

# SUSU

**Southampton University  
Students' Union**

**External Trustee  
Candidate Briefing Pack  
November 2022**

**Would you like to help lead an organisation which is membership-led, vibrant and dynamic, and full of people working hard to support students to love their time at University?**

**If so, we have the perfect opportunity for you.**

### **Welcome from our Chair and Chief Executive**

Dear potential applicant,

Thank you for your interest in these exciting roles at SUSU (University of Southampton Students' Union). This application pack contains an overview of our organisation and what we think makes us special, an outline of the roles and information on how to apply. We are currently looking for two new trustees to join the ten other trustees on the Board; we are a membership-led organisation that exists to represent students and eight of our twelve trustee positions are held by current or recent students.

Our four external trustees complement the existing skills and experience on the Board with their professional background and we are currently particularly keen to hear from applicants with a background in finance, commercial management, sustainability or equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We are committed to maintaining the diversity of our Board and would welcome applications from non-male applicants. The eight student/elected officer trustee roles serve a one-year term and the external trustees are appointed for three years.

In addition to the Trustee Board, we have three sub-committees (Audit & Risk, Finance & Resources and Executive Performance & Reward); our external trustees chair these committees and are each expected to attend one of them as well as the Board meetings.

SUSU is a large students' union with approximately 70 core staff in addition to around 200 student support staff. Our charitable objectives are to represent and support students as well as providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities for students at the University of Southampton; we have an Advice Centre, Lettings agency, over 400 clubs and societies and hundreds of academic reps. In addition, we have a bar, coffee shop, vegan

café, two retail outlets and offer weekly evening events as well as regular club nights and balls.

We emerged from the challenging circumstances of Covid restrictions in a relatively strong position and this is an exciting time to join SUSU. We have a great strategy in place, our finances are solid and we have a new, internally-recruited Chief Executive. We are starting the second year of our strategy, and building on a strong performance against its KPIs at the end of the first year. Moving forward, we will be focusing on our approach to sustainability, EDI and our role in the local community.

We are largely funded by a grant from the University of Southampton, to whom we are accountable. Our relationship with the University is strong, and our ambitions and strategy broadly aligned with theirs. However, our role is to represent students and we are a separate, independent charity. We work hard to ensure our relationship with the University is based on honesty, integrity and trust, making it possible to have challenging conversations when we need to.

A students' union is unlike any other organisation – we are led by our members, most of whom are 18-25 years old, we are democratic and values-led and we need to provide a consistent offer to students, based on solid financial planning, while remaining agile enough to respond quickly to changing circumstances and student demand.

We hope this has piqued your interest and that you go on to submit a full application. If you would like further information or an informal conversation about the role, please contact Sonia Cottrell for a chat at [ceo@susu.org](mailto:ceo@susu.org)

With our best wishes,

**Oliver Murray**  
**President and Chair of the Board of Trustees**

**Sonia Cottrell**  
**Chief Executive**

## About SUSU

We are the University of Southampton Students' Union (SUSU). We are here to represent students at every level at the University of Southampton and make their experience unforgettable. Independent from the University, we're run by students, for students. We are a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. We are over 100 years old and proud to be part of one of the top 100 global universities. Key information about our view of the world and our place in it, taken from our current strategy, is shown below, whilst general information about SUSU, including our history, finances, governance and strategy is also available [here](#).

### Our Belief

We believe every student at Southampton should:

- feel part of a community and feel happy and safe.
- experience a world-class academic programme.
- be able to access top quality experiences outside the curriculum.
- feel listened to, able to influence their University experience and the world around them.

### Our Vision

Our vision is that every student loves their time at Southampton.

### Our Purpose

We exist to:

- Help students form friendship groups.
- Support students to complete their degree programmes.
- Give students a voice in the University and wider community.

### Our Missions

Our missions are the work we do to deliver our purpose; they are to:

- Strengthen student voice.
- Build student communities and provide great opportunities for students.
- Support students to complete their degree programmes.
- Create an outstanding and memorable university experience.
- Be a strong and sustainable organisation.

