

**OU** Students  
ASSOCIATION

# TRUSTEE ROLE

## CANDIDATE PACK



## Trustee, Open University Students Association

**Location:** Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

**Nature of the role:** This is an unremunerated voluntary role but reasonable expenses incurred will be covered.

**Skills:** We are seeking a Trustee with a background in HR or digital communications/marketing to support the skills gaps on our current board.

**Closing date:** ongoing – applicants will be reviewed as they come in. Interviews to be held in August.

### Background to the organisation

The Open University Students Association is a company limited by guarantee (number 12031028) and a registered charity (number 1183837 and SC049546). We are a Students Union within the definition of the Education Act 1994. Our mission is to make a positive difference for all Open University students. Our student body is unlike any other, as shown by the following facts:

- Over 170,000 total students, the largest University in the UK and one of the largest in Europe.
- Majority of students are studying part-time and at distance across the 4 Nations of the UK and in continental Europe. There are OU students in 90% of UK postal districts.
- Over 24,000 disabled students.
- 3 in 4 OU students are in work.
- Over 1,700 students are currently studying in prison and other secure environments.
- For most courses, no previous qualifications are required to study, removing some of the barriers to higher education.

Our charitable objects are the advancement of education of students of the Open University for the public benefit by:

- Defending the principles of equal opportunity and of open access to the University regardless of academic qualifications or financial circumstances.
- Promoting the interests and welfare of students at the Open University during their period of study and representing and supporting students.
- Being the recognised representative channel between students and the Open University and any other external bodies.
- Asserting that all students studying with the Open University have the right to have their views heard and acknowledged by the University.
- Providing social, cultural and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.

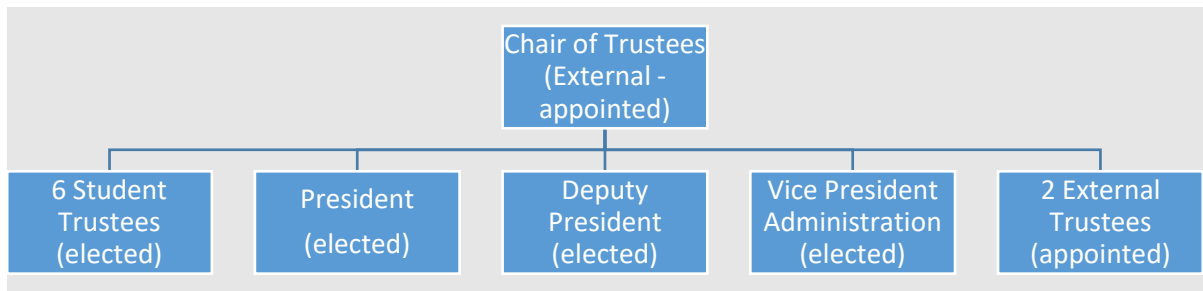
We operate through a democratic governance structure, which includes students elected by their fellow students in our key leadership roles. This includes our President and the Central

Executive Committee of student representatives who shape the policy and activities of the Students Association. The Central Executive Committee members are the public face of the organisation, representing student interests.



The Board of Trustees acts to safeguard the Students Association, leading on the management and administration of its strategy, governance, finances and staffing.

The Board of Trustees includes places for the President, two other elected student Officers (our Deputy President and Vice President Administration), six directly-elected Student Trustees and three External Trustees making a total of 12. All student positions are elected, and the current members are due to complete their terms on 31 July 2022 with a new elected board taking office 1 August 2022.



External Trustees are not elected, they are appointed in their roles following recommendation by the current Board of Trustees and approval by the Central Executive Committee. External Trustees provide the continuity through from the current group into the next. We currently have one External Trustee supporting us as Acting Chair of Trustees.

The Trustees and student representatives are supported by a team of 40+ professional staff led by our Chief Executive. With our Chief Executive leaving the team after 10 years of service to the Association, our Director of Membership services has stepped up as Interim Chief Executive and the new Trustees will have an opportunity to be involved in the recruitment of a new Chief Executive for the Association. Our staff are based in Milton Keynes but they are currently piloting hybrid working, with a view to making decision with the Trustees about how this looks in the future.

You can read more about the Association, our governance, our accounts and minutes of meetings on our website at [oustudents.com](https://oustudents.com).

## Role available

Following a skills audit, the Board is keen to find candidates with either Human Resources experience (especially in the areas of EDI and culture) or with digital communications/marketing experience.

We are a student's association (union) whose role is to represent our diverse student body. We recognise that this means we need to ensure that the voices around our table better reflect and understand the whole community we exist to serve. We therefore encourage individuals who identify as Black, Asian or other Ethnic Minority groups to apply. We are keen to support applications from these underrepresented groups, so please reach out for a conversation if you are unsure about the role.

