EXTERNAL TRUSTEE

RECRUITMENT PACK

Oxford SU

Overview & context

Oxford SU is looking for an experienced HR leader who can join our trustee board for an initial interim period from January to July 2027, with possibility for extension to a full term.

Following a major period of transformation Oxford SU has launched our 3-year Strategy, providing a clear direction that focuses on where we can have the greatest impact and add value to the student experience. Furthermore, the trustee board has undergone a governance review and is in the process of implementing the recommendations to support a more resilient and effective trustee board into the future.

We are looking for an experienced, engaged individual who is excited to support our student-led work, contribute to good governance, and help us continue to build a strong and inclusive SU.

Your expertise in HR or a related field would also be invaluable in supporting the review of our People & Culture strategy, a key objective over the next year. If that sounds like you - we'd love to hear from you.

About Oxford SU

The University of Oxford Students' Union (Oxford SU) is a charity and membership organisation and the primary representative body for over 27,000 students.

Our mission is to shape students' lives and enhance their experience at Oxford by making students' voices heard at the highest levels of the collegiate University.

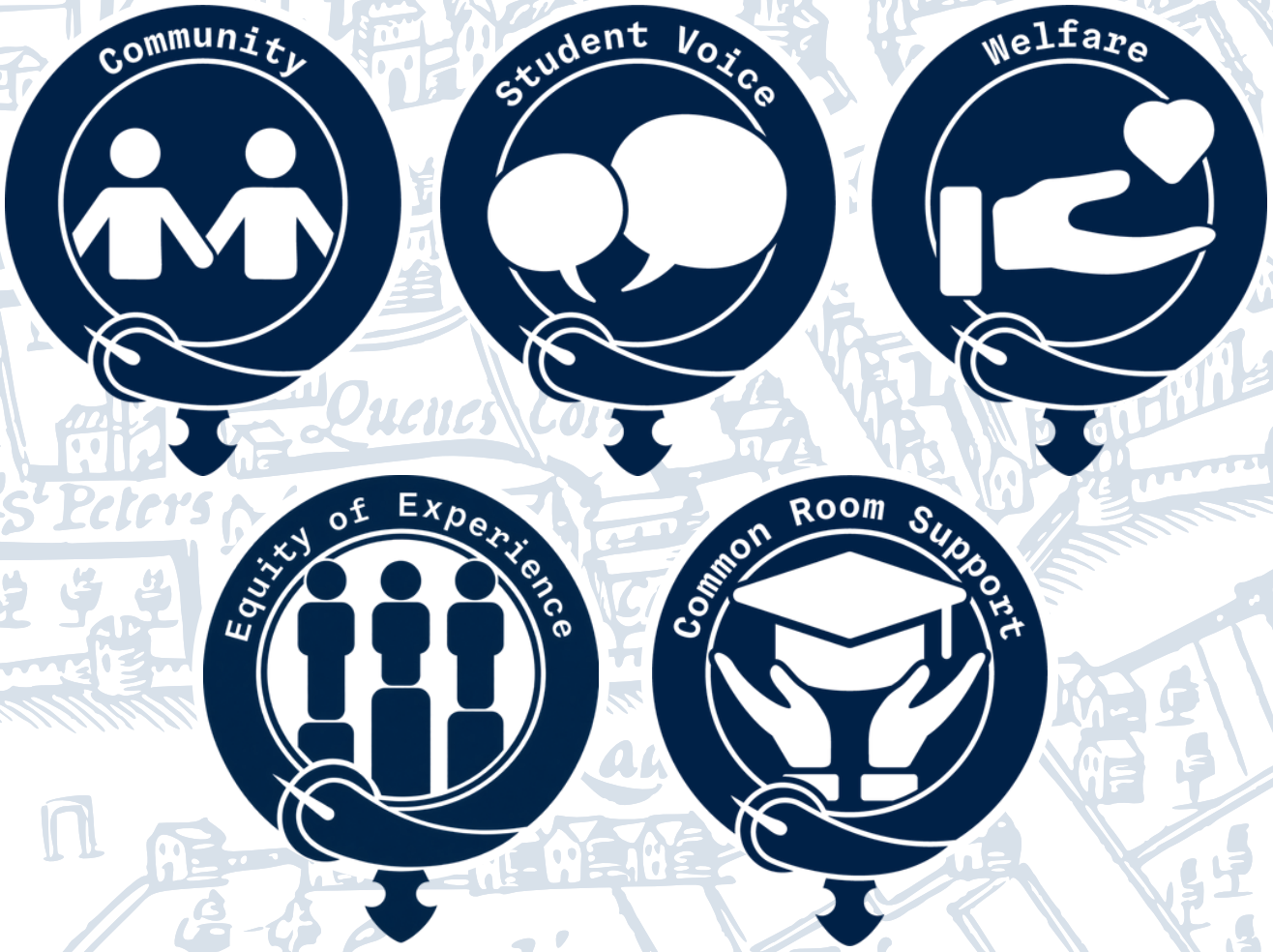
We do this by representing students' academic, social interests and wellbeing to ensure that the experience they have at Oxford is shaped by students, for students.

Through our professional advice service, academic representation, democratic structures, and student insight and policy development work, our elected officers lead the SU, supported by a team of professional, permanent staff members, to advocate for change on behalf of our diverse student body.

