



## ARC UK – The Application Form Frequently Asked Questions

ARC is an ecumenical Christian association. The letters ARC stand for the French words *Accueil* (Welcome), *Rencontre* (Encounter) and *Communauté* (Community). These words were chosen to express the ideals of ARC, an association of young volunteers founded in France in 1977 to offer an international welcome to cathedral visitors.

Each summer, ARC volunteers guide thousands of visitors around cathedrals in the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. Regional branches in each of these countries recruit young people to guide in their own language. ARC UK recruits English speakers to work in cathedrals across Europe, including the UK.

Cathedrals host groups of up to 12 young people of different nationalities and Christian traditions. In return for this hospitality, the volunteers spend up to 30 hours a week offering tours to visitors. Guides live and work together, sharing a spirit of community for the duration of the project. For more information visit our website: [www.encounterarc.org.uk](http://www.encounterarc.org.uk).

### 2. Can anyone volunteer for an ARC project?

ARC volunteers are very diverse, but there are a few basic requirements.

You will need to be:

- A proficient English speaker
- Aged between 18 and 30
- Able to commit a minimum of 3 weeks
- Familiar with basic Christian beliefs
- Ready to share in a daily time of prayer
- Committed to the ideals of ARC as outlined in the ARC Charter.

You don't need to be a regular churchgoer. We welcome volunteers with an open mind and a genuine interest in exploring Christian faith and spirituality, no matter what their background. Nor do you need to be an expert on religion, art or architecture; full training is provided by the host cathedrals.

### 3. Will it cost anything?

Accommodation, food, and other essential costs are covered by the host cathedral. You are responsible for the cost of your return journey to the cathedral city and for any personal expenditure while you are there (e.g. souvenirs, ice-cream, weekend trips and luxury items). Any tips received *must* be donated to the ARC project, the cathedral, the group or the local ARC Board as local circumstances determine. Your host cathedral may choose to give you pocket money out of these tips or other funds, however.

Successful applicants will be asked to pay £25 for ARC UK membership. This money is used to subsidise ARC's recruitment and training work. In return you will receive your ARC UK training pack and the opportunity to take part in projects over the next two years.

Your membership is valid for 3 years from date of issue. You will not need to pay anything unless you are allocated to a project. We are currently putting together a scheme for life membership, but this is expected to take several years to be implemented.

### 4. Do I need to speak a foreign language?

No. As an ARC UK guide you will only be asked to guide in English. English is also the common language between volunteers. We do recommend that you have intermediate French or German skills for certain projects. Your language skills are taken into account during project allocation.

## **5. What should I expect from an ARC project?**

Each project has its own identity, according to the location and the participants, but there are some common points:

- Your hosts will provide you with accommodation, often in close proximity to the church.
- You will live together with the other guides, sometimes sharing a room with one or two others.
- You should expect to share everything in a spirit of community – money, cooking, even the cleaning!

As well as sharing a time of prayer each day, you will be expected to attend some services in the host cathedral. Many cathedrals will also ask the ARC group to participate in worship, perhaps by reading from scripture, or saying a prayer. You will be welcomed by the local church and should be open to their requests. Guides share daily life with other volunteers from different cultural and Christian backgrounds. Respect for those with divergent opinions and beliefs is essential, as is an ability to listen to others and negotiate compromises in practical matters.

## **6. What does being an ARC guide involve?**

As an ARC UK volunteer you will be responsible for providing a welcome to English-speaking visitors. You may be asked to spend time at the welcome desk and to take several tours a day. An ARC tour presents the cathedral as a building dedicated to God, a place of worship and reflection, not simply a museum or work of art. Training and information is provided, but this cannot compensate for your own enthusiasm. You should be keen to learn about and appreciate the religious and spiritual significance of church buildings.

The number of visitors will vary. In some projects you may give only one or two intimate tours (with 2–4 people) each day; in other churches each guide may have more than 50 tourists per tour. In the past participants have undertaken up to 10 tours a day, but the number of tours you do is entirely up to you. Leisure time also varies, but you will normally be expected to spend 25–30 hours each week in the cathedral, with an average of 2 days off each week.

## **7. When do ARC projects happen?**

Projects take place during July and August, lasting between three and six weeks and averaging four. Exact dates are available from late March. These will be published on the ARC UK web site and circulated by email.

## **8. I am not resident in the UK. Can I apply?**

ARC UK accepts applications from competent English speakers; past participants have included volunteers from Singapore, Australia and eastern Europe. You must make your own visa arrangements and we may ask you to prove that you are able to travel before you are firmly allocated a place. You are asked to note that if all other factors are equal, preference is given to native or native-level speakers and to those who are able to attend both the interview and training day.

