



Trustee – Role Description

Trustees of The Open University Students' Educational Trust (Ouset) play a vital role in ensuring that the charity fulfils its charitable purposes, acts in the best interests of its beneficiaries, and is managed responsibly and effectively. Trustees have collective responsibility for the governance, strategy, assets, compliance and overall administration of the charity, and must exercise independent judgement, reasonable care and skill in line with charity law and regulatory guidance.

Brief overview of Ouset: The Open University Students' Educational Trust is a registered charity which provides grants towards course fees and essential study costs for Open University students who are in financial difficulty and unable to access sufficient financial support from government or university sources. The Trust supports access to education by helping students facing hardship to continue their studies.

Trustees act collectively as the charity's governing body. Individual trustees share equal legal responsibility for decisions, must act within Ouset's governing document and the law, and should put the charity's purposes and beneficiaries ahead of personal, organisational or third-party interests.

Duties:

- Ensure that Ouset is carrying out its charitable purposes for public benefit and remains focused on supporting Open University students in financial hardship.
- Comply with Ouset's governing document, charity law and all relevant regulatory requirements, including those of the Charity Commission and OSCR (Scottish Charity Regulator) where applicable.
- Act in Ouset's best interests, declaring and managing conflicts of interest appropriately and taking decisions in good faith.

- Set and review OUSET's strategic direction, ensuring that its activities, grant-making and use of resources are aligned with its charitable objects.
- Approve and monitor policies, operational plans, budgets and financial statements, and ensure that resources are managed responsibly.
- Safeguard the charity's assets and ensure that appropriate financial controls, risk management arrangements and governance processes are in place.
- Exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence, drawing on personal knowledge and experience while seeking appropriate advice when needed.
- Ensure that OUSET is accountable to its beneficiaries, regulators, funders and supporters, including through accurate reporting and transparent decision-making.
- Contribute to regular reviews of OUSET's governance and attend Board meetings fully prepared to participate constructively in discussion and decision-making.
- Support the promotion of OUSET's objects, aims and reputation by applying relevant skills, expertise, knowledge and networks.

As a charity working to support students in financial hardship, there may be times when trustees are asked to contribute beyond Board meetings. This may include scrutinising papers, participating in working groups, supporting governance or fundraising development, providing advice on areas of expertise, and representing OUSET appropriately when required.

What we are looking for

We are looking for people who bring energy, enthusiasm, commitment and independent judgement to the role, and who will broaden the diversity of thinking, experience and perspective on the Board.

Previous charity governance experience is helpful but not essential. Trustees will receive an induction and should be willing to understand and fulfil their legal duties and responsibilities.

Personal skills and qualities

- Willingness and ability to understand and accept the responsibilities and liabilities of charity trustees.
- Commitment to acting in OUSET's best interests and in accordance with its charitable purposes.
- Ability to think strategically, exercise sound independent judgement and contribute effectively as part of a collective Board.
- Ability to scrutinise information, ask constructive questions and support evidence-based decision-making.
- Effective communication skills and willingness to participate actively and respectfully in discussion.

- A strong personal commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Enthusiasm for widening access to education and supporting Open University students experiencing financial hardship.
- Commitment to Nolan's seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Terms of appointment

Terms of office

- Trustees are appointed for a two-year term in office, unless otherwise determined by the Trustees in exceptional circumstances.
- This is a voluntary position, but reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

Time commitment

- Attending four Board meetings annually. Currently meetings are held remotely.
- Attending an annual strategy and training day in person, location to be confirmed based on location of board members.

Committee membership

Ad hoc and occasional support through working groups and / or support for events agreed by the board.