Our strategic plan

Following the launch of our 2026-29 Strategy, this is an exciting time to join the SU as we look to focus on delivering exceptional levels of representation and redefining how student voice is heard and acted upon at a collegiate University.

Find out more: Our Strategy, Shaped by You



The Trustee Board

The Oxford SU Trustee Board plays a pivotal role in overseeing the strategic direction of the Students' Union, ensuring that students are at the heart of everything we do. The Board is responsible for maintaining the legal, financial and reputational integrity of the organisation. Oxford SU operates in a fast paced, high-challenge, high-reward environment.

A strong and active board is crucial for us as we begin implementing our 3-year strategy. Trustees will help drive forward our strategic priorities, ensuring measurable impact as the SU navigates a complex and rapidly evolving landscape.

As a student-led, membership organisation, the Trustee Board strives to maintain a student majority. The composition of the SU Trustee Board is: 4 external trustees, 4 Sabbatical Officer trustees (elected annually), and 4 student trustees (elected annually).

Due to the annual turnover of our student trustees, it is imperative that our external trustees understand that these roles will also provide development and support to our student trustees. Being willing to share your expertise in a way that complements this continual learning cycle is critical to us as a student-led organisation.

Who we're looking for

We are specifically looking for an external trustee with significant professional or senior level strategic experience in HR, people and culture, organisational development or a similar field. This role would join our People & Culture subcommittee to provide insight and expertise for this work.

The students' union sector thrives on diverse skills, perspectives, and experiences. At Oxford SU, we want our Trustee Board to reflect the diversity of our student community and the wider society we serve. We particularly encourage applications from people from marginalised and underrepresented backgrounds, whose voices have historically been less represented in leadership and governance.

We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and identities, including across ethnicity, nationality, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion or belief, and socio-economic background.

Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable
Experience	• Substantial professional strategic or senior-level experience in HR, people, organisational development or a closely related field.	• Experience of contributing to effective governance through a board, committee, senior leadership, representative or comparable role.
Knowledge & Skills	• Sufficient working knowledge of budgets, management information and financial performance to contribute to collective board decisions and risk management • Ability to use expertise at a strategic and governance level, providing oversight and constructive challenge rather than becoming involved in operational management • Ability to think strategically and contribute to the long-term direction, sustainability and effectiveness of the Students' Union	
Behaviours & Qualities	• Independence of thought, integrity and sound judgement • Collaborative approach and ability to contribute effectively to collective decision-making • Commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging • Willing to listen to and value different perspectives, underlying a commitment to the principles of a student-led, democratic and member-focused organisation	

Commitment required

Meeting Attendance

Trustees must be able to attend and contribute to 4 full-day, in-person Board meetings a year. Trustees will also be expected to participate in decision-making via email and other discussion outside of formal meetings.

Time commitment outside of quarterly board meetings

- Typically, up to 4 hours per month during term time (Oxford operates on three, eight-week terms)
- Reduced commitment during vacation periods
- Occasional participation in sub-committees or Task and Finish Groups to address specific issues or priority areas of business

Terms of Office

- We are currently recruiting an interim External Trustee to serve from January – July 2027, with possibility for extension up to a full term.
- External Trustees generally serve terms of up to 4 years, renewable up to two terms (consecutive or non-consecutive).

Commitment required

Training

We utilise support from existing trustees, the National Union of Students (NUS), the Charity Commission and other organisations to ensure that trustees are fully informed of their responsibilities. External trustees also play an important role in supporting our Student and Sabbatical trustees.

Remuneration

The role of a trustee is a voluntary one, however we will provide the support you need to be an effective trustee including induction and training. We hope that our trustees will regard the role as an excellent opportunity to develop their own skills and experiences, as well as the reward inherent in knowing you are helping the SU in its work to improve the experience of the 27,000 students we represent.

All reasonable expenses such as travel to Board meetings will be reimbursed, in line with our policies.

Appointment process

Oxford SU external trustee appointments are made through a transparent, skills-based process that will involve an interview with the Nominations Committee.

The process is overseen by the Nominations Committee to ensure that the Board benefits from a diverse range of expertise. The committee is made up of:

- One sabbatical officer trustee
- One student trustee
- One external trustee
- One nominated representative of the University of Oxford
- One additional officer of the Students' Union, who is nominated from the Conference of Common Rooms (the Students' Union democratic structure)

Once selected, External Trustee appointments are recommended to the Conference of Common Rooms for approval by a simple majority vote before final confirmation by the Trustee Board.

How to apply

If you are interested in applying for the role of trustee or for an informal chat, please contact Nikki Smith, Oxford SU CEO - nikki.smith@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk

To apply for the role, please send a CV and covering letter of no more than one page to martha.wiltshire@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk on why you would like to be a trustee and how you meet the selection criteria.

Please also complete and return our Equality & Monitoring form.

Applications close on Wednesday 2nd December 2026.

Interviews will take place online in the week commencing 14th December 2026, outside of standard work hours.

Equal opportunities & declaration

Please note that the role of External Trustee is not open to current Oxford University students and information on Student Trustee opportunities can be found on our website.

When applying, you will be asked to complete our equal opportunities monitoring form and if your application is successful, you will be asked to complete a directors declaration form.

For more details about the organisation including details of our accounts and trustee board, please visit:

https://www.oxfordsu.org/

https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/07314850/filing-history

https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/07322922/filing-history