

# Trustee Information Pack

April 2025



University of York  
**Students'**  
**Union**

## York SU - Our Union

**22,000** students from across the globe

**7** elected sabbatical officers

**1,100** volunteers across 17 student-led volunteering projects

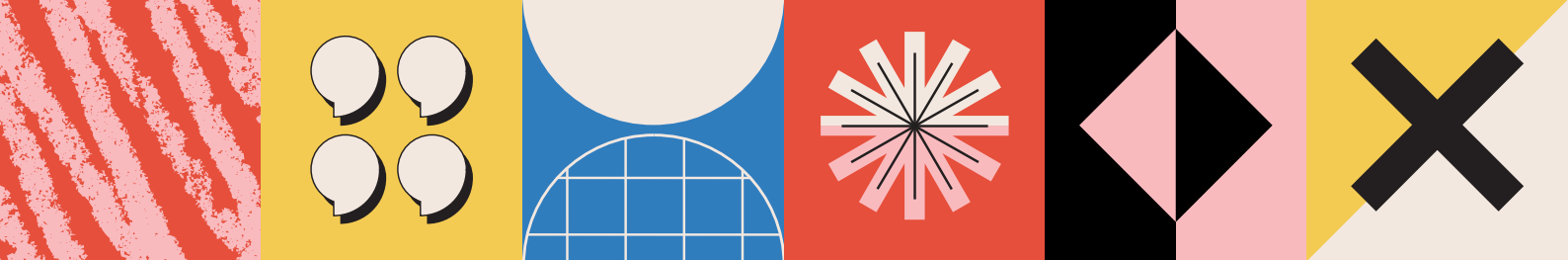
**60** sports clubs

**220** student societies

**150** staff

## Our mission

Building power and creating connection that breaks down barriers and enables members to thrive as students and citizens.



## Our beliefs

- We believe in the transformative power of education.
- We believe in the capacity of people to build a better society.
- We believe the role of a union is to empower, support and challenge.

## Our values

### Ambition

We are unashamedly ambitious. Students and their success is the reason we exist, and we will do everything in our power to work to their unique needs, journeys, experiences and communities.

### Innovation

We're not afraid of failure. We bring creativity, sensitivity and integrity to all our work meaning that when things don't pan out how we expected, we own it, learn from it and always try again.

### Social Conscience

We are bigger than just ourselves. We care and are committed to our vibrant community, celebrating and encouraging difference and diversity.

### Authenticity

We are authentic and honest - building trust, rather than just focusing on our own power, privilege and legitimacy. We are always open about the needs, complexities, opportunities and challenges we all face now and in the future.

### Partnership

We recognise we can't work alone - we know and are open about our limitations and believe that collective action and solidarity is what makes our work special. We weave and connect what already exists, build on common ground and focus on what unites us rather than divides us.

# Our organisation

The University of York Students' Union is the representative body for 22,000+ students at the University of York. Over 60 years old and growing rapidly, the Union provides a wide range of charitable and trading services and activities designed to improve students' lives, create student employment opportunities, and support students to make the most of their time at York.

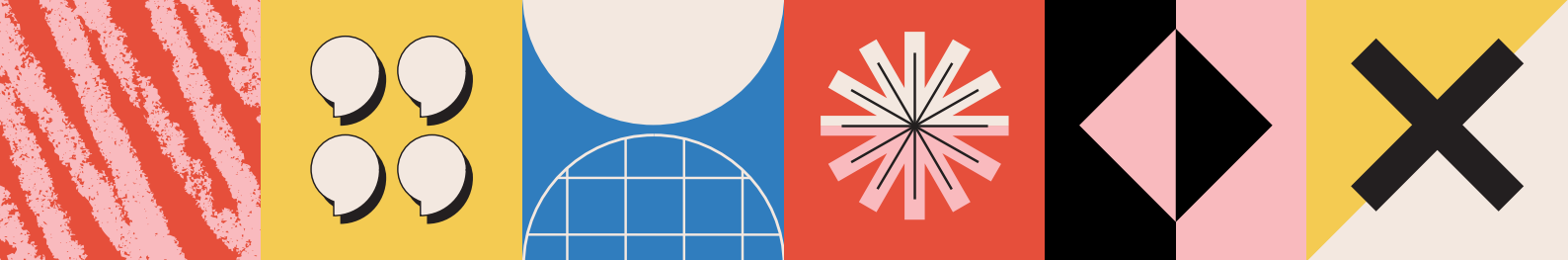
Despite the inevitable impacts of both the pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis, our adaptability and ability to innovate has brought about rapid growth over the last 10 years which has seen our turnover exceed £5m p.a., our student participation increase, our staff population grow and our estate evolve. Our employee population approaches 150 staff including creating employment opportunities for nearly 100 part-time student staff across all areas of our operations.

