**NAAC – Best Practices**

## Format for Presentation of Best Practices

1. **Title of the Practice**

 Volunteer Services Organization (VSO)

2. **Objectives of the Practice**

 What are the objectives / intended outcomes of this "best practice" and what are the underlying principles or concepts of this practice (in about **100 - 200** words)?

 Volunteer Services Organization is the social upliftment umbrella of MAHE, which aims to provide a platform for students, faculty and faculty spouses to volunteer for social and community service in and around Manipal. It aspires to inculcate the spirit of selflessness, nurture the ability to give, and mold future leaders. The organization provides volunteers for various University events throughout the year, and is instrumental in carrying out multiple, weekly community outreach visits to slums, old age homes, orphanages, schools and hospital wards. Additionally, beach cleaning, cleanliness drives around Manipal, health awareness camps and blood donation drives are also carried out. Through these visits, VSO has continued to create a difference in the lives of people in the Udupi-Manipal community through sustained interactions, as well as instill empathy, kindness, sensitivity and courage among its volunteers.

3. **The Context**

 What were the contextual features or challenging issues that needed to be addressed in designing and implementing this practice (in about **100 - 200** words)?

Volunteer Services Organization employs a unique and easily replicable model to any college or University intending to involve its students in various acts of giving. It firmly believes that the essence of education is to be of service to the community. As per the National Education Policy, 2020, VSO aims to integrate the concept of United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in each of its activities. Every visit is curated keeping in mind at least one of the 17 SDG's, with the most prominent being quality education, and clean water and sanitation. Being University students, most of the volunteers are involved in technical or health-care research, and VSO hopes to harmonize volunteering and innovation to provide a unique platform to apply research, and also formulate practical solutions towards serving the community at large. It exposes volunteers to the extraordinary domain of social entrepreneurship, with the aim of bringing them together in an

endeavor to develop a more caring and a successful nation. VSO has a sustainable volunteering engagement and has evolved a system over the years for academic volunteering in higher educations in India.

4. **The Practice**
    Describe the practice and its uniqueness in the context of Indian higher education. What were the constraints / limitations, if any, faced (in about **100 - 200** words)?

VSO aims to respond to community needs; address the issues of the society; develop leadership potential and enhance collaborative learning. Newly admitted students are briefed about VSO's structure, joining process and personal and professional benefits. Students can register at the website and get their user Id and password after approval from the chief coordinator. Subsequently, they can log into their profile, and register for any weekend project. After a specific number of volunteering hours, and based on project need, they can become project coordinators, through a motivation letter and a personal interview. The project coordinators upload the project details (which are aligned with a specific SDG) on the website, and manage the scheduled activities, along with the registered volunteers. These project coordinators can later become student heads as VSO student ambassadors. All VSO activities are coordinated by the students and faculty mentors. The uniqueness of VSO is 6000+ active volunteers. Every week, 200+ volunteers participate in various community projects and contribute 400+ hours of volunteering. All this is recorded on the VSO website and is visible to volunteers in their profiles. At the end of the course, they can apply for a certificate stating the number of volunteering hours.

5. **Evidence of Success**
    Provide evidence of success such as performance against targets and benchmarks, review/results. What do these results indicate? Describe in about **100 – 200** words.

This can be seen in the growing number of active volunteers in VSO, who meaningfully engage themselves in community activities, inspite of their busy academic schedule. Over the years, VSO alumni have received international study scholarships, have joined and worked in social and development sectors, and have ventured into social entrepreneurship. They all attribute this to the exposure they received in VSO, where silos were broken, and they learned collaboratively with,

from and about each other. This engagement gave them an opportunity to see the world with a different lens and contribute back to the society. VSO, MAHE is seen as frontrunner in academic volunteering by the leaders of social and development sectors, where it sets an example of constant volunteer engagement in delivering collaborative projects. The volunteering journey which students undertake in VSO, gives them an opportunity to connect, an opportunity to develop, an opportunity to grow, an opportunity to self-discover, an opportunity to build a career in social work, an opportunity to make someone happy and an opportunity to create a better tomorrow.

6. **Problems Encountered and Resources Required**
Please identify the problems encountered and resources required to implement the practice (in about **100 - 200** words).

As a division of MAHE, VSO operates on the Manipal and Mangalore campuses and recently started in the Bengaluru campus. Its activities are restricted to the areas surrounding these locations. VSO has yet to explore partnerships with local NGOs that might strengthen its efforts. As of now, there are very few NGOs working on social and environmental concerns around these campuses. VSO has collaborated with national-level NGOs on a number of projects, including Daan Utsav and the National Youth Conference. These partnerships should be continued and extended to weekly projects.

The secret to the volunteers' long-term development is consistent mentorship. At the moment, each institution has a college coordinator who serves as a mentor. The time offered by the mentors to carry out different initiatives is being constrained by their various duties and responsibilities, as well as their personal and professional priorities. College coordinators should have regular chances for training and development along with monetary benefits.

7. **Notes (Optional)**
Please add any other information that may be relevant for adopting/ implementing the Best Practice in other Institutions (in about **100 - 200** words).

Any other information regarding Institutional Values and Best Practices which the university would like to include.