written tasks
- Case studies or role play
- Structured discussion
- Resource preparation
- Direct observation
- Self-assessment
- Group activities

Face to face sessions for all modules, plus 15 hours of supervised practice in classes or 1:1 settings. This practice will begin during the training period.

## Course outcomes

This course is designed to provide participants with the skills and knowledge to:

- Understand that literacy involves “reading, writing, listening, speaking and critical thinking, and it incorporates numeracy.”
- Expose trainees to current theories and thinking in the adult literacy field and to engage in discussion of them
- Gain an awareness of learners, their various needs and associated literacy challenges
- Gain an understanding of :
  - Reading processes
  - Genre and the process of writing
  - Listening and speaking as literacy skills
  - The importance of critical thinking
  - The role of numeracy in literacy
- Be able to undertake their role as literacy volunteers in respect to:
  - Communication with learners and designing learning with individual needs in mind
  - Lesson planning and record keeping



- Recognising limitations in the role of literacy volunteer
- Attendance at professional development for volunteers
- Confidentiality

A *Certificate of Success* will be issued on completion of all modules, tasks and practice.

## Recognition of Prior Learning

If you feel you are already able to meet the course requirements and can provide details of recent experience in the Adult Literacy field, together with recognised qualifications, please discuss your former training and experiences with Literacy Services staff.

## What to bring to training

- A pen
- Something to write on – a writing pad or lined paper
- Course notes and a large folder will be provided

## Fees

Training is available free of charge to prospective literacy volunteers selected to undertake the course in preparation for volunteering in the program.

## Additional Information

### Workplace Health and Safety

Under the *WPH&S Act (2011)*, volunteers are regarded as workers.

If working in a Sunshine Coast Council venue you must:

- Comply with written or verbal instructions
- Use equipment when permitted and competent
- Never place the health, safety or well-being of any person in jeopardy
- Check emergency evacuation procedures-ensure student's knowledge of same

- For insurance purposes sign on and off in the library volunteer book or be marked present on a class roll as required by all Sunshine Coast Council volunteers.

A Sunshine Coast Council Volunteer Induction will be included as part of the training.

## Insurance

As a volunteer, you are not covered under workers' compensation legislation. However, when working on council premises you and your student are covered under Public Liability.

## Access and Equity

Sunshine Coast Libraries Literacy Services programs will meet the needs of individuals, and the community as a whole, through the integration of access and equity guidelines. Our programs and selection procedures are non-discriminatory. If you wish to sight the Sunshine Coast Council Access and Equity Policy, ask your trainer.

## Complaints and appeals

Participants who feel they have a genuine complaint/appeal have the right to a fair hearing at which they may state their concerns.

In the first instance this should be taken to your trainer. If agreement is not reached, a written account should be made to the Literacy Services Supervisor for investigation.

If a resolution cannot be achieved, assistance will be sought by arbitration with a qualified panel acceptable to all parties.



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