



UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA STUDENTS' UNION

HR Trustee

WELCOME TO UCSU

Thank you for your interest in becoming an External Trustee of University of Cumbria Students' Union.

This is an exciting opportunity to join the Trustee Board at an important moment for UCSU. We are looking for an experienced leader who can bring strategic HR, People and Culture expertise, strong governance instincts and a genuine commitment to improving the experience of students.

UCSU is the independent Students' Union for students at the University of Cumbria. Our Trustee Board is responsible for ensuring that the organisation is well governed, financially sustainable, legally compliant and focused on delivering meaningful benefit to its members.

As an External Trustee, you will bring an independent perspective to the Board, working alongside elected Officer Trustees and Student Trustees. You will have the opportunity to use your experience to strengthen the organisation while also supporting and developing fellow Board members.

This is a particularly interesting and important time to join UCSU. The organisation is preparing for a period of transition with our current Chief Executive leaving the organisation after 10-years. This will create an important opportunity for the incoming Trustee to play a meaningful role in supporting the Board through this process and helping to ensure strong governance and leadership for the future.

We are looking for someone who can combine strategic thinking with a collaborative and supportive approach. You will be comfortable asking difficult questions when needed, but equally committed to listening, developing others and helping the Board work effectively as a collective. An understanding of the Higher Education sector would be helpful but not essential.

Above all, we are looking for someone who believes in the power of students to shape their own university experience and who wants to use their skills and experience to make a positive difference.

If you are an experienced people and culture leader who is excited by the opportunity to contribute to a student-led organisation, we would love to hear from you.

ABOUT UCSU

University of Cumbria Students' Union is the representative organisation for students at the University of Cumbria.

The University currently has six campuses across Carlisle, Ambleside, Lancaster, London and Barrow-in-Furness, with a new site in development at Carlisle Citadel.

UCSU exists to represent and support students and to ensure that the organisation remains focused on the interests and needs of its membership.

The Trustee Board plays a central role in making this happen. Trustees provide oversight, challenge and support, ensuring that UCSU has the right strategy, governance, financial management and leadership to deliver for students both now and in the future.

Our Board brings together different perspectives and experiences:

- **Three Officer Trustees**, who are elected by the student membership, one of whom is the Chair.
- **Three Student Trustees**, who bring the direct perspective and lived experience of current students.
- **Three External Trustees**, appointed for their skills, experience and expertise. One External Trustee serves as Vice-Chair.

This mix is an important part of what makes a Students' Union Board distinctive. External Trustees bring independence, professional expertise and experience from outside the organisation, while working alongside student representatives who bring direct insight into the lives and priorities of the students UCSU exists to serve.

Our Trustee Board

The Trustee Board is the most senior decision-making body within UCSU.

Collectively, Trustees are responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity, our financial health, the probity of our activities and the development of our aims and objectives.

The Board ensures that UCSU:

- Has a clear strategy, vision and set of goals.
- Operates in line with its governing documents and charitable objectives.
- Uses its resources responsibly and for the benefit of its members.
- Maintains strong financial oversight and long-term sustainability.
- Meets its legal and regulatory responsibilities.
- Has effective governance arrangements.
- Protects and promotes the reputation and values of the organisation.
- Supports and holds the Chief Executive to account.
- Remains focused on delivering meaningful benefit for current and future students.

Trustees act collectively. While individual Trustees will bring particular areas of expertise, no Trustee should operate in isolation or become solely responsible for a particular area of Board business.

We are looking for someone who understands this collective responsibility and who can contribute their expertise while working collaboratively with others.

About the Role

Purpose

The External Trustee will contribute to the effective leadership and governance of UCSU as a member of the Trustee Board.

The successful candidate will bring particular expertise in strategic HR, People and Culture, helping the Board to develop its approach to people, organisational culture and leadership.

You will also play an important role in strengthening governance practice across the Board and supporting UCSU through the recruitment and induction of a new Chief Executive.

This is a role for someone who can provide both strategic challenge and practical support. You will be comfortable operating at Board level, considering the long-term interests of the organisation while understanding the realities of a student-led charity.

