



# EXTERNAL TRUSTEE —

# RECRUITMENT

# PACK

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**Living Wage**  
Employer



[www.uwsunion.org.uk](http://www.uwsunion.org.uk)



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Paisley, PA1 2HB



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# Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming an External Trustee of the University of the West of Scotland Students' Union (UWS Students' Union).

This is an important moment for our organisation. We are building on a period of strong performance, record student engagement, and significant democratic reform. At the same time, we are preparing to develop our next Strategic Plan, which will set the direction of the Students' Union for the years ahead.

We are looking for external trustees who share our commitment to social justice, widening access, strong governance, and meaningful student voice, and who can bring skills, insight and challenge to support the next phase of our development.

A key value of our students' union is promoting Equality and Diversity - Advancing equality and breaking down barriers in all that we do. Applications from individuals are encouraged regardless of their race, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability status or any other characteristic. We are happy to discuss any reasonable adjustments you may require in the recruitment process or once in the post.

This pack is designed to give you information on the role of a Trustee and our Students' Union. If you would like to find out more, you can contact our Chief Executive, Sinead Daly, by emailing [sinead.daly@uws.ac.uk](mailto:sinead.daly@uws.ac.uk) to arrange a suitable time to speak.

If you would like to apply for the post, please complete the Application Form, Trustee Declaration and the Diversity Monitoring Form. Please do not send a CV as it will not be considered. **Closing date for applications is 10 am on Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2026.**

Please note that all applications and relevant recruitment documents will be held confidentially and destroyed 6 months after the closing date, apart from documents relating to the successful applicant.

We look forward to receiving your completed application.

# About Our Union

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## Our Services

### WELFARE AND ADVICE

Provides impartial information, advice, representation and advocacy to students.

**Fun Fact:** 91% of students told us that they felt better after contacting our advice service



### REPRESENTATION

We support Student Reps to feel confident in their roles. Student Reps strive to enrich the learning experience of current and future UWS students.

**Fun Fact:** 97% of Reps who received training found it valuable.



### SOCIETIES

We support students to establish and run Student Societies and avail of volunteering opportunities. This helps students to make friends, gain experience, and develop their skills.

**Fun Fact:** We have 64 societies with over 1,100 members.



### SOCIAL EVENTS

Our two events venues in Paisley and Ayr provide a safe and fun space for students to enjoy themselves and make lasting memories.

**Fun Fact:** We organised 28 welcome events with 1,429 attendees.

### We are a democratic charity that is led by students.

UWS Students' Union is a democratic, student-led charity representing over 19,000 students across five campuses: Paisley, Ayr, Lanarkshire, Dumfries and London. All students are automatically members of the Union.

We work in partnership with the University, while remaining an independent charity that is accountable to students. Our role is to represent students' interests, support their wellbeing and success, and create opportunities for connection, leadership and belonging.

### A Widening Access University

We are proud to work alongside a university with one of the most diverse student populations in Scotland. Our student body reflects a very different demographic to much of the higher education sector:

- 75% of students are aged over 21
- 45% are the first in their family to attend university
- 30% of new entrants study full-time
- 51% of students are Scottish-domiciled
- 43% are international students

These characteristics shape everything we do as a Students' Union. Our trustees play a critical role in ensuring our strategy, services and governance are responsive to the lived realities of our students.

The Students' Union is a registered Scottish Charity, number SC049356 and Company Limited by Guarantee, number SC631885.



Despite significant pressures across the higher education sector, UWS Students' Union has delivered strong outcomes for students in recent years. These include:

- Record-breaking democratic participation, including a landmark referendum with 93% student support for major democratic reforms
- Sustained high satisfaction with our Advice and Welfare Service, supporting hundreds of students each year through academic, financial and wellbeing challenges
- Growth in societies, representation networks and student-led activity across all campuses, including significant expansion at our London campus
- Strong digital engagement, with our communications recognised across the sector for best practice in reaching and engaging students
- Improved organisational resilience through governance reform, strengthened financial oversight and investment in staff development

Our trustees have played an essential role in providing oversight, assurance and strategic direction through this period of growth and change.

