

“A Positive Impact With Every Portsmouth Student”

External Trustee / Deputy Chair Recruitment Pack

2025-26

Dear Prospective Candidate	1
Role Description	2
The Person	3
Person Specification	4
Summary Conditions of Appointment	5
Summary Governance and Management Information	7
Organisational Model	10
Recruitment and Selection Timetable	10

Dear Prospective Candidate

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Trustee of the University of Portsmouth Students' Union (UPSU). We are a successful and vibrant organisation that, despite the challenges that many organisations face in the current climate, has an exciting future ahead of us. We are dynamic, agile and never complacent, always striving to improve and better serve the rights, needs and wants of our diverse membership of around 28,000 students.

We are looking for one Trustee & Deputy Chair to join our Charity Trustee Board to support the Union through its next steps.

UPSU is implementing a 3 year Strategy (2023-2026) and as always, our Strategy sets the direction for UPSU and ensures we are all focussed on the right things for the benefit of all University of Portsmouth students.

Our Strategy focuses on three areas:

- **Academic Success** - All students' academic outcomes are improved as a result of the work that we do - making this the best we can for UoP students through our charitable aims of Representation, Development and Welfare
- **Social Capital** - Students are supported to find themselves, be themselves, connect and belong
- **Future Readiness** - Students' futures are made clearer and enhanced by the work that we do

A strong and active Board is crucial for us as we develop and implement our strategy, face challenges, maximise opportunities and endeavour to create an even better Union; one that continues to be flexible and agile enough to react quickly to the changing needs and interests of our student members and achieve our vision of 'having a Positive Impact with every Portsmouth student'.

This pack should provide everything you need to support your application; it contains:

- Role description and person specification
- Summary conditions of appointment
- Summary governance and management information
- Application, selection process and timetable
- Trustee declaration

We appreciate that there is a lot of paperwork in the pack – if you would like to talk through the position before completing then please do contact me using the details shown below. Further information is also included on our website www.upsu.net. I hope you decide to apply for this position.

Yours faithfully,

Blessing Okafor
Chair of Board of Trustees 25/26
blessing.okafor@upsu.net

Role Description

Purpose

The Trustees are ultimately responsible, individually and collectively, for the strategies and associated activity of the Union. The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring the definition of the vision and values of the organisation as informed by the student membership and for ensuring the delivery of the Charitable aims as set out in the governing documents. The Trustees ensure robust risk and financial oversight, strategy development and monitor the supporting delivery plans.

Key Responsibilities

- Trustees are accountable for delivering the responsibilities detailed in the [Byelaws and Articles of Association](#).

Notwithstanding this, all Trustees have a duty to:

- Ensure that the Union acts in accordance with its charitable objects, Articles of Association and other guiding documents and, in particular, remains true to its Charitable Aims, Vision and Values.
- Help the Union achieve its objectives to 'have a positive impact on every Portsmouth student'.
- Ensure that the Union complies with all relevant legislation and regulations, including relevant charity acts and education acts.
- Ensure that the Union does not undertake activities that put its financial stability, members or reputation at undue risk.
- Work with other trustees, staff and volunteers in a collaborative and constructive manner and for the greater good of the Union.
- Participate fully in Board meetings and assigned sub-committees and projects.
- Use personal skills and experience to ensure that the Union is well run and efficient.
- Seek external professional advice where there may be material risk to the Union, where the Trustees may be in breach of their duties or at any other appropriate moment.
- Add value to the Board and the Union through generating ideas, challenging the status quo, broadening thinking and supporting and promoting innovation and creativity.

External Trustees have a particular responsibility to:

- Use their particular knowledge, skills and experience to enhance 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 and support the annual transition between Elected Officer Trustees.

Board meetings sit 4-5 times per year and in addition we ask our Trustees to share their expertise in supporting at least one of our sub-committees. The roles are voluntary and whilst we welcome all applicants and offer digital and hybrid meetings, the requirement for occasional face to face meetings may suit people within easy travel time to Portsmouth.

The Person - Key competencies sought from External Trustees

External Trustees are asked to bring senior-level competencies, as listed within the table of desired knowledge, skills and experience.

To support our current strategic direction and bring new skills to the Board, the Board of Trustees is looking for a trustee who has financial experience.