You will work alongside the Chair, Vice-Chair, fellow Trustees and senior staff to help UCSU remain a well-run, ambitious and student-focused organisation.



What You Will Do

As a Trustee, you will share collective responsibility for the governance and strategic direction of UCSU.

Your responsibilities will include:

- Attending and actively contributing to Trustee Board meetings.
- Reading Board papers in advance and using your expertise to provide constructive challenge and guidance.
- Contributing to the development and monitoring of UCSU's strategy.
- Ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the charity and its student members.
- Maintaining oversight of the organisation's financial health and long-term sustainability.
- Ensuring UCSU complies with its governing documents, legal obligations and regulatory responsibilities.
- Supporting effective risk management and good governance.
- Acting as a guardian of the charity's reputation, values and assets.
- Supporting and constructively challenging the Chief Executive and staff team.
- Working collaboratively with Officer Trustees and Student Trustees.
- Making full use of your own skills, knowledge and experience to strengthen Board decision-making.
- Acting as an ambassador for UCSU and championing its work where appropriate.

Your Specialist Contribution

We are particularly interested in candidates who can bring significant experience in HR, People and Culture.

You will help the Board to think strategically about areas such as:

- Organisational culture and development.
- Workforce strategy and people planning.
- Learning and development.
- Employee engagement and wellbeing.
- Performance management.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Senior leadership and succession planning.
- Effective HR governance and employment practice.
- Organisational change and transformation.
- Building high-performing and inclusive teams.

We are particularly interested in someone who can help UCSU continue to develop good governance practices and who understands the relationship between effective governance, strong leadership and organisational culture.

Experience of Higher Education would be valuable, particularly an understanding of the distinctive environment in which Students' Unions operate. However, we are open to candidates who can bring relevant expertise from other sectors.



Our Values

We expect all Trustees to demonstrate the highest standards of integrity and to uphold the Nolan Principles of Public Life:

Selflessness

Acting solely in the interests of the charity and its beneficiaries.

Integrity

Avoiding obligations or relationships that could improperly influence decisions.

Objectivity

Making decisions on merit and considering evidence fairly.

Accountability

Being willing to be held accountable for decisions and actions.

Openness

Being transparent in decision-making, except where there are legitimate reasons for confidentiality.

Honesty

Being truthful and declaring relevant interests.

Leadership

Promoting these principles through personal example and being willing to challenge poor behaviour.

These principles underpin the way we expect Trustees to work with one another and with the wider organisation.

About You

We are looking for an experienced people and culture professional who is comfortable contributing at Board level and who is motivated by the opportunity to use their expertise for the benefit of students. You will ideally bring:

Strategic HR / People & Culture Experience

You will have significant experience of HR, People and Culture, organisational development or a closely related field, ideally gained at a senior level.

Strategic Leadership

You will have experience of contributing to organisational strategy, leading or supporting change and helping organisations develop and improve.

Governance

You will understand the importance of good governance and be confident contributing to Board-level discussion, scrutiny and decision-making.

Previous charity or Students' Union trustee experience is not essential. What matters is your ability to understand the responsibilities of a charity trustee and apply your professional expertise effectively in a Board environment.

Leadership and Development

You will be comfortable supporting, mentoring and developing others, including elected student representatives who may be relatively new to Board-level governance.

Communication

You will be an excellent communicator who can make complex issues accessible, listen carefully to different perspectives and express your own views with tact, confidence and diplomacy.

Judgement

You will be able to exercise independent judgement, ask challenging questions and make decisions in the best interests of UCSU.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

You will be committed to equality of opportunity, value diversity and understand the importance of removing barriers to participation and progression.

Integrity

You will demonstrate high standards of probity, integrity and honesty and be committed to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

Above all, you will be committed to giving the role the time and attention it requires and to working collaboratively with the wider Board.

What You Will Gain

Being an External Trustee is an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution while bringing your professional experience into a new environment.

