

THE STUDENTS' UNION (THE SU) TRUSTEES ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES POLICY

Vision: For Trustees to have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities within The SU.

Rationale: To provide guidance on the role and responsibilities of Trustees within The SU.

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What is a Trustee?

A Trustee is a person with legal responsibility for the overall administration of The SU.

Why does The SU have Trustees?

The SU is a registered charity and must have a Board of Trustees in order to comply with the law.

Who are the Trustees?

The SU has two types of Trustees:

- Officers who are elected by the Members of The SU.
- Independent Trustees who are appointed by the Board of Trustees.

Both Officer and Independent Trustees have exactly the same legal responsibilities.

What role do Trustees have in The SU?

Trustees are responsible in The SU for:

- Strategic planning
- Performance monitoring
- Governance
- Legal compliance
- Resource management
- Risk management
- Health & safety

How do Trustees carry out their role?

Trustees carry out their role through meetings of the Board of Trustees and its committees. They are collectively responsible for any decisions made at these meetings.

Trustees can delegate particular responsibilities to trustees, staff members or committees but they will always remain legally liable for any actions carried out by those acting on their behalf.

What are Trustees personally liable for?

Trustees are personally liable for any financial loss they cause to The SU by acting improperly and for any legal claims made against the union by third parties that it can't meet the costs for.

The charity commission and the courts will rarely enforce liability on an unpaid trustee who made an honest mistake and can relieve Trustees from liability if they have not benefited from their actions.

There is no legal protection for Trustees who have acted dishonestly, negligently or recklessly.

What is the relationship between Trustees and staff?

Trustees are not directly involved in managing staff or the day to day running of The SU.

This is a responsibility that they delegate to the Chief Executive and monitor.

What does The SU expect from its trustees?

The SU expects its Trustees to:

- participate in meetings and take decisions in the best interests of The SU
- engage with important SU activities and events throughout the year
- provide support and challenge to the senior leadership team of The SU
- attend training relevant to their role
- develop an understanding of how The SU operates
- declare any personal conflicts of interests they may have when they arise

What will The SU do for its Trustees?

The SU will:

- provide an effective induction to their role
- provide them with any information they require for their role
- follow the strategic direction they set
- respect their work life/balance
- reimburse them for legitimate expenses in relation to their role

Checklist for Trustees

Trustees should receive and retain copies of the following documents:

- Articles of Governance
- The SU Strategic plan
- Trustees' Annual report
- Complaints & Disciplinary procedures

Trustees should ensure they have completed and signed the following documents:

- Register of interests
- Declaration that they are not disqualified from being a trustee
- Skills audit

Further Reading

The [essential Trustee](#) should be consulted for a broader understanding of the role and responsibilities of trustees as they apply to charity sector in general.