- Preferably financial experience from a charity outside of the SU sector
- Understanding of financial oversight
- Ability to interpret financial information to support strategic decision-making
- Awareness of charity finance and regulatory requirements

The successful candidate would also be the Deputy Chair, and we are looking for the following experience:

- Ability to deputise for the Chair, and chair meetings of the Board
- Ability to build a strong and effective working relationship with the Board of Trustees Chair
- Ability to foster, maintain and ensure that constructive relationships exist with and between the Trustees
- Assist and support the Chair in providing leadership to the Board, through the governance arrangements, and also acting as a 'sounding board' and confidante to the Chair in the execution of their role

Due to the current make-up of our Trustee Board, we are not actively searching for candidates with skills, knowledge and experience related to the Student Union and HE sector and we would welcome candidates from other sectors or regions to apply. That said, we would very much like to encourage anyone who feels that they could bring something to our Board to apply, regardless of experience - our purpose and values also lead us to welcome first time Trustees too!

As part of our EDI commitments - we are aiming to better reflect the demographics of our student body (40% BAME/PGM, 49% Mature) on our Board. We are strongly dedicated to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our community and we are passionate about creating a welcoming and inclusive environment which supports everyone from recruitment through to appointment, regardless of your background. We welcome applications from all those who feel they could bring something to the role and as part of this commitment, we are working to improve the diversity of our Trustee Board to ensure that it is as relevant and representative of our student community as possible and are actively encouraging applications from underrepresented groups, particularly applicants from BAME/PGM backgrounds.

Table of essential and desired knowledge, skills and experience

Essential Knowledge, Skills and Experience			
Finance		Experience as a Chair or Deputy Chair	
Other desired knowledge, skills and experience			
Civic / expanding our 3rd Party connection	Diversity	Marketing and communications	Cyber security

Person Specification

DESIRABLE (BUT NOT ESSENTIAL) SKILLS	
Knowledge and Experience	Evidence of successfully undertaking a leadership and/or governance role (this could be through work, personal life or voluntary experience)
	Knowledge/experience of finance - see above
	Knowledge/experience of chairing - see above
	Understanding of issues affecting under-represented student groups and communities (currently those with protected characteristics, distance, commuter, postgraduate, mature and part-time students)
Skills and Abilities	Commands confidence, with the skills to develop productive relationships with a range of stakeholders
	Sound judgement and ability to think collectively and strategically; ability to handle competing priorities and make informed decisions
	Highly motivated, energetic and enthusiastic
	Strong communication skills, with the ability to relate to and communicate effectively with people at all levels
	A resourceful individual who has credibility because of what you know and how you apply it, with good independent judgement
Work Ethic & Values	Able and willing to devote the necessary time and effort to the role
	A flexible and adaptable approach to delivering your role and responsibilities
	A commitment to supporting organisational development in a fast paced environment
	Evidence of commitment to the Students' Union and its purpose, vision and values
	An excellent role model who promotes the highest standards of probity, integrity and honesty

Summary Conditions of Appointment

Remuneration

The post is a voluntary and unpaid position.

Expenses

All reasonable out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed on request; this could include reimbursement of travel costs to all meetings, mobile or home telephone calls on Trustee business and all other reasonable costs incurred whilst carrying out the duties of being a Portsmouth Students' Union Trustee.

Terms of Office

The term of office is 3 years. External Trustees may serve an additional term of office of a further 3 years, subject to agreement from the Board of Trustees.

Expected Time Commitment

The time commitment for this post is expected to be four or five Board meetings a year, plus two-four sub-committee meetings a year and one annual Away Day, with optional attendance at other events, meetings and award ceremonies. Additional time for reading papers for each meeting, allow 1-2 hours per meeting.

Meetings are held in person at the Students' Union, with a digital option available.

Training and Development

UPSU is committed to providing comprehensive training and development to support its Trustees. The Union will provide a comprehensive induction programme for all new Trustees, as well as an opportunity to meet elected officers and staff of the Union. The Union may also support and fund other relevant training that will benefit Trustees in their role with UPSU.