You will have the opportunity to:

- Use your expertise to improve the lives and experiences of students.
- Work alongside people with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.
- Develop your understanding of charity governance and the Students' Union sector.
- Gain experience of Board-level strategic decision-making.
- Support and develop emerging student leaders.
- Contribute to the recruitment and development of senior leadership.
- Build relationships across the University and wider community.
- Give something back and make a tangible contribution to the organisation.



Working with Student Trustees

One of the most rewarding aspects of being an External Trustee is working alongside student representatives.

UCSU's Student and Officer Trustees bring direct experience of university life and a clear understanding of the issues facing students. Some may have limited previous experience of formal governance or senior decision-making.

External Trustees therefore have an important role to play in creating an inclusive Board environment where every Trustee can contribute confidently and effectively.

We are looking for someone who enjoys working with people at different stages of their leadership journey and who can adopt a coaching and supportive approach without losing sight of the Board's need for effective scrutiny and challenge.

Key Information

Time Commitment

The Trustee role is voluntary and unpaid, although reasonable travel expenses may be claimed.

The Board currently meets five times a year, usually via Microsoft Teams.

Trustees are also invited to participate in relevant UCSU activities throughout the year, including training events and conferences. Board meetings usually take place during weekdays.

For this particular appointment, we anticipate a commitment of approximately **one day per month**, particularly during the first year of the role.

This additional commitment reflects the importance of supporting UCSU through the recruitment and induction of a new Chief Executive, alongside the usual responsibilities of a Trustee.

Dates and times of Board meetings and other commitments are agreed in advance. Most Trustee activities can take place remotely, although we'd expect the appoint Trustee to join for in-person activities 3 to 4 times per year.

Eligibility

To become a charity Trustee, you must meet the relevant legal eligibility requirements.

In particular, you must:

- Be aged 18 or over.
- Not be disqualified from acting as a charity trustee.
- Not have been disqualified from acting as a company director.
- Not have been removed from the office of charity trustee because of misconduct or mismanagement.
- Meet the relevant requirements concerning bankruptcy and arrangements with creditors.
- Meet the relevant requirements concerning criminal convictions and other matters set out in charity law.

Trustees are expected to comply with UCSU's Constitution, Bye Laws, Code of Conduct and relevant Charity Commission requirements.

The above is not an exhaustive statement of the legal requirements and eligibility will be confirmed as part of the appointment process.

The Appointments Process

Student and External Trustees are initially interviewed by a sub-committee of the Trustee Board known as the Appointments Committee.

The Appointments Committee consists of the Chair of the Board and at least one other Trustee.

Following the interview process, the Committee makes a recommendation to the full Trustee Board for final approval, subject to the successful candidate meeting all relevant eligibility requirements.

Before You Apply

This is a voluntary, unpaid Trustee position, although reasonable travel expenses may be claimed.

You should be prepared to commit the necessary time and attention to the role, including preparation for Board meetings and participation in the additional activity required during the first year.

You will be expected to act collectively with the other Trustees and always in the best interests of UCSU and its student members. You will also be required to comply with the organisation's governing documents, policies and Code of Conduct and to meet the legal requirements for charity trustees.



An opportunity to make a difference

This is an opportunity to bring your professional expertise to an organisation whose purpose is ultimately about improving the experience and opportunities of students.

We are looking for someone who can bring strategic People and Culture expertise, strengthen our governance, support our emerging leaders and help UCSU navigate an important period of organisational change.

If you have the experience, judgement and commitment to make a meaningful contribution to the Board, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Application Process

Key Dates

Closing Date: 12 noon, 29th September 2026

Interviews: w/c 12th October 2026

Interviews will be held remotely



How to Apply

You can apply for the role using [Atkinson HR's application portal](#). You will be asked to submit a CV and complete an application form, where you will be asked to answer three questions (300 words per question):

- Why are you interested in applying and how do you feel your personal values align with our mission?
- What are the key skills, knowledge and achievements that make you a strong candidate for the role?
- What do you believe are the most significant contributors to board effectiveness?

You may wish to prepare your answers in advance in a separate document to avoid losing your responses before you submit them in the form.

If you have any questions or would like to arrange an initial, informal discussion about the role, please contact our recruitment partners, Atkinson HR, via email at nida@atkinsonhrconsulting.co.uk