

## Heriot-Watt University Students Union

### Trustee Recruitment

External Trustees

Information Pack

#### **The Role**

The role of external Trustees is brand new for Heriot-Watt University Students Union.

The role was created following an internal Governance review. Previously the Students Union Executive, comprising the three full time and four other part time members, were considered as Trustees.

The new Board comprises:

2 Full-Time (Sabbatical) Student Officers – the President and Deputy President  
2 Student selected by the Trustees, who shall not be members of the Executive  
2 External Trustees, selected by the Trustees, who will not be students or members of the University.

The new Constitution states that the Trustees shall be responsible for the overall strategy, management and finances of the Union. We are looking for External Trustees to bring expertise to the Union in these areas. There is more information about the role of Charity Trustees on the OSCR web site at [www.oscr.org.uk](http://www.oscr.org.uk).

External Trustees are appointed for an initial period of two years and may be re-appointed for a further two years. We would expect one of the External Trustees to be re-appointed and one to step down after two years in order to provide continuity and experience.

The position is not remunerated but expenses will be paid in accordance with Union policies.

#### **Time Commitment**

It is expected that the Trustees will meet between four and six times a year. Trustees will be expected to read Board papers prior to the meeting. Trustees may be involved in additional meetings throughout the year if specific issues arise that require further consideration. Trustees will be expected to be available to advise Officers and Senior Staff Members on issues that may arise.

Trustees will be expected to attend a small number of events though the year such as award ceremonies and handover events.

## **The Challenge**

This is the first time that non-students have been part of the governing body of the Students Union and the challenge will be working alongside students who are the elected leaders of the organisation. The challenge is to ensure that the SU is an organisation fit for purpose whilst being sensitive to the political dynamic of the Executive.

In addition, there are other challenges facing Students' Unions in general. Heriot-Watt University itself, in common with much of the sector is experiencing financial pressures which translate directly into their ability to provide additional funds for the Students Union. In turn, the Union also faces pressures on its own commercial services as licensed trade revenues fall across the country and the overall economic climate begins to impact on all sectors. The Union has just received a report from an outside consultant which recommends changes in the way the Union is run and the way it interacts with the University in order to ensure its financial viability.

## **Personal Specification**

### **Requirements**

#### **Essential**

- Enthusiasm for the values of the Union as a democratic, participative, student-led organisation.
- knowledge of some of the following:
  - setting strategy
  - Monitoring targets and evaluating performance
  - Financial management
  - legal and compliance matters
- Involvement in third sector organisations.
- Ability to think strategically.
- Ability to make and express independent judgements.
- Ability to communicate effectively.
- Commitment to devoting necessary time and attention to the role of External Trustee.

#### **Desirable**

- Knowledge of trusteeship and/or scrutiny overview.
- Understanding of Students' Unions/Universities and the Higher Education Sector.
- Experience or knowledge of the working of charities.
- Technical knowledge to assist management and other Trustees e.g. legal, financial expertise, human resources, marketing etc.
- Understanding of the role of External Trustee including legal responsibilities.

## **Job Description**

The Board of Trustees' legal role is to ensure that the resources held by the Union on trust are applied effectively for the purposes of and furtherance of its aims and objectives.

Its crucial objective is to secure a well run, efficient and strong organisation which abides by its aims, objects, values, constitution and policy mandates and operates within the constraints of the law.

It is important to note that whilst the Union Board of Trustees delegates management and political leadership to the elected Office-Bearers, particularly the President and Deputy President, who may in turn delegate this to permanent members of staff, legal accountability remains with the Board of Trustees, the Sabbatical Officers being required to fulfil the dual roles of political representative and Trustee.

The role of a Trustee is:

- To ensure that the Union complies with its governing document, (Articles, Byelaws and Regulations) the law and any other relevant legislation or regulations;
- to ensure that the Union pursues its objects as defined in its Articles, Byelaws and Regulations;
- to ensure that the Union applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects and the policies as agreed by the democratic structures;
- to contribute actively to setting the strategy and direction of the Union;
- to ensure the financial stability of the Union;

## **Specific Duties**

Trustees are expected to use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the Board of Trustees reach sound decisions (it is anticipated that External Trustees will help to ensure an appropriate range of skills, knowledge and experience). This will involve:

- Scrutinising board papers
- Leading discussions
- Focussing on key issues
- Providing guidance on new initiatives
- Guidance on other issues in which the Trustee has special expertise

External Trustees will be expected to complete an internal Induction Programme to familiarise themselves with the Union and to participate in training programmes, meetings or conferences relevant to the position.

Trustees will be invited to attend events organised by the Union.