### Our Values

Our values inform how we work and behave and what we stand for. They are:

- *Stand Strong* – We stand up for students and make sure their voice is heard. We stand strong when facing challenges and are not afraid to be different. We think big and work to achieve great things.
- *Join Together* – We are an inclusive and diverse community of students and

- staff. We join together with each other, the University, and the local community to make a positive difference.
- *Take Responsibility* – We take action on the issues that matter to students and act with integrity. We continually work to be more sustainable, challenge discrimination and prejudice. We strive to be a force for good for students and wider society.

## Our Services

The services we offer students to further our missions are:

- A network of hundreds of elected student officers who represent their peers to the University and wider community. Our full-time student leaders are members of all major University Committees, including its governing body, and meet local MP's and government leaders to ensure students have a voice locally. More information about this work is [here](#).
- 250+ student-led societies including many national award-winning groups and covering a broad spectrum of activities, including performing arts and dance groups, religious and academic groups, special interest and media groups – more information is [here](#).
- 90+ student-led sports clubs, including martial arts, outdoor and indoor team sports, extreme- and water-sports; more information is [here](#).
- A charity fundraising programme that supports students to raise £thousands each year for local and national charities.
- A range of support services, including our Advice Centre, which supports hundreds of students each year and helps them complete their degree programmes, a peer-to-peer buddy scheme and a Lettings agency. More information is [here](#).
- A social enterprises directorate generating annual revenue of circa £5M, which includes:
  - an entertainment venue used for live entertainment, as a cinema, and a nightclub.
  - a large convenience store and a clothing and merchandised goods store.
  - a catering outlet and a coffee shop.
  - a range of bars with integral food offers.

More information about our social enterprises is [here](#).

## Legal Status

SUSU is a [Registered Charity](#) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG); this is a common legal structure employed by most incorporated students' unions. It is also the most popular and well-established corporate form for charities generally and the legal vehicle of choice for charities of a significant size or which have a large number of employees. The Trustees of SUSU are also directors of the Company and therefore subject to the law regarding directors' duties and responsibilities. As Trustees, they are also subject to charity law and responsible to the Charity Commission.

## Role and Function of Students' Unions

The Education Act (1994) defines a students' union as "*an association of the generality of students at an establishment...whose primary purposes include promoting the general interests of its members as students; or a representative body...whose principal purposes include representing the generality of students at an establishment in academic, disciplinary or other matters relating to the government of the establishment*".

The Act goes on to outline some key legal requirements of students' unions. The Act places the burden of compliance scrutiny for these requirements on the University, but as Trustees it is important to be aware of, and monitor performance to, these requirements. These (paraphrased) requirements are listed below:

1. The Union should have a written constitution.
2. The constitution should be subject to the approval of the University's governing body and be approved at least every five years.
3. A student should have the right not to be a member of the Union.
4. Appointment to major Union offices (i.e., the sabbatical officer roles) should be by a fairly and properly conducted election in a secret ballot of all members.
5. No person may hold sabbatical office for more than two years.
6. The financial affairs of the Union should be properly conducted, and the budget and accounts should be approved by the University's governing body.
7. The Union should produce financial reports at least annually, and these should be made available to the University and all students.
8. The procedure for allocating resources to student groups should be fair, set down in writing, and made available to all students.
9. The details of all the Union's affiliations should be made available to the University and all students.
10. All affiliations should be reviewed annually.
11. The Union should have a complaints procedure.

As a minimum, and at their heart, students' unions are organisations that exist to represent and further the interest of students, as a collective and as individuals. In many cases in the UK, this representative function is enhanced by the provision of services for students, whether non-commercial (or 'membership'), such as societies and welfare advice, or commercial (such as shops and bars). SUSU is no exception to this and we realise that there must be a balance between the three in terms of focus and performance. This belief is accentuated by the fact that the University, as our key funder, expects the funding it provides to result in the provision of services that enhance the student experience, playing a significant role in the recruitment and retention of students for the University.