## WISE VALUES

### WELCOMING

Always friendly and supportive, providing opportunities to meet new people, learn new skills and have fun.



### INNOVATIVE

We are an ambitious Union and are unafraid to try new ways of working to ensure students receive the best services and university experience.



### STUDENT LED

We are led by students for students and ensure that student voices are at the heart of everything we do.



### EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Advancing equality and breaking down barriers in all that we do.

## Our Democratic Structures

UWS Students' Union is undergoing the most significant democratic reform in its history.

Following a two-year Democracy Review shaped by extensive student consultation, students voted overwhelmingly to approve new democratic and governance arrangements. These changes have now been formally adopted and are embedded within the Union's Memorandum and Articles of Association and Bye-Laws, which together set out the Union's constitutional framework and legal obligations.

In line with these governing documents, the Board of Trustees has been restructured to strengthen student leadership, ensure effective governance, continuity, and external oversight. The Board will comprise:

- The President and Vice President Education, who serve as trustees by virtue of their elected roles
- Up to four Student Trustees, appointed in accordance with the Articles and Bye-Laws
- Up to six External Trustees, appointed for their skills, experience and independence.

This structure reflects the Union's commitment to being student-led while meeting the requirements of charity law, the Education Act 1994 and OSCR guidance. It ensures that student voice remains central to decision-making, supported by a Board with the experience and capacity to provide robust scrutiny and long-term stewardship.

From 2025/26 onwards, the Union is implementing these agreed constitutional arrangements alongside the introduction of new student voice structures, including School and Campus Assemblies, and clearer frameworks for student policy-making. Trustees play a critical role in ensuring these reforms are implemented effectively, reviewed proportionately, and remain aligned with the Union's charitable objectives.

## Developing Our Next Strategic Plan

The Students' Union is entering a period of strategic renewal. Our current Strategic Plan concludes in 2025/26, and we will shortly begin the process of developing our next multi-year strategy.

This will be an evidence-led process, informed by student insight, staff experience, external peer review and trustee oversight. As an External Trustee, you will:

- Help shape the long-term vision and priorities of the Union
- Provide constructive challenge and sector insight
- Support the Board in balancing ambition with financial and organisational sustainability

This is a genuine opportunity to influence the future direction of a values-driven, student-centred organisation.

*Our vision is to create a better future for UWS students and the world around us.*

# Who this role is likely to suit

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## Skills and Experience Sought

We are seeking External Trustees with significant senior leadership experience, who are comfortable operating at Board level and can bring strategic insight, challenge and assurance.

Following a recent review of Board skills and capacity, our priority areas for this recruitment round are:

This role is likely to suit individuals who:

- Have held senior leadership roles (for example, at director, partner, executive or equivalent level)
- Are experienced in operating at Board or senior decision-making level, with a strong understanding of governance versus management
- Enjoy working alongside elected student leaders, and are confident in supporting, mentoring and constructively challenging in equal measure
- Are motivated by social impact, widening access to education and improving outcomes for under-represented groups
- Are comfortable contributing in a values-driven, student-focused organisation where perspectives may differ from traditional corporate or public-sector boards

We welcome applicants from a wide range of sectors, including the voluntary, public, and private sectors. Experience of charity governance is valuable but not essential; we are particularly interested in individuals who can translate senior leadership experience into effective trustee oversight.

Above all, we are seeking trustees who understand the value of student-led organisations and are motivated by widening access, equity and social impact.

- **Finance and income generation** – including financial oversight, audit and risk, income diversification, commercial activity or social enterprise
- **Strategic planning and organisational change** – supporting long-term vision, transformation, and delivery in complex or resource-constrained environments
- **People leadership and HR** – including workforce strategy, organisational culture, governance of HR matters and change management
- **Digital, communications or data-informed decision-making** – using insight, analytics and digital approaches to improve impact, engagement and accountability.



External Trustees play a vital role in the governance and strategic direction of a student-led organisation.

