



External Trustee

Job Description, Person Specification & Applicant Information

Summary

Aston Students' Union (SU) is a membership organisation for students studying at Aston University. The SU is led by elected student officers, supported by a staff team, and exists to impact positively on the life of Aston University students. The SU provides a range of services and opportunities including advice and support, student representation, clubs and societies, accommodation services, headline annual events and much more.

External Trustees are members of the Trustee Board who bring independent experience, specialist knowledge and constructive challenge to the governance of the Union. This role provides an opportunity to contribute to the leadership and sustainability of one of Birmingham's most active student-led charities.

Job Summary

The External Trustee will contribute independent judgement and a minimum of three years' professional experience in at least one relevant business operations skill area to the Trustee Board. The role helps oversee the Union's strategy, finance, risk, governance and charitable impact. Trustees do not manage day-to-day operations; they ensure that the Union is well-run, solvent, accountable and delivering positive outcomes for Aston students.

Principal Purpose of Role:	To support the Students' Union's governance by providing independent oversight of strategy, finance, risk, legal compliance and charitable outcomes, ensuring decisions are evidence-based, student-focused and sustainable.
Work Location:	Aston University Campus: Aston Students' Union, B4 7BX. Some meetings may be held online or in a hybrid format.
Responsible to:	Chair of the Trustee Board / Students' Union President, and the Trustee Board collectively.
Role Type:	Voluntary external trustee role. This is not a paid employment role.
Time Commitment:	Monthly meetings from September to June. Meetings usually take place on the last Tuesday of each month between 16:00 and 18:00 and may be either a full Trustee Board meeting or a sub-committee meeting made up of Trustee Board members. Trustees may occasionally be required to attend meetings or events outside these hours.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity

Aston Students' Union is an equal opportunity organisation that is committed to diversity and inclusion in trustee recruitment and governance. We prohibit discrimination and harassment of any kind based on race, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or any other protected characteristic. If you require any reasonable adjustments to assist you in the application or interview process, please get in touch to discuss your needs.

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Act in the best interests of Aston Students' Union and its student members, ensuring the Union delivers its charitable aims and public benefit.
2. Bring an independent external perspective to Board discussions, applying professional expertise gained through at least three years' experience in a relevant skill area to strengthen governance and decision-making.
3. Support the development of effective governance practice, risk management, financial sustainability and strategic assurance across the Union.
4. Contribute to the strategic direction of the Union and support long-term organisational sustainability.
5. Scrutinise finance, budgets, annual accounts, key performance indicators and risk reports, asking constructive questions where appropriate.
6. Ensure that the Union is governed in line with charity law, its governing documents, internal policies and relevant regulatory obligations.
7. Read Board papers in advance, attend meetings regularly and participate constructively in discussion and decision-making.
8. Monitor the performance and impact of key Union services, including advice and support, representation, student activities, accommodation services, elections and events.
9. Support free, fair and transparent democratic governance, including oversight of elections and representation structures where relevant.
10. Maintain confidentiality, declare conflicts of interest and uphold collective responsibility for Board decisions.
11. Complete trustee induction and any required training to understand the duties and responsibilities of charity trustees.
12. Work collaboratively with officer trustees, student trustees, external trustees, alumni trustees and senior staff, maintaining a clear distinction between governance and operational management.
13. Attend key Union events, planning sessions or committees where this supports the role of the Trustee Board.

General Responsibilities:

1. To act collectively as part of the Trustee Board, recognising that trustees provide oversight and assurance rather than managing day-to-day delivery.
2. To provide constructive challenge, ask appropriate questions and ensure that agreed actions are followed through by those responsible.
3. To support the Union's mission, values, democratic structures and commitment to improving the student experience at Aston University.
4. To actively demonstrate commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in all Board activity and decision-making.
5. To ensure that data protection, confidentiality, health and safety, safeguarding and other relevant Union policies are respected in trustee activity.
6. To act with integrity, avoid personal benefit from the role and declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.
7. To support responsible use of Union resources and consider the social, economic and environmental impact of Board decisions.
8. To undertake any other duties reasonably expected of a Trustee in line with charity trustee responsibilities and the Union's governing documents.