At the rear of this pack is a detailed role description and person specification for the role of External Trustee.

## Finances

We have an annual expenditure of around £2million. Our major source of funding is a block grant from the Open University, known as the subvention, which is negotiated on an annual basis. Our audited accounts can be viewed on our website and on the Charity Commission's website.

## Strategy

Trustees oversee our approved strategy to take us through to 2022/23. This ambitious strategy focuses on three core strategic objectives for the period which are to:

- Inform and Support: we want to increase awareness of the Students Association and improve the relevance of our services.
- Engage and Involve: we want to increase student engagement and improve opportunities.
- Influence and Transform: we want to increase our influence and improve our impact.

This is an exciting time for new Trustees to join us as we are approaching the end of our current strategy, and any new members of the board will join us in developing a new strategy to achieve our objectives and enhance our mission for OU Students.

Our organisational values are Integrity; Equality and Inclusivity; Kindness and Compassion; Openness; and Collaboration. More details of our strategy can be viewed on our website.

## Term length

We seek to make an appointment until 31 July 2024 as our term limit is two years, with potential future extension on two-year terms by agreement between both parties. All Trustees may serve up to a maximum of eight years in line with our Articles of Association.

## Time commitment

The last meeting for the current board is 19 July 2022, further dates for the 2022-24 year will be set by the full Board of Trustees at this meeting.

All meetings are usually held during business hours, meetings are held either online or at the Open University's campus in Milton Keynes although this is agreed by the full Board to suit their needs and remote attendance is also supported. The Trustees will occasionally arrange meetings outside of their regular cycle and outside business hours to suit the group should a need arise, e.g. a conference call in the evening or the OU annual dinner on a weekend.

In addition to attending the regular scheduled meetings, External Trustees will also be expected to participate in a few other ways:

- Attending an induction session with our Chief Executive, which will be arranged at a mutually convenient time.
- Besides the meeting dates, we would anticipate that the time commitment for this role averages out throughout the year to around 2 hours a week. This will include participating in discussions on the Trustees' online forums should a need arise, posting decisions on any urgent requests, reading papers and preparing for meetings. We also make good use of our online discussion spaces and emails.

- External Trustees may be asked for additional insight and advice from their own professional expertise to support our development.

Trustees are also invited to take part in the following optional activities if they wish to do so:

- Visiting our offices to meet our staff group and hear more about their work.
- An optional invitation to attend at least a part of our biennial Conference, which takes place over the summer on Milton Keynes campus.
- Training and development sessions, including webinars and external events hosted by our legal advisors and auditors.
- Occasional optional events, including attendance at joint events with the University and attending our annual dinner.

## Eligibility

Applicants must not be disqualified from serving as a Charity Trustee as per the [Charity Commission rules](#). Trustees will be asked to sign a declaration that they comply with the Charity Commission requirements. External Trustees must not be a student of the Open University, hold any elected or paid position within the Students Association or the Open University, nor be a member of the Open University's governing Council. Open University alumni are however welcome to apply.

## Support for the role

All Trustees are advised and supported by the Chair of Trustees, Chief Executive and other relevant senior staff members as well as by the rest of the Board of Trustees. Alongside this we have existing relationships with effective external advisors and specialists including HR consultants, legal advisors and auditors. We are also members of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Charity Finance Group (CFG) and make use of their training, guidance and induction materials. Trustees are provided with access to their online materials, which also includes a range of guidance and free training.

We invest in the development of our Trustees and their own learning and expertise in charity governance by running regular training sessions, inviting external presentations and providing high quality external training opportunities and access to sector conferences. We are also proud holders of the Investing in Volunteers quality standard, which demonstrates our commitment to creating and supporting quality volunteering opportunities.

## Why apply for this role?

This is a fantastic opportunity to bring your skills and experience to help the growth, decision making and effective governance of a growing charity working at the forefront of supporting part-time and distance-learning students. Working as part of an engaged Board of Trustees, the successful candidate will have real scope to get involved in helping to shape our work and our development.

Our Board meetings are not just about effective governance, they also provide opportunities to get involved in detailed and interesting conversations on solving problems and inputting new ideas and initiatives to take us forward. In return for your time, commitment and input across our range of activities you will gain access to ongoing training and support and networking opportunities as well as the chance to develop your skills and experience in our context. You will be making a huge contribution to the organisation which will be valued and appreciated by your fellow Trustees and senior staff. The OU Students Association holds equality and inclusivity as one of our core values and seeks to have a diverse Board capable of representing the community that we serve. We therefore welcome applications from all sections of the community, and work hard to meet all accessibility requirements Board members disclose to us and take a flexible and supportive approach for all members.