***Our goal is simple: to provide our students with the best student experience by offering a range of enhanced activities, representation, and support services.***

# Our strategy

The Union's strategy, developed as we navigated the post-pandemic period, saw us look critically at our beliefs and ambitions as an organisation and think deeply about the future and the shifting economic, social and political landscape as we explored what really mattered to our members.

Underpinned by the need to ensure organisational resilience, and shaped by a dual focus on the power of collectivism, and a desire to role model and practise higher standards of equity and inclusion, our strategy is helping to lay the foundations for the future, in particular through the partnership approach that underpinned the Union's 2024 merger with the University's Graduate Students' Association.



## Our impact

This year marked big changes for the Union, including the final stages of the merger to form York SU - a single, united Students' Union for all York students. Alongside our new name came a fresh new brand that better reflects the values and spirit of our diverse community of members.

We introduced a 7 member sabbatical team and strengthened our focus on inclusive, intersectional representation. Support and representation for postgraduate and international students remains a key priority.

The merger streamlines service access for students, reduces duplication, and consolidates and strengthens student representation. Given our ethos as students' unions, the power of collectivism has been a real driver alongside the opportunity to bolster organisational health and enhance resilience and efficiency in challenging times.

### Continuing to enhance student life at York

Against the context of a tough financial environment, the Union focused on providing continuity, building a sense of community and putting money back into students' pockets by supporting students to manage the basics.

We served up 60p hot meals and distributed 3,500 fruit and root bags to ensure access to free, healthy food across the year. We provided fair, flexible jobs; paying over £400k in student salaries. Our Activities Access Grants continued to widen access to societies, sports and volunteering; over 500 grants saw £31,700 in funding distributed.

Our Advice team supported 581 students to navigate the challenges of University life, while student-led efforts to help the community raised £127,459 for charity and saw over 5,200 hours of volunteer time logged across 17 projects.

## Focusing on the future

This year, we made big progress toward becoming a more sustainable organisation. In terms of financial security, new commercial partnerships with York street-food seller, YUZU and digital marketer, Native helped diversify our income.

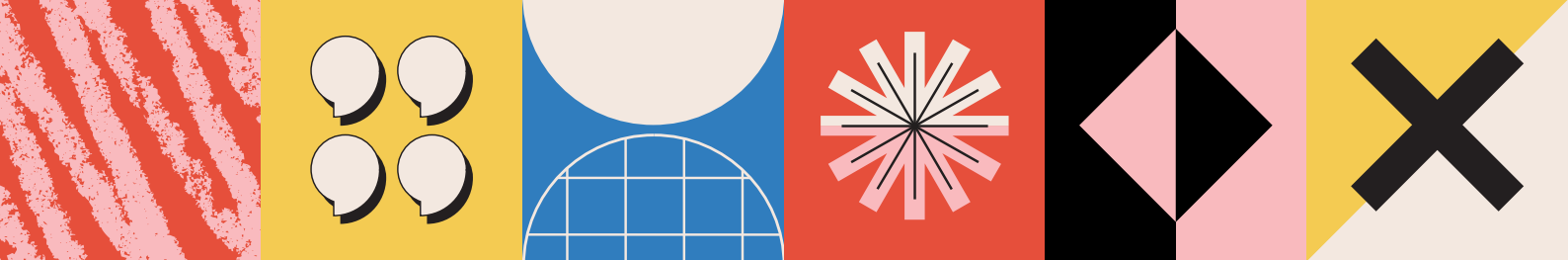
In parallel, we continued to develop an ambitious roadmap towards improving environmental sustainability. We joined a pioneering coalition of SUs capturing best practice and harnessing collective action through a sustainability charter, and using a science-based approach to map the carbon footprint of every dish. We ended the year with significant carbon and waste reductions - earning an NUS Sustainability Award. Looking ahead, we'll continue this work through a whole institution approach to sustainability and a new partnership with ESAY on the accredited Responsible Futures Scheme.

## Our commitment to equality and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our values. We celebrate our diverse and unique communities and are committed to ensuring that equity and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do. Colleagues across the SU are proud of our values and care about creating and supporting diverse teams that are inclusive of age, background, disability, gender, identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and lived experience.

Our latest impact report detailing some of our proudest achievements from the last year in more detail is [here](#).

Our latest consolidated and audited accounts are available [here](#).



