



University of York
Students' Union

Student Trustee Information Pack

May 2024

An Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Trustee of the University of York Students' Union.

The Board is the highest decision making body of the York SU. Its role is to provide strategic direction and oversee the work of the Union; an organisation that exists to advance the education of students at the University of York and help students to make the most out of their time here, both in and outside the classroom. The Union works hard to deliver a vision of university life where every student can realise their full potential by:

- Supporting and promoting students' interests and welfare during their course of study and representing and advising students.
- Serving as the recognised representative body between students and the University of York, as well as other external bodies.
- Offering various social, cultural, sports, and recreational events and platforms for students to engage in discussions, debates, and personal growth.

The Union's governance as a student-led organisation and a registered charity is exciting, challenging and critically important to our work. Overseen by our Trustee Board, the Union has been on a real journey in recent years. Following a period of consultation with our student members, the Union will launch a new brand identity over the summer, reflecting its expanded remit as the single students' union representing **all** students at the University of York from August 2024. The coming years will see a more purposeful approach to engaging with all students, from both postgraduate and undergraduate academic pathways and from all walks of life. Our aim is to be a Union for all students, providing engagement and representation activities and support services that encourage all students to make the most of their time at York. As we look to new ways of studying, supporting students and working, York SU has an exciting opportunity to recruit three lay and two new student trustees to bring new knowledge, insight and ideas to the Board in a key period.

Serving as a Trustee will offer you a great opportunity to make a positive difference to the lives of students while gaining experience of strategic decision-making in a board-setting that will give you the opportunity to make a real difference to students' lives.

This pack contains an overview of the Trustee role and more information about the appointment process. If you would like any further information, or an informal conversation please contact our Central Resources Director, Kate Williams (k.williams@yusu.org) or our Representation and Student Support Director, Rachel Barber (r.barber@yusu.org).

Thank you again for your interest in the role.

About the University of York Students' Union

The University of York Students' Union is the representative body for 22,000+ students who come from all over the world to study at 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. Among the largest registered charities in North Yorkshire, we aim to be amongst the best students' unions in the UK.

Rapid growth over the last 10 years 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 operation. The Union has been through a real period of change, driven by our strategic plan.

With a focus firmly on building our members' ability to create change and to build connections, our strategic approach has been underpinned by creative thinking with our students, our funders, our staff and our wider stakeholders about what our future priorities should be and where our new opportunities are. We are conscious of the need to ensure high-quality services that enhance student life and reach and inspire as wide a demographic of students as possible, but also recognise that the need to diversify income opportunities is key, particularly given a challenging financial context. We think that strong organisational credibility, a creative and entrepreneurial spirit and students' expectations and hunger for great student life can drive further growth in existing and new areas as we develop new partnerships and collaborations, secure investment into student services and build relationships on and off campus.

Our organisation incorporates a charity and a subsidiary trading arm. The organisation as a whole provides the following:

A wide range of student opportunities:

- Including over 220 student societies with one of the widest range of student interest groups per capita of any students' union in the UK.
- An award-winning range of student media groups from broadcast radio and TV to print media.
- A diverse volunteering programme, linking students to volunteering opportunities locally and across the world, building their skills, networks and experiences while supporting wider society and providing fundraising opportunities. Students raised £148,471 through the Union's RAG, Clubs, Societies and Volunteering Projects, and Colleges at York in the last academic year, benefitting over 30 local, national and international charities.
- Sports opportunities at every level with over 60 sports clubs; 65 British University and Colleges (BUCs) teams competing across the UK; an annual College Varsity contest against Durham; and Roses, Europe's largest, 143 fixture strong, annual inter-University sport competition.

Student voice and representation:

- A student voice team developing a network of volunteer representatives championing student academic and liberation interests across the University, the city and wider afield. We recruit, elect and train reps to support and inform decision making at every level of the University each year.
- A students as researchers programme that offers insights into students' lived experiences and unique opportunities to co-produce research. This work, combined with wider insight and research informs policy across the Union, the University and nationally on matters impacting students' lives.
- A specialist student advice and support centre providing one to one support for over 580 students across the 2022-23 academic year.
- Work with the University to support its Access and Participation Plan, including the development of a 'student expert panel' to ensure students with lived experience are at the heart of access and participation work.

Events and venues:

- A programme of large-scale events on and off campus for students, including live music, cultural celebrations, comedy, awards ceremonies and more.
- A series of licensed venues providing 60+ employment opportunities for student staff and a safe, engaging and fun environment for students to socialise in.
- A bustling coffee shop providing great food and a unique, value-for-money space for students on campus.

All of this is underpinned by brilliant central teams providing marketing, communications, health & safety, finance, HR, digital and facilities support across the organisation.

About our strategy

The Union's emergent 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, and in particular the partnership that has driven the Union's merger with the University's Graduate Students' Association.

It is underpinned by the following shared purpose, mission and beliefs.

Our shared purpose

Working together to ensure every student at York can realise their true and full potential, create change and help make the world a better place.

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

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

About the University

The University of York is a Russell Group institution founded in 1963. It is one of just six post-war Universities to have appeared in the world top 100 institutions. With over 30 departments and research centres, the University is home to more than 22,000 students and 500 staff. Its strategy is focused on its strong sense of purpose as 'a

University for public good'. This is underpinned by a commitment to quality; York is one of only four universities to have won the top Gold Teaching Excellence Framework award and be in the top ten in the Research Excellence Framework (matched only by Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial).

