


VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Academic Skills Development Assistant (ASDA)
Assignment Modality	Univol (In-Country)
Assignment Number	42161
Country	Papua New Guinea (PNG)
Location	Kokopo, East New Britain
Partner Organisation	Divine Word University (Rabaul Campus - Kabaleo)
Duration	9-10 Months
Sustainable Development Goals	

1. Partner Organisation Overview

The Divine Word University (DWU), OLSH Kabaleo (formerly known as Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Teachers' College), was founded in 1966. The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) established the College as a female teachers' training institution to meet the demand for more primary school teachers in Catholic Church-operated schools. In 1995, it became a coeducational teachers' training college. The College remained under the aegis of the Catholic Archdiocese of Rabaul until 2015. Towards the end of 2015, the College became part of DWU.

The DWU Rabaul Campus embodies the vision of Divine Word University "to be a national University, open to all, serving society through its quality of research, teaching, learning and community engagement in a Christian environment". This vision is supplemented by the Strategic plan 2016-2026 vision "to be recognised nationally and internationally by its value-based innovative application of technology to enhance learning and teaching and to give the opportunities of higher education to as many learners as possible". DWU's Main Campus is located in Madang. For more information, please visit DWU's website: <https://www.dwu.ac.pg/en/index.php/campus/rabaul-campus>

2. Assignment Overview

The Academic Skills Development Assistant (ASDA) plays a vital role in supporting undergraduate student success by helping them develop strong academic skills, digital literacy, and academic English proficiency. The role involves close collaboration with students, academic staff, and professional services to deliver academic skills support through a range of methods—including one-to-one tutorials, group sessions, webinars, and online learning materials. This role is ideal for someone who is motivated, a self-starter, and passionate about student development, educational equity, and innovative approaches to learning support in higher education.

The volunteer will also assist lecturers in enhancing their teaching and learning resources and will be expected to provide tutoring support for trainee teachers who are struggling with the English language.

3. Goal/Outcomes/Outputs

Goal

The goal of the Academic Skills Development Assistant (ASDA) role is to advance undergraduate student achievement and engagement by delivering targeted support in academic skills, digital capabilities, and academic English. The role also contributes to shaping the first-year transition programme and works closely with staff across the college to ensure that support is embedded in everyday learning.

Outcome 1

Undergraduate students will demonstrate improved academic skills, including critical thinking, academic writing, time management, and digital literacy, as a result of targeted support delivered through one-to-one tutorials, group sessions, and online resources.

Working collaboratively with teaching and library staff:

- Facilitate group workshops and seminars on key academic skills, such as critical thinking, academic writing, time management techniques, and communication skills.
- Assist in developing and maintaining online learning resources and modules focusing on critical thinking, academic writing, time management, and digital literacy.
- Deliver personalised one-to-one tutorials focused on developing students' academic writing, critical thinking, time management, digital literacy, and communication skills.

Outcome 2

Academic staff within the Faculty of Education will receive effective support in preparing and delivering course materials, alongside associated teaching and learning support services. This will ensure the seamless integration of academic skills development into the curriculum and contribute to a high-quality student learning experience.

- Provide effective support to academic staff by sourcing, updating, and maintaining electronic teaching and learning resources, including relevant open-source journals and multimedia content.
- Assist academic and library staff in the creation and maintenance of course-specific resource repositories, making it easier for staff to share materials and best practices across the faculty.

4. Reporting, Working Relationships and Capacity Building

The volunteer will work alongside faculty staff and trainee teachers on a day-to-day basis and report to the Head of the relevant Department. The volunteer will contribute to capacity strengthening and knowledge management through training, upskilling, mentoring, coaching, knowledge sharing, and experiential learning. The volunteer and DWU will have an ongoing relationship with the VSA Programme Manager in terms of assignment monitoring, reporting, professional advice and personal support.

As needs on the ground may change over time, the volunteer is encouraged to review and update the Assignment Description on arrival in consultation with the partner organisation and VSA Programme Manager. By their very nature, development situations can involve significant change, so it is advisable that the volunteer periodically reviews and reflects on the Assignment Description throughout the Assignment to ensure the best development outcomes are being achieved.