# What we are looking for

We are looking for both external (lay) and student trustees and need individuals who can bring fresh perspectives, challenge our thinking, and inspire growth as we adapt to the ever-evolving needs of a diverse student community.

## External Trustees

We are particularly keen to hear from candidates with expertise in:

- **Finance and accounting**
- **Commercial development**
- **Sustainability and ESG (environmental, social & governance)**
- **Charity, Company or Media Law.**

External Trustees aren't required to have student union experience, or to have studied at the University of York.

## Student Trustees

We are also looking to recruit new Student Trustees, current University of York students with a passion for representation.

As a Student Trustee, your knowledge of the student experience will be key in ensuring student voices are central to our strategy and that we deliver the best possible experience for all University of York students. We welcome applications from all registered students, regardless of year, study mode, or background. We ask that student trustees are available for a minimum of one academic year.

Our Trustee roles are more than just volunteer roles; they provide an opportunity to develop leadership skills, contribute meaningfully to our community, and be part of a vibrant and impactful organisation.

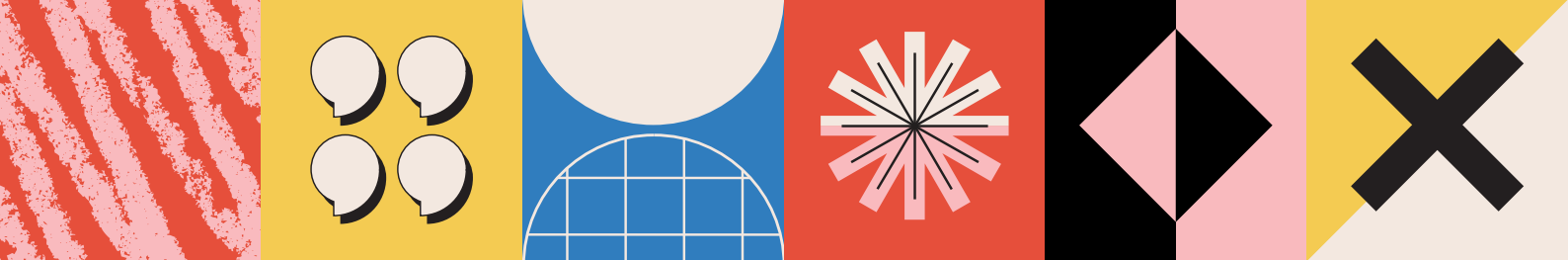
# Our governance

The Trustee Board has collective responsibility for the organisation with a particular focus on its strategic direction, financial sustainability and practice and charity and legal compliance. It carries out this duty mindful of the will of student members and respectful to the membership led policy processes.

The Board is comprised of seven sabbatical officer trustees, elected to cover a range of portfolio areas, alongside at least three 'ordinary student' trustees, current students (with at least one postgraduate and one undergraduate representative) who are selected for their particular areas of interest of expertise, and at least three external lay trustees recruited for their professional experience, knowledge and expertise. The Trustee Board (up to 15 people in total) is supported by the organisation's full time Chief Executive and senior leadership team. The board is chaired by the Union Affairs Officer with an external trustee as Deputy Chair.

The Trustee Board has two formally constituted subcommittees; HR Committee and Finance Committee. In addition, the Board constitutes working groups and occasional sub committees, as business requires.





# About the role of trustee

## Role responsibilities

**Trustees have the following broad responsibilities:**

1. To ensure that the charity has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction and is focused on achieving these.
2. Responsibility, with the CEO and other trustees, for the charity's performance and culture.
3. Ensuring the charity complies with all legal and regulatory requirements.
4. Acting as guardians of the charity's assets by taking due care of their security and proper use.
5. Ensuring that the charity's governance is of the highest possible standard.

All trustees need to be sympathetic to the aims of the organisation. More generally trustees should share a commitment to the broader values of the student movement; student representation, student rights and the student experience – and the importance of students having a platform to organise together to help make these values a reality.

The role requires careful balance; trustees need to respect the democratic will of a diverse, vibrant and vocal membership where possible but also be willing to think creatively and mitigate potential risk in any proposals. An eye for detail to ensure that the Union is being well-governed and the ability to see future opportunities are also important.

We adopt the [Nolan Principles](#) for all our trustees expecting them to act with high standards of integrity, to understand equality and diversity and to demonstrate their understanding of this individually and collectively. Board members should pragmatically hold one another and subsequently the organisation to account in striving to provide accessible services, opportunities and events that welcome and celebrate the full diversity of our membership.

Whilst the **position of trustee is voluntary and unpaid**, reasonable out of pocket expenses will be paid.