For further information on the University see [here](#).

Our commitment to quality

We believe in externally benchmarking our practices and do this in a variety of ways. We have received a number of awards for our commitment to providing quality licensed spaces that have sustainability at the heart of our day-to-day operations. We have received Gold status with Best Bar None for our last three audits (a nationally recognised licensed trade best practice scheme), were awarded 'excellent' in a national 'Quality Students' Unions' assessment framework sponsored by the government and for the last several years achieved 'excellent' status with the NUS' Sustainability & Green Impact Program.

About our governance

As well as our employed staff, made up of both specialist full-time 'career' staff and student part-time staff, we will, for the first time this year, have a team of seven full-time student officers, elected each year by cross campus ballot. Our full-time officers cover the portfolios of Union Affairs Officer, Union Development Officer, Academic Officer, Sports Officer, Activities Officer, Community and Wellbeing Officer and Equality and Inclusion Officer. As well as their representative roles, our sabbatical student officers hold positions as trustees for their one or two year duration of office.

Under our structure the [Trustee Board](#) is the highest decision making body in the organisation, ultimately responsible for the work of the Students' Union with particular responsibility for its financial sustainability and practice, charity and legal compliance and strategic direction. It carries out this duty mindful of the will of student members and respectful to the membership led policy processes. The recruitment is taking place in line with the requirements of the Union's amended [Articles of Association](#), approved by members, the Board, and University Council to support the transition to a Single Students' Union at York.

The seven sabbatical officer trustees are accompanied on our Trustee Board by at least three 'ordinary student' trustees who are current students (with at least one postgraduate and one undergraduate representative) and who are selected for their particular areas of interest of expertise, and at least three external lay trustees recruited for their experience 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 currently has two formally constituted subcommittees; HR Committee and Finance Committee. In addition, the Board constitutes working groups and occasional sub committees, as business requires.

The Trustee Board meets at least four times a year, usually from late afternoon (around 4pm) into early evening. Both the Finance Committee and the HR

Committee meet at least three times a year. The Board and its committees can call additional 'extraordinary meetings' as they require.

Student trustees may remain in office for a period of up to two years and may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. Should the student trustee's course of study (student status) come to an end before the end of the two year term, the term of office would also end.

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

About the role of trustee

The position of trustee is voluntary and unpaid, however, reasonable out of pocket expenses will be paid.

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.

In broad terms, the five key responsibilities for all University of York Students' Union Trustees are:

1. To ensure that the charity has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction and is focused on achieving these.
2. Being responsible, 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.

Appointment process

Student trustees

Student trustees will be selected by an Appointments Committee, comprising existing members of the University of York Students' Union's Trustee Board, the GSA President, and Chair of Trustees.

The roles will be advertised widely across campus and promoted through the Union's community networks and social media channels in order to attract interest from as wide a range of candidates as possible.

The recruitment of student trustees is intended to attract a wide range of both skills and lived experience from candidates from the current student body in order to ensure the Board is both representative of the student demographic, empathetic to its diverse needs but also has a range of knowledge, skills and lived experience to support its governance and oversight roles and responsibilities. Whilst attracting a diverse pool of candidates is a significant priority for the Board, this recruitment exercise is particularly interested in recruiting trustees with the following skills:

- Finance and audit
- Commercial operations
- Democracy and governance

More information

Drop-in sessions will be held on 28 May (online) and 29 May (in person) to provide more information on the role of a Trustee and to support interested students with the application process.

Please note these briefings will also include information for students interested in the Accountability Chair role. Please contact studentengagement@yusu.org to register your interest in attending one of these sessions.

Application process

Students are invited to apply for the roles via our application portal: <https://apply.yusu.org/>

Applicants will be asked to respond to three questions.

- Please explain why you are interested in the student trustee role? (200 words)
- Please set out the main skills and experience that you would bring to the role? (500 words)
- What do you hope to gain from being a trustee? (200 words)

Shortlisting will take place w/c 3 June 2024, followed by informal interviews for the Trustee roles online w/c 10 June 2024 (TBC).

EDI monitoring and skills assessment

To support EDI monitoring, student trustee 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](#).

Key timings

Drop-in information sessions	
Online	28 May 2pm-3pm
In person	29 May 3pm-4pm J/P/004
<i>Please register attendance at:</i> studentengagement@yusu.org	
Application deadline:	3 June - midnight
Informal interviews:	w/c 10 June TBC
Appointment confirmations:	Friday 14 June
Term of office underway	1st August 2024

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.

In addition, the government states specific things that disqualify someone becoming a trustee. The reasons for disqualification are included in the Government's '[disqualifying reasons table](#)' and include:

- being bankrupt or having an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA)
- having an unspent conviction for certain offences (including any that involve dishonesty or deception)
- Being on the sex offenders' register.

Attendance at meetings

The expectation is that the Trustee Board will meet at least four times each academic year. There will also be the requirement to sit on sub-committees or occasional working groups which will be established as required, with membership decided by the Trustee Board. You should anticipate a total of 9 days' commitment per year, predominantly scheduled for late afternoon starts on weekdays.

Training

Full training will be provided both prior to, and in the early weeks of the term of office. In addition, the incoming student trustees will be invited to attend Board Development Days as they arise. Any 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 '[The Essential Trustee](#)'; what you need to know, what you need to do' may be helpful background reading.