## Role and Responsibilities of Trustees

The Charity Commission summarises Trustees as being “*responsible for the general control and management of the administration of a charity.*” In short, Trustees accept ultimate liability for the affairs and operations of a charity and, as such, must ensure that their level of influence and control is appropriate and sufficient to ensure that this duty is discharged. The Charity Commission outlines eleven requirements of Trustees; these are:

1. “*Trustees have and must accept **ultimate responsibility** for directing the affairs of a charity, and ensuring it is **solvent, well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes** for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up.*
2. *Trustees must ensure that the charity **complies with charity law**, and with the requirements of the **Charity Commission as regulator**; in particular, they must ensure that the **charity prepares reports on what it has achieved and Annual Returns and accounts** as required by law.*
3. *Trustees must ensure that the charity does not breach any of the requirements or rules set out in its **governing document** and that it remains true to the charitable purpose and objects set out there. SUSU’s governing document is its Memorandum and Articles of Association, which can be found [here](#).*
4. *Trustees must comply with the requirements of **other legislation** and other regulators which **govern the activities** of the charity. There is additional regulation that applies to students’ unions in the Education Act (1994).*
5. *Trustees must act with **integrity** and avoid any personal **conflicts of interest** or misuse of charity funds or assets.*
6. *Trustees must ensure that the Charity is and will remain **solvent**.*
7. *Trustees must use charitable funds and assets reasonably, and only in **furtherance of the charity's objects**.*
8. *Trustees must avoid undertaking activities that might place the charity's endowment, funds, assets, or reputation at **undue risk**.*
9. *Trustees must take special care when **investing the funds** of the charity or borrowing funds for the charity to use.*
10. *Trustees must use reasonable care and skill in their work as Trustees, **using their personal skills and experience** as needed to ensure that the charity is well-run and efficient.*
11. *Trustees must consider **getting professional advice** on all matters where there may be material risk to the charity, or where the trustees may be in breach of their duties.*

## Trustee Role Description

### Purpose

The Trustees are ultimately responsible, individually, and collectively, for all activity within SUSU. The Board of Trustees is responsible for setting the mission, vision, and values of SUSU and for ensuring delivery of organisational purpose. The Trustees ensure development of, and agree, a long-term strategy and approve and monitor plans to deliver the strategy.

### Key Responsibilities

Trustees are accountable for delivering the responsibilities detailed in the Terms of Reference of the Board of Trustees. Notwithstanding this, all Trustees have a duty to:

- Ensure that SUSU acts in accordance with its charitable objects, Articles of Association, and other guiding documents and, in particular, remains true to its Mission, Vision and Values.
- Help SUSU achieve its objectives and improve the lives of its members.
- Ensure that SUSU complies with all relevant legislation and regulations, including relevant charity acts and education acts.
- Adhere to the Trustee Code of Conduct and the [Charity Governance Code](#).
- Ensure that SUSU does not undertake activities that put its financial stability, members, or reputation at undue risk.
- Work with other trustees, staff, and volunteers in a constructive manner and for the greater good of SUSU.
- Participate fully in Board meetings and join one of the Board's Committees.
- Use their personal skills and experience to ensure SUSU is well run and efficient.
- Seek external professional advice where there may be material risk to SUSU or where the Trustees may be in breach of their duties, or at any other appropriate moment.
- Add value to the Board and SUSU through generating ideas, challenging the status quo, broadening thinking, and supporting and promoting innovation and creativity.

Student Trustees and Officer Trustees have a particular responsibility to:

- Ensure decisions of the Board and its Committees take account of the needs and views of SUSU's members.
- Ensure SUSU considers the needs and views of all student groups, for example postgraduate, international or part-time students.
- Ensure effective communication between SUSU and its members.

External Trustees have a particular responsibility to:

- Use their knowledge, skills and experience to improve the decision-making of the Board and its Committees.
- Support and empower the student and officer trustees.
- Act as mentors, as required, for new, less experienced trustees.

### **Person Specification**

Trustees should be:

- Committed to the purpose, objects, and values of SUSU.
- Constructive about other trustees' opinions in discussions and in response to staff members' and others' contributions at meetings.
- Able to act reasonably and responsibly when undertaking Board responsibilities.
- Able to maintain strict confidentiality.
- Clear about the importance and purpose of Board and Committee meetings and committed to preparing for them adequately and attending them regularly.
- Able to analyse information and, when necessary, challenge constructively.
- Able to make collective decisions and stand by them.
- Able to respect boundaries between management and governance functions.
- Excellent role models who promote the highest standards of probity and integrity.
- Firm supporters of equality of opportunity and committed to promoting diversity.

## Board of Trustees Terms of Reference

### Purpose

The Board of Trustees has ultimate accountability and responsibility for directing the affairs of SUSU, ensuring it is solvent, well-run, and delivering its objects, as detailed in the Articles of Association. The Board must ensure that the Union complies with relevant legislation and regulation, that the Union delivers for its current members whilst protecting its ability to deliver for future generations. The Board must protect the reputation of the Union and monitor the performance of senior management.