Equity of Opportunity

The Union is committed to the principles of equality of opportunity and will endeavour to meet the needs of any candidate - if you require any adjustments or support to participate fully in this process or as a trustee, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We are strongly dedicated to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our community and we are passionate about creating a welcoming and inclusive environment which supports everyone from recruitment through to appointment, regardless of your background. We welcome applications from all talented people and as part of this commitment, we are working to improve the diversity of our Trustee Board to ensure that it is as relevant and representative of our student community as possible and are actively encouraging applications from underrepresented groups, particularly candidates who are women, have a disability or from BAME/PGM backgrounds.

We would very much like to encourage anyone who feels that they could bring something to our Board to apply, regardless of experience - our purpose and values also lead us to welcome first time Trustees too!

Summary Governance and Management Information

Who we are

The University of Portsmouth Students' Union (UPSU) is an independent charity with a responsibility to all students studying at the University of Portsmouth to advance their education. As a charity we have 3 core objects - representation, development and welfare.

The UPSU Group has a trading subsidiary; Portsmouth Students Union Trading (PSUT).

Our vision

To have a positive impact with every Portsmouth student: students are heard, students are empowered, students thrive

Why Students Union's exist

Legally: Students' Unions exist under the Education Act 1994. Under The Act a Students' Union is an association of students at a University whose principal purposes include acting as a representative body in academic, disciplinary or other matters and promoting the general interests of its members as students.

Culturally: Students' Unions are bubbling with emerging leaders who are supported to cultivate their skills and experiences, act as change agents and inspire other students to do the same. Students' Unions give a voice to University students, they provide access to often weird, wonderful and thought-provoking ideas and student activities which broaden horizons and are great networking opportunities, communities of belonging and provide access to the support and communities they need to reach their full potential.

Charitable Aims - why we exist for UoP Students

- Representation
- Development
- Welfare

Our Values - how we work

- A Union you can count on
- A Union led by students
- A Union for every student
- A Union that makes a difference

Our Guiding Principles - what we stand by and will always be

- Students democratically guide us
- Equity of opportunity for students
- Our independent status is paramount

- Partnerships strengthen our work
- Relevant and resilient for current and future student
- We fight for student rights

Current Strategic Aims

1. **Academic Success** - All students' academic outcomes are improved as a result of the work that we do - making this the best we can for UoP students through our charitable aims of Representation, Development and Welfare
2. **Social Capital** - Students are supported to find themselves, be themselves, connect and belong
3. **Future Readiness** - Students' futures are made clearer and enhanced by the work that we do

Democratic Structure

Every student can influence change within the Union and the University through a number of democratic processes such as Have Your Say, an ideas platform where students can submit ideas; through elected representatives like our Course Rep System or Elected Officers; or at Student Council where members work together to tackle issues and run campaigns which affect all parts of student life.

The democratic processes are separate from the trustee/governance structure, however trustees will have oversight of anything that poses a financial, legal or reputational risk.

Full information of all our democratic and representation tools and processes can be found at www.upsu.net under the 'Representation' tab.

The University of Portsmouth relationship

The Education Act secures the existence of a SU for every University over a certain size. The SU is an independent entity from the University but is linked in law through the education act. The terms of the legal requirement of both entities is set out in a [Code of Practice](#).

The most impact can be gained when there is a healthy challenge/support and partnership approach between Universities and their SU's. We are lucky to enjoy such a relationship here at Portsmouth and the details of that partnership are now formalised in our [Financial Memorandum](#) and our new Partnership Agreement (currently in final stages of approval).

Legal Status

University of Portsmouth Students' Union is a company limited by guarantee (Company number: 03934555) and a registered charity (Charity number: 1136115).

Portsmouth Students' Union Trading Company Limited is a private limited company (Company Number: 06320382) - the Chair of the Board of this Company is an independent external Director who is not a Union Trustee, the remainder of the Board is made up of Union Trustees and the MD who is the CEO of the Charity.

The Trustees

The Trustees of the Union are the four 'officer' trustees, three 'external' trustees, one 'University nominated' trustee and three 'student' trustees.

The officer trustees are elected each year by and from the student membership of the Union. The officer trustees either take a year out of their studies or start their term immediately after graduating to serve as a trustee. They can stand for re-election for a second year if they choose, but can serve for no more than two years. Unlike the trustees of most registered charities, the officer trustees are paid a salary and work a normal working week.

