

## Sketch: Volunteer

Let's talk about the volunteer section of the sketch.

If you have not already done so, it is strongly recommended that you volunteer or have work experience in a health-related facility with patient care experience and interaction with health care professionals. You need to provide evidence that you are passionate, motivated and understand this profession. Try to have an experience that is ongoing to show your dedication and passion for medicine. It is important to present a consistent package and show a long-term interest in helping others.

Your experiences can be both structured and unstructured. An example taken from the OMSAS Instruction booklet of an unstructured activity is helping an ill neighbour with farm work. However, according to a Northern Ontario School of Medicine webcast, it was recommended to limit unstructured activities such as shoveling snow for neighbours. You can include a few of these types of activities, but limit them.

Here are some suggestions on how to manage experiences that may fall under the volunteer category:

If you held a Volunteer position as a Research Assistant (that is an RA) part-time and did not receive a stipend, then include this under Volunteer Activities. Only list the assistant type work that you did under this category. If you had a significant research contribution, count this experience twice by including the research experience work that you did (contributing to figures/tables/writing/results, for presentations and publications) under the 'Research' category.

If you held an internship and you were not paid then include it in the volunteer category section. Again if you had a significant research contribution, it can count twice by including the research work under the 'Research' category.

As noted in the OMSAS instructions in this section: "Co-operative placements which are part of your university program do not qualify under volunteer." If you had an unpaid co-op term, it is still Employment and you can write "unpaid" in the description.

The OMSAS Instruction Booklet states to include location of where you held the activity, so we recommend adding that detail to the "summer or academic year" box. This will make more sense with the next slide.

This is a screen shot of the Volunteer activities category. Again, we will work from the top down.

The top block is populated from the top layer of the sketch and a verifier is needed.

List the highest level of education you had or were in while at the time of volunteering.

List the total number of hours and number of years that you participated in this activity. Remember to be consistent with how you present this information for all of your activities.

For the Summer or Academic year section list when you held the activity. However, if you run out of space in the responsibilities box, you could add in more details in this section. For example: you could write: Orientation: Organized activities during summer (semicolon) Held events during academic year.

Let's look at some examples of what to include in the responsibilities section. Start with action verbs and state what you accomplished. Provide enough details, and provide depth when explaining the details.

This is a poor example of the responsibilities section, as the information is too vague. You want to use a stronger action verb than volunteered and you need to be more specific about what the interactions with health care professionals were, or what health care professionals you dealt with. Also, state what you learned or observed through this experience.

This is a good example to include in the responsibilities section. Note how much information was conveyed in 142 characters. You have a maximum of 150.

Be very cautious when volunteering with an agency that sends you internationally and then asks you to perform procedures that you are not qualified to perform at all, such as births, physicals, and vaccinations. It is very unethical to complete this type of work without the relevant years of professional school education and training to safely treat patients. Sometimes applicants believe that participating in these tasks will look good to medical school admissions, but remember the ethical standards that exist in the profession – and you do not want your ethics questioned while an admissions committee is reading your application.

Ensure that you have a good understanding of the roles you will complete before going internationally. There is also no expectation that you have international experience. Local experiences are very valuable. No matter the experience, you need to convey clearly what you did and learned.