Those resident in other countries where ARC is active should apply to their regional branch in the first instance.

## **9. How will my application be assessed?**

On receipt of your application, our administrator will verify that all relevant papers have been completed and the application satisfies the basic requirements (see question 2 above). In late March, after the application deadline, our recruitment team will meet to short-list applications for interview using the letters of motivation. These are graded according to your motivation, suitability, articulacy and other criteria. Those who score highly in their letter assessment will be invited for interview.

## **10. What happens in the interview?**

Interviews are used in addition to letters of motivation to evaluate the suitability of each applicant. They provide an opportunity for us to explore any queries that arise from your application, and to discuss in more detail the demands of an ARC project and your own strengths and weaknesses. There will also be a chance for you to ask questions.

Interviews are offered across the country; you will usually be given a choice between London, Cambridge, Oxford, York, Manchester and Bristol. These locations can change from year to year and will be updated on the application form. You may be interviewed by a member of the ARC Board or by an assistant; you will be contacted by your allocated interviewer in advance to agree a place to meet. Interviews are informal and should not take longer than half an hour.

#### **11. How are projects allocated?**

When allocating projects we keep in mind their character and timing as well as the availability, preferences and disposition of each applicant. Please note that although we consider your skills and requirements, we do not guarantee that you will be allocated your project of preference. The process is a complex one and depends on many factors. This may mean, for example, that a French speaker can be sent to Italy. We aim to maximise opportunities for all our volunteers and you will find that even those who are placed in an entirely different project to what they anticipated later say they would not have swapped it for anywhere else.

#### **12. When will I know if I have been allocated a project?**

The recruitment season begins in January and runs until the application deadline in March. Short-listing takes place in March and interviews are normally held in April. The allocations are then finalised. If your application is not short-listed for interview we aim to inform you by email within 10 days of that decision. When all the interviews are complete, the recruitment team meet again to discuss the project allocations. This meeting is normally held at the beginning of May.

Once we have completed the allocations, we contact the successful applicants with basic details of their placement. To confirm the placement, each applicant must then pay the ARC UK membership fee (£30). Successful applicants will be asked to attend the training day in June. The programme includes workshops on guiding, group prayer, language barriers and community life as well as information about the structure of ARC, a basic introduction to church architecture and an opportunity to meet other volunteers. Training packs will be distributed to those present.

#### **13. What if the application deadline has already passed?**

In the event that all placements are not filled during the main recruitment period, our recruitment team will agree dates and deadlines for a second round. These will be published on the ARC UK web site and our Facebook group. Preference is given to applications received before the deadline, but applications received late may be fast-tracked in order to prevent the cancellation of placements.

We may also place applicants on a waiting list and/or solicit last-minute applications in case an allocated volunteer is unable to participate.

## **HOW TO APPLY FOR AN ARC PROJECT**

#### **If you have guided for ARC UK before:**

Please fill out the current application form. In place of a letter of motivation we would ask you to write a brief account of any previous projects, highlighting anything you feel you gained or learned from the experience. We will shortlist previous participants separately from new applicants. Up to one quarter of ARC projects each year are reserved for returning applicants. Before you post your application, please re-read the ARC Charter and remind yourself of ARC's aims and ideals. It is essential that all applicants sympathise with these ideals.

#### **If you have NOT guided for ARC UK before:**

1. Familiarise yourself with ARC. Read through the ARC Charter and website carefully. If you have any unanswered questions please contact us by email or telephone.
2. Complete the application form. We require your contact details and information about your availability. The background information requested on the application form is used to assess the breadth of our recruitment. This information will not be considered during the short-listing process.
3. Write a short letter of motivation. Tell us about yourself, any relevant experience and why you want to be an ARC guide. The recommended length is 400-500 words or one A4 page. Concentrate on what you feel is important, and remember we are looking for evidence of your enthusiasm, not any

expertise.

NB: ARC UK is an equal opportunities organisation. To help us treat all applications fairly, we ask that you do NOT include your name on the letter of motivation.

4. Sign and date two copies of the charter. This is the central agreement between the different branches of ARC. It defines our aims and ideals. Everyone who participates in an ARC project should share these aims. Store one copy safely for your reference. Return the second copy to [arcukrecruit@googlemail.com](mailto:arcukrecruit@googlemail.com) with:

- your completed application form
- your letter of motivation
- two passport photographs

We accept digital signatures if you are unable to scan your documents.