Trustees are responsible for ensuring the Students' Union operates in line with its charitable purpose, legal obligations and strategic priorities. Key responsibilities include:

- Setting strategic direction and monitoring progress
- Safeguarding the Union's finances, reputation and assets
- Supporting and constructively challenging the Chief Executive and senior staff
- Bringing independent judgement and expertise to a Board led by elected student officers
- Upholding the Nolan Principles of public life

Trustees are not involved in day-to-day operational management, but use their skills and experience to support effective decision-making.

### Eligibility and Legal Responsibilities

As a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, Trustees are both charity trustees and company directors, with associated legal duties.

Trustee names are published on the Scottish Charity Register (OSCR) and Companies House.

To be eligible, applicants must not:

- have unspent convictions involving dishonesty or deception
- be an undischarged bankrupt
- be disqualified from acting as a company director

Further guidance is available from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

## Person Specification

### Essential Criteria

- Significant senior leadership experience, with a track record of contributing to organisational strategy and decision-making
- Commitment to UWS Students' Union and its core values
- An interest in the work of Students' Unions and an understanding of the Higher Education sector context
- Strong strategic thinking, with the ability to analyse complex information and exercise sound judgement
- Ability to operate effectively at Board level, including providing constructive challenge and independent, objective judgement
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Ability to adapt to the dynamic needs of a student-led organisation
- A clear commitment to equality of opportunity and valuing equality, diversity and inclusion
- Understanding of effective governance in organisations (public, private or voluntary sector), including the role, responsibilities and legal duties of charity trustees
- Experience of leading or contributing to organisational strategy and change at a senior level

### Desirable Criteria

- Finance, audit, income generation or commercial development
- Digital Communications – knowledge of building brand and storytelling skills
- People leadership / HR and organisational culture



## **Time commitment and location**

The Board meets quarterly, with meetings normally held midweek in the early evening. Trustees also participate in sub-committees, which meet periodically throughout the year.

Board meetings are usually held at one of our Scottish campuses. Video conferencing facilities are available for trustees who live further afield. Sub-committee meetings are typically held online. Trustees may also be invited to attend occasional development or strategic planning sessions and key Union events.

## **Term of office**

The term of office for External Trustees is four years. Trustees may be eligible for reappointment for a further term of up to four years, in accordance with the Union's governing documents.

## **Training and Support**

All trustees receive training and support to help them fulfil their responsibilities effectively. This includes a structured induction and access to development opportunities through organisations such as the National Union of Students (NUS), OSCR, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, the University, and peer students' unions.

External Trustees also play an important role in supporting and mentoring Student Trustees, recognising that student trustees may change more frequently.

## **Reward**

Trustees serve on a voluntary basis. A structured induction and ongoing support, including relevant training opportunities, will be provided. The role offers the opportunity to contribute your expertise to the governance of the Students' Union and to support work that improves the lives and experiences of UWS students.

## **Expenses**

All reasonable expenses, such as travel to Board Meetings, will be reimbursed in line with our Expenses Policy.



Please ensure you send a completed **Application Form by 10 am on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup> 2026**. Candidates are also required to read and sign the Trustee Declaration and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, which will be separated from your application prior to shortlisting.

## Process

The appointment process is handled by the Nominations Committee – a subcommittee of the Board. If you are selected for an interview, you will be contacted to advise you of the date and time of the interview and the process thereafter. Candidates will be given a tour of the Students' Union as part of their interview process (unless the interview is being conducted remotely).

## Guidance on completing the application

As part of our commitment to equal opportunities, candidates for each post are treated equally. We remove all identifying personal information before any applications are passed on to the appointments panel. It is **very** important that your completed form contains both the information we want about your skills and experience, and the information you want to give us.

Questions 45 is the most important part of your application. This is your chance to explain why you want to be a Trustee and what experience, skills and knowledge you can bring to the role. **Ensure you refer to the Essential and Desirable Criteria outlined on page 6.**

Thank you for your interest in this role, and we look forward to hearing from you.



# THANK YOU

We hope you have found this application pack helpful. Please contact [recruitment@uwsunion.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@uwsunion.org.uk) if you have any questions.



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