The three student trustees bring active experience and representation of student life, issues and challenges. They have all the responsibilities of being a trustee, but are still studying and fulfilling their Board duties on a 'part-time' and voluntary basis. The three student trustees are selected via a recruitment process each year. The length of a student trustee term is one year long, and they have the option of serving a second term.

The University nominated trustee brings knowledge and experience of Higher Education and is familiar with the workings of the University of Portsmouth. They are recruited by a selection process, normally including recommendations from the University. University nominated trustees normally serve a term of four years with the option of serving a second term.

External trustees bring knowledge, skills and experience to the Board and are recruited by a selection process and appointed by the Student Focus and Governance Sub-Committee. External Trustees normally serve terms of three years with the option of serving a second term.

Chair and Deputy Chair

One of the four officer trustees will be the Chair of Trustees - this is agreed by a selection panel that includes any officer trustees who are not re-elected, an external trustee and a student trustee. They are responsible for chairing meetings of the Board, working in close partnership with the Chief Executive and acting as lead ambassador of the Union to external stakeholders and the wider public.

As part of this recruitment round, we are also seeking a Deputy Chair to assist the Chair in all areas of their role.

Trustee Board 25/26

TRUSTEE POSITION	NAME
Education Officer (Chair of the Board)	Blessing Okafor
University Nominated Trustee	Currently vacant
Opportunities Officer	Charday Stone
Welfare Officer	Verity Knight
Inclusion Officer	Simbarashe Dube
External Trustee	Richard Askey
External Trustee	Alex Hannan
External Trustee	Currently vacant
Student Trustee	Dorothy Ku
Student Trustee	Currently vacant
Student Trustee	Currently vacant

Update on current Board vacancies:

- Student Trustee: We are currently recruiting for 2x student trustees, and aim to have them recruited by October. Due to the academic year, we usually recruit for student trustees in September, once students return to campus
- University Nominated Trustees: The CEO is working with the University to fill this role

Meeting Arrangements

The Board of Trustees meets a minimum of 4 times per annum. All meetings take place in Portsmouth and last for approximately 2 hours. The Board of Trustees meeting dates for 2025-26 scheduled as follows:

- 22nd October 2025
- 28th January 2026
- 29th April 2026
- 24th June 2026
- There is also an annual Trustee development day lasting a full day (9am-4pm) - this is provisionally booked for the 25th August 2026.

Two Sub-Committees, Finance, & Risk Committee and Student Focus & Governance Committee, support the Board.

The Finance & Risk Committee meets four times per annum and has responsibility as delegated by the Board of Trustees for ensuring that the Union;

- remains in sound financial health
- maintains effective risk management practices
- complies with relevant legislation and regulations

The Student Focus & Governance Committee meets a minimum of twice a year and has responsibility as delegated by the Board of Trustees for ensuring that the Union;

- has in place and maintains a high quality, relevant and inclusive representation, co-curricular and student support provision
- maintains student leadership through fit for purpose and effective governance and democratic structures
- complies with relevant legislation and regulations

The Central Administration Manager acts as Clerk supporting the Union's governance function, the Board and its Committees and the Trustees. A member of the team takes minutes during meetings.