5. Selection Criteria/Position Requirements

Professional Specifications

Essential

- Demonstrated sound academic research and writing skills.
- Excellent communication skills and an ability to communicate well with staff and trainee teachers.
- Ability to effectively explain concepts or ideas in a clear and understandable way.
- Experience using information and communications technology for academic purposes.
- Ability to help others learn through coaching or mentoring.

Desirable

- Experience visiting or living in one of the Pacific island countries.

Personal Specifications

Essential

- Ability to work unsupervised.
- Effective time management.
- Patience, tolerance, empathy, and flexibility.
- A preparedness to work with limited resources within a challenging environment.

6. VSA Essential Attributes

- Commitment to volunteering, to VSA and to the partner organisation.
- Cross cultural awareness.
- Adaptability and a willingness to approach change or newness positively.
- Able to form good relationships, both personally and professionally, with work colleagues and in the community.
- Resilience and an ability to manage setbacks.
- Initiative and resourcefulness.
- An ability to facilitate learning through skills exchange.

7. Country Context

For more information about Papua New Guinea, see <https://vsa.org.nz/our-work/countryregion/papua-new-guinea/>

8. Living and Working Situation

Furnished accommodation will be provided to the volunteer. Located within the suburbs of Kokopo, the distance between the University campus and the volunteer's accommodation is about 10 minutes by bus. Volunteers may be asked to share accommodation depending on the situation.

There is a designated space attached with the Language strand office for the volunteer. The University will provide basic office equipment and resources including printer, stationery, and internet access. The University's staff bus picks up and drops off staff and volunteers each working day.

Additional Information

UniVol Assignment

Residency status

VSA volunteers must be New Zealand citizens or have New Zealand permanent residency status, and currently living in NZ.

Pre-departure briefing

As part of the volunteer's contract, successful candidates will be required to take part in a pre-departure briefing course run by VSA in Wellington and complete all required pre-reading.

Final appointment

Final appointment will be subject to satisfactory medical and immigration clearances (costs covered by VSA), partner organisation acceptance, and successful completion of the pre-departure briefing course.

Family status

Partners or dependent children cannot accompany UniVols.

Fundraising

VSA funding stakeholders are both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and donors. We ask volunteers to fundraise to help cover the cost of sending volunteers throughout the Pacific and beyond. Fundraising can be as simple as doing something you enjoy with a group or friends, and our Fundraising team is available to help you every step of the way.

Vaccination requirements

Potential volunteers are advised that VSA's insurers require volunteers to be vaccinated, prior to departure, in accordance with the instructions of VSA's medical adviser. VSA covers the cost of any required vaccinations.

Children's Act

While on assignment, VSA volunteers may be required to work with children and/or may choose to participate in informal activities in their own time that involve interactions with children (such as coaching teams or teaching English). VSA is committed to the protection of vulnerable children and adults, which also includes meeting our commitment under the Children's Act 2014.

The information requested during the application process is necessary to assist VSA to determine applicant suitability to work and/or interact regularly with children, and is part of a series of pre-selection checks undertaken on all applicants for VSA assignments.

Volunteer package

The volunteer's package includes the following:

Reimbursements and grants

1. The volunteer may be entitled to an establishment grant to help them set up in their country of assignment, and a rest and respite grant after a specified period of active service in-country to encourage the volunteer to take a break away from the immediate assignment location. These grants depend on the length and location of the assignment. The volunteer's contract will specify any grant entitlements.
2. The volunteer will receive a monthly living allowance of PGK 2,100.

Accommodation

Basic, comfortable furnished accommodation will be sourced by VSA. In some circumstances, volunteers may be asked to share accommodation.

Airfares and baggage allowance

VSA will provide the volunteer with economy airfares to and from New Zealand for their assignment plus a baggage allowance.

Insurance

VSA will provide travel insurance to cover baggage and personal property, and non-routine medical expenses for the duration of the assignment. Further details of the insurance cover will be provided during the volunteer pre-departure briefing.

Utilities

VSA will reimburse volunteers reasonable expenses for household utilities while on assignment.

Final terms and conditions relating to the specific volunteer assignment will be confirmed in a personalised volunteer contract.