Standards

- A. The External Trustee will be expected to display a positive image of Aston SU and act as an ambassador for the Union.
- B. The External Trustee will be expected to uphold the values of Aston SU and demonstrate high standards of professionalism, respect for others, integrity and accountability.
- C. The External Trustee will be expected to actively demonstrate commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- D. The External Trustee will be expected to abide by the Union's policies, including the Code of Conduct, Equality and Diversity Policy, Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy, Data Protection Policy and Conflict of Interest Policy.
- E. The External Trustee will be expected to maintain confidentiality and support collective responsibility once Board decisions have been made.

What to Expect from the Role

Trustees will receive papers and documents for meetings in good time and will be expected to read them in advance. New Trustees will complete an induction programme and may be invited to relevant training, planning sessions and Union events.

Typical Period	Indicative Activity
August - October	Fourth quarter finance and KPI reporting; Welcome/Freshers activity oversight; annual accounts and Trustee Report.
November - January	First quarter reporting; review of student insight or market research; planning for the coming year.
February - April	Overview of the election process; second quarter finance and KPI reporting; budget boundaries for the coming year.
May - July	Budget for the following year; third quarter finance and KPI reporting; strategic planning review; Union Awards; new Trustee induction.

Person Specification

Essential:

- Eligible to serve as a charity trustee and not disqualified from acting as a trustee.
- A strong interest in the student experience and the charitable purpose of Aston Students' Union.
- Ability to think strategically and consider the long-term interests and sustainability of the Union.
- A minimum of three years' professional experience in at least one of the following skill areas is essential: governance; strategic development and planning; financial management; human resources; or change management.
- Governance: to strengthen Board effectiveness, regulatory oversight, accountability and sound decision-making.
- Strategic development and planning: to help shape the Union's long-term direction, assess priorities and monitor progress against strategic objectives.
- Financial management: to support informed scrutiny of budgets, annual accounts, financial performance, controls and long-term sustainability.
- Human resources: to support effective oversight of workforce strategy, organisational culture, people risks and responsible employment practice.
- Change management: to help the Board oversee organisational development, transformation and the effective implementation of change.

- Applicants are not expected to have experience in every area, but they must clearly demonstrate at least three years of professional experience in one or more of the areas above and be able to apply that expertise at Board level.
- Ability to read, understand and question Board papers, finance summaries, risk reports and performance information.
- Good judgement, integrity and the ability to handle confidential information appropriately.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Able to work effectively as part of a diverse Board while offering constructive challenge where required.
- Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Willingness to attend meetings, read papers in advance, complete induction and undertake trustee training.

Desirable:

- Previous board, committee, governance, charity, education, public sector or voluntary-sector experience.
- Understanding of students' unions, membership organisations, charities or higher education.
- Experience of working with elected representatives, university stakeholders or external partners.
- Commercial awareness and an ability to consider how services can remain financially sustainable while meeting student needs.
- Experience of strategy development, organisational change, risk management or service improvement.

Applicant Information

- This is a voluntary external trustee role and is not a paid employment position.
- Trustees are appointed by the Appointments Committee following submission of a CV and covering letter, and an interview.
- New Trustees will be expected to complete a trustee induction programme.
- Board papers and documents will be provided in advance of meetings and Trustees are expected to read them before attending.
- Typical annual activity may include: quarterly finance and KPI reports, annual accounts and Trustee Report, strategic planning, budget discussions, election oversight, Trustee induction and attendance at key Union events such as Union Awards.
- To apply, please send a CV and covering letter to **s.hussain30@aston.ac.uk**. The covering letter must identify the relevant skill area and clearly demonstrate at least three years of professional experience, explaining how that expertise would be applied to the External Trustee role.
- Application closing date: 12:00pm; 24th July 2026
- Interview date: TBC