## Time commitment

The Trustee Board meets at least four times a year, usually from late afternoon (around 5pm) into early evening.

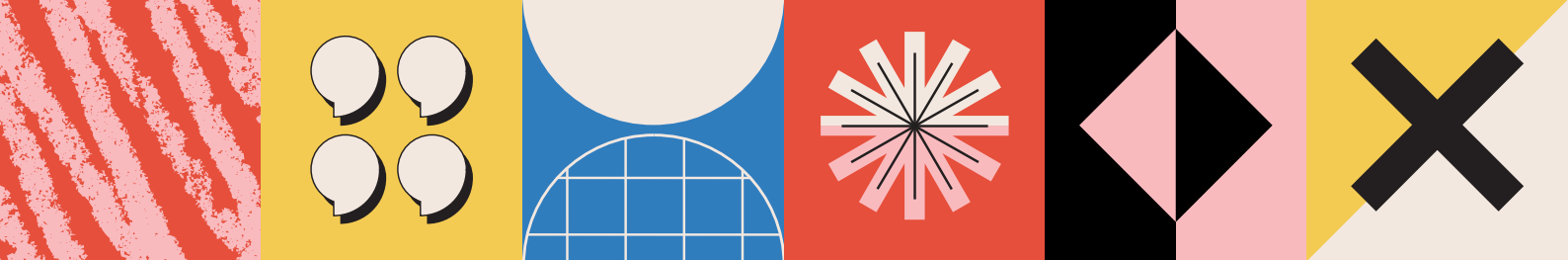
Both the Finance Committee and the HR Committee meet at least three times a year.

Applicants should anticipate a total of 9 days commitment per annum.

## Term of office

Student trustees may remain in office for a period of up to two years and may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms, subject to continued registration as a student.

Lay trustees may remain in office for a period of up to three years and may serve a maximum of two terms.



# Appointment process

Trustees will be selected by an Appointments Committee comprising existing members of the Trustee Board.

## Application process and key dates

To apply please submit an online application ([apply.yorksu.org](https://apply.yorksu.org)) by midday on 6 June 2025.

Applications will explore candidates' volunteering experience; motivations and contributions, and skills through providing:

- A summary of your previous **volunteering experience**;
- A short **personal statement** that covers your reasons for applying, what you hope to get out of the experience and why you believe you could make a positive contribution to the organisation as a Trustee;
- A summary of your **relevant skills, knowledge and expertise** and why you believe these attributes would help you be a successful Trustee.

## Information session: 23 May 2025, 1pm

An online information session will provide an opportunity for prospective trustees to find out more information about the organisation and our Trustee Board.

Please contact [studentengagement@yorksu.org](mailto:studentengagement@yorksu.org) to register your interest in attending this session.

- **Closing date: 6 June 2025 - midday**
- **Interviews: 23 June - 24 June 2025**
- **Term of office:** We anticipate new Trustees will take up their roles by 1 August 2025.

## EDI monitoring and skills assessment

To support EDI monitoring candidates are invited to complete our [EDI monitoring form](#). Please note that information shared is confidential, for monitoring purposes only and will not form part of the selection process.

Prospective candidates are also invited to complete the trustee [skills assessment](#).

## Eligibility

Student trustees must be a student at the time of their appointment and continuously over their period of office, with no break in their student status.

Charities are expected to avoid appointing individuals that are disqualified from becoming a trustee. The reasons for disqualification are included in the Government's '[disqualifying reasons table](#)' and include:

- having an unspent conviction for certain offences (including any that involve dishonesty or deception)
- being an undischarged bankrupt or subject to one of a range of insolvency orders
- being on the sex offenders' register.

## Training

Full training will be provided both prior to, and in the early weeks of the term of office. All incoming trustees will be invited to attend Board Development Days as they arise. Any additional training needs will be explored as needed.

In understanding the nature of the role, interested candidates may wish to read more about their legal obligations and how the Charity Commission requires trustees to use their skills and experience to support their charities, helping them achieve their aims and to always act in the best interests of the charity.

The Charity Commission's [guidance on what's involved](#) with being a charity trustee may be helpful background reading.

## Further information

If you would like any further information, or an informal conversation please contact our Central Resources Director, Kate Williams ([k.williams@yorksu.org](mailto:k.williams@yorksu.org)) or our Representation and Student Support Director, Rachel Barber ([r.barber@yorksu.org](mailto:r.barber@yorksu.org)).

Thank you again for your interest in the role.

**Make the  
most of  
your time  
at York**



University of York  
**Students'  
Union**