Staff and Management Structure

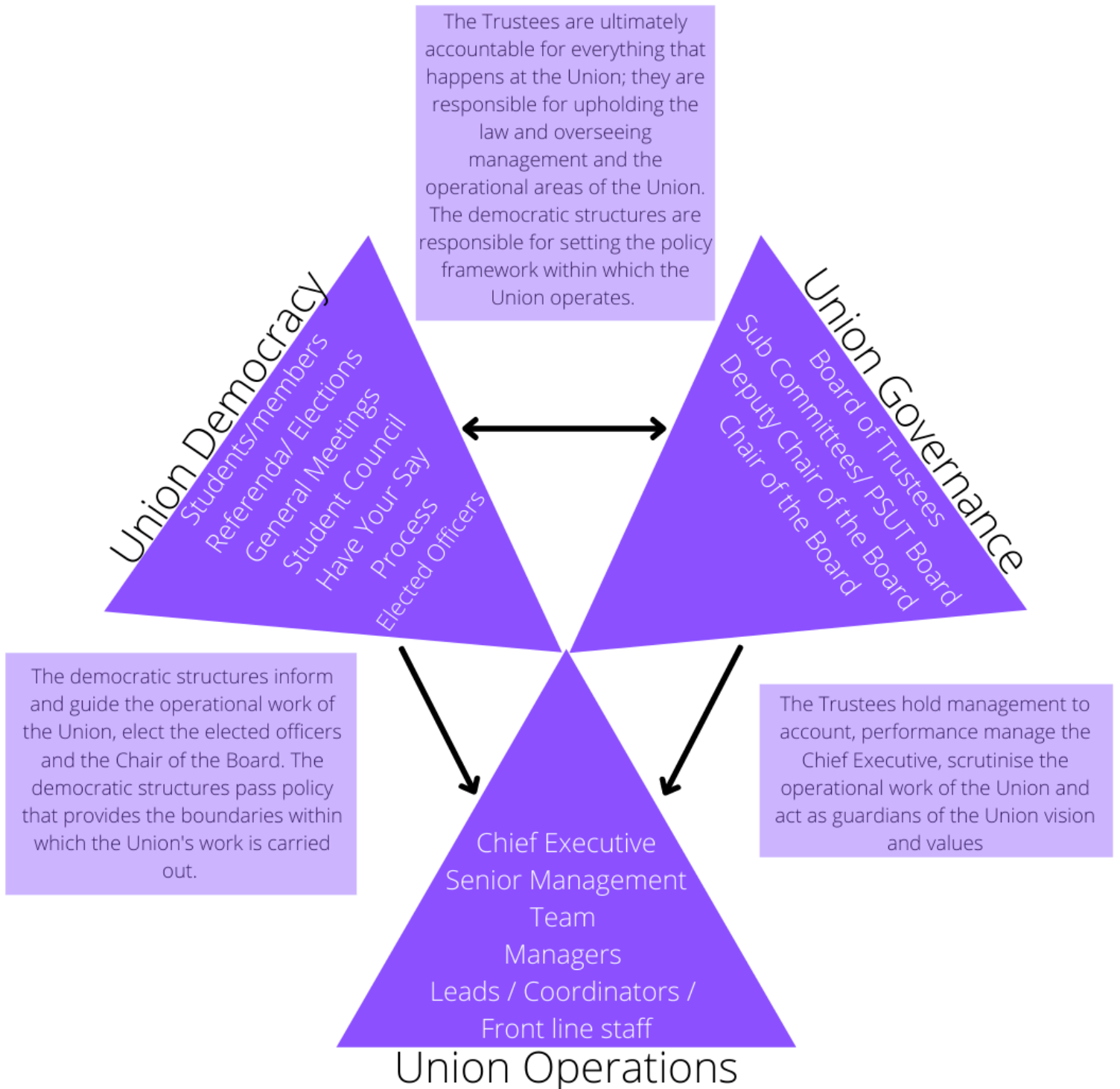
The Union employs approximately 70 staff to provide services for its members. Staff are of two types - approximately 40 casual student staff, who work whilst completing their studies at the University; and approximately 30 career staff - professionals who have made working at the Union part of their career.

The Board oversees the work of staff through the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team. See the [Organisational Structure](#) for more information.

The Chief Executive reports to the Board as a collective and has performance appraisal through an assigned panel of Trustees which must include the Chair and an External Trustee.

Organisational Model

(adapted from Leeds Union)



Recruitment and Selection Timetable

- Advertisement will be left open and we will interview candidates on application.

Next steps:

- Candidates informed of outcome and feedback provided
- To be arranged: Induction session with the Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees
- TBC: First formal Board of Trustees Meeting for the successful applicant

Selection Process

Stage 1: Application Pack: CV & Supporting Statement, Trustee Declaration

Stage 2: Selection Interview (in person/digital)

Applications

- Application is via a comprehensive CV plus a supporting statement (of no more than two sides of A4) detailing why you are applying for the position and what requirements you meet to carry out the role
- Applications can be sent by email to jobs@upsu.net

Further Information and Questions

For an informal conversation about this opportunity, please contact Blessing Okafor, Chair of the Board of Trustees, on blessing.okafor@upsu.net or Fern Lewis, Chief Executive, on fern.lewis@upsu.net.

Further information about University of Portsmouth Students' Union is available at www.upsu.net.

Expenses

Any reasonable expenses incurred in attending for interview will be reimbursed; further details will be provided on the day.