### **Deadline and how to apply:**

Please submit a CV and a covering letter of no more than two A4 sides to [OUstudents-Jobs@open.ac.uk](mailto:OUstudents-Jobs@open.ac.uk) which sets out:

- How you meet the experience, knowledge and skills aspects of our person specification.
- Why you want to be a Trustee of the OU Students Association.
- What you would like to gain from the opportunity.

**For an informal discussion about this opportunity:** Please email [OUstudents-Jobs@open.ac.uk](mailto:OUstudents-Jobs@open.ac.uk) to ask a question about this opportunity or to arrange an informal discussion.

Receipt will be acknowledged.

Please ensure that your application reaches us by **Sunday 26 June 2022 at 6pm.**

### **Next steps**

We will consider all applications and invite short-listed applicants to attend an interview with several of the existing Trustees and our Chief Executive. We would normally welcome the chosen candidate to attend our next Board meeting as an observer to meet the group and confirm their interest before we take the appointment further. If both parties are happy to proceed, the Board's recommendations of an appointee will go before the Central Executive Committee for approval.

## External Trustee Role Description

In addition to the role description outlined below, Trustees should be mindful of the [Charity Governance Code](#) and relevant Charity Commission guidance.

### **Purpose:**

The OU Students Association Board of Trustees has the ultimate responsibility for the Association's affairs and exercises its powers subject to relevant legislation in addition to our Articles of Association and Bye-Laws. This includes oversight of the governance, staffing, finances and strategy of the Association. The Board of Trustees delegates the day-to-day management of the Association and its staff team to the Chief Executive.

### **Main Responsibilities**

1. To ensure that the OU Students Association acts in accordance with its governing document, charitable objects and other guiding documents.
2. To ensure that the OU Students Association complies with all relevant legislation and regulations, including relevant Education Acts and Charity Acts where applicable.
3. To safeguard the effective administration of the Association, including maintaining its financial viability and avoiding activities which greatly risk our reputation, sustainability or students.
4. To approve the Association's strategy, annual budget and the Association's annual financial statements. To consider funding proposals and applications during the course of the budget year as and where necessary.
5. To make an active contribution to the Board of Trustees reaching sound decisions including reading and scrutinising all papers; attending and participating in meetings and on the Trustee online forums; leading discussions and/or meetings where appropriate; maintaining a focus on key issues; building an understanding and appreciation of the Association and our membership; offering own skills and experience; exercising a vote on key matters; participating in sub-committees or working groups as necessary.
6. To add value and actively contribute to the Board of Trustees, offering a considered and reasonable perspective on matters at hand and being unafraid to challenge appropriately.
7. To work with other Trustees and support the Senior Staff team to create a positive, hard-working, inclusive, supportive and successful culture.
8. To seek to empower and support the student voice at all levels of the organisation, including recognising the important role of the Student Elected Officers and Central Executive Committee.



9. To recognise and value the difference between the Central Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees, working to create a joined-up and constructive governance culture.

10. To appoint and receive any reports from the Association's bankers, HR advisors, solicitors and auditors. To consider proposals for external affiliations where necessary.

11. To approve all amendments to the Association's governing documents for submission to a vote of Conference.

12. To appoint, establish the job description, agree the remuneration and annually appraise the performance of the Association's Chief Executive.

**Trustees should be aware that they are jointly and severally liable for the affairs of the Association.**

## Person Specification

An applicant's covering letter should address the experience, knowledge and skills criteria.

### Experience

- HR or digital communication/marketing experience.
- Experience of senior committee work and strategic decision making.
- Previous experience as a Trustee and/or Company Director (desirable – we are looking for the right fit, so please reach out to chat to us to find out more).

### Knowledge

- Can evidence a good understanding and appreciation of the role and context.
- An understanding relevant and current issues for charities and member-led organisations surrounding EDI or digital marketing.
- Working knowledge of the UK Charity Sector and Charity Governance Code (desirable).

### Skills

- Inclusive leadership skills.
- Able to exercise good governance, e.g. scrutinising Board papers, contributing positively to discussions, offering own expertise.
- Effective working as part of a team.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including diplomacy and tact.
- IT skills including Microsoft Office.

### Personal qualities

- Meets the eligibility criteria.
- A considered professional approach.

- Strong interest in performing the role and supporting the OU Students Association.
- High integrity, with a strong commitment to fairness and ethical decision making.
- Willingness to devote the time and effort to successfully perform this role, including developing an understanding of the issues at hand and undertaking relevant training.
- Confident and assertive, willing to make decisions that are in the best interests of the organisation.
- Commitment to the Nolan principles.
- Commitment to and prioritisation of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Willing to learn and develop in the role.
- Able and willing to travel to Milton Keynes for Board meetings (desirable).