### Remit

#### Compliance

- To ensure compliance with the objects, purposes and values of the organisation and with its Governing Documents.
- To ensure that the organisation complies with relevant laws, regulations and requirements of its regulators.

#### Reputation

- To protect the reputation of the Union.

#### Strategic governance

- To review the Union's Governing Document, Mission, Vision and Values every five years and ensure a Union strategic plan is developed and implemented in line with these values, vision and mission.
- To review on a continuous basis the Union's governance arrangements and identify opportunities to improve the Union's governance. To include an annual skills, experience and diversity audit of the Board, identifying additional skills, experience, characteristics and backgrounds required to provide a balanced and effective Board.
- To determine and regularly review a Scheme of Delegated Authority and internal control measures including establishing committees of the Board as required. To appoint members to committees, empowering them to act on behalf of the Board within agreed parameters.

#### Finance

- To ensure the solvency, financial strength and good performance of the organisation, including ensuring preparation of the Union's Financial Statements and discussion of any issues arising from the External Auditor's report.
- To approve the Union's annual financial statements before submission to the AGM
- To approve the Union's annual budget

#### Risk management

- To determine the Union's approach to risk management, including the Union's risk appetite, and risk management policy.

#### Staff



- To review and approve the Union's terms and conditions of employment and other staffing policies and to consider matters relating to staff discipline and grievance as required.
- To oversee the appointment (and if necessary the dismissal) of the Chief Executive, including approval of remuneration arrangements. To oversee the performance of the Chief Executive and to appoint members (normally the Chair and Deputy Chair) to appraise and performance-manage the Chief Executive and wider Senior Leadership team.

### **Board Development**

- To carry out regular skills, experience and diversity audits of the Board and identify any skills, experience, characteristics and backgrounds that are required to provide a balanced and effective Board.

### **Chair**

Union President

### **Deputy Chair**

External Trustee appointed by Board

### **Membership**

- Union President (Chair)
- 3 x Sabbatical Trustees
- 4 x Student Trustees
- 4 x External Trustees (including Deputy Chair)

### **In attendance**

- 1 x non-trustee Sabbatical Officer
- Chief Executive
- Senior Leadership Team

### **Quoracy**

6 Trustees including 1 x Sabbatical (in addition to Chair), 1 x Student and 1 x External

### **Meetings**

At least four meetings per annum

### **Resources**

- Any financial resources necessary to achieve the Board's objective.
- Any management resources necessary to achieve the Board's objective.
- Chief Executive to ensure the drafting of papers and reports for the Board as well as to develop the agenda for Board meetings in conjunction with the Chair.
- Admin support role to take minutes and collate papers for Committee meetings.

## Further Information

### Term of Office

Terms of office for external trustees are three years and external trustees may serve up to two terms of office, subject to approval for a second term by the Board of Trustees.

### Remuneration

The post is not remunerated, i.e. it is a voluntary and unpaid position.

### Expenses

All out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed, this will include reimbursement for standard travel costs to all meetings and all other reasonable costs incurred whilst carrying out the duties of being a SUSU Trustee.

### Expected time commitment

The time commitment for this post is expected to be about 5-7 days per annum, including:

- Attending all Board meetings (there are generally 3 full Trustee Board meetings per year which may be online, hybrid or in person).
- Attending pre-Board briefings prior to each Board meeting.
- Membership of at least one Board Committee (2-3 meetings per annum).
- Other ad hoc events, training, and opportunities.

Trustees are also expected to take the time to be fully familiar with all paperwork relating to Board and Committee meetings, prior to those meetings.

## Application and selection process

To apply please submit a CV and a cover letter that explains your motivation for applying. Please also complete our Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, which is included with this recruitment pack, and include it with your application. Completed applications should be emailed to [ceo@susu.org](mailto:ceo@susu.org) before 17.00 on January 5<sup>th</sup>.

### Interviews

We intend to invite all shortlisted candidates to interview week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> January but can be flexible about timescales.

### Further Information

If you require any further information or would like to discuss the role before submitting an application, please email Sonia Cottrell at [ceo@susu.org](mailto:ceo@susu.org)