



SERVING SINCE 1955

# GRADUATE UNION

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

*External and Alumni Trustee  
Recruitment Pack*



Dear candidate,

**RE: External and Alumni Recruitment to the University of Cambridge Graduate Union**

Thank you for considering an application for the position of an External and/or Alumni trustee.

Our non-student Trustees bring a wealth of experience to the board that cannot be supplied by our student members. This will help achieve the objective of the charity, to advance the education of Graduate Students and our other members of the Union by:

1. promoting the interests and welfare of graduate students and other members of the Union, and providing support and advice to them;
2. being a recognised representative channel between graduate students (other than those who are not members of the Union) and the University and bodies external to the University; and
3. providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of graduate students and any other persons who are members of the Union,

Your role is to hold the Union resource in trust, to make sure that we are using our financial resources in a way that we achieve our objectives; that we run in a democratic, reputationally sound and legal manner.

We generally have up to 8 meetings a year, though we may contact our trustees by phone and email for advice and decision in-between this. We may ask trustees to provide line management capacity to our sabbaticals, so you should expect about 6-8 days a year in total.

If you are still interested in applying, most of the information is located in this pack, or on our website: [www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk](http://www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk), otherwise do feel free to get in touch with myself (Darshana) at [president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk) or our General Manger at [manager@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:manager@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

Yours faithfully,

Dr Darshana Joshi (Cantab)  
Graduate Union President, Chair of the Board of Trustee and Graduate Union Council



# *External and Alumni Trustee Recruitment Pack*

**Application deadline:** 11:59pm (midnight) on 30 April 2018 (Extended)

**Short listing:** 30 April

**Interviews:** likely 4-6 May

**Deadline for appeal:** 11:59am (noon), 7 May

**Graduate Union Council:** 7 May

All applicants will need to apply to [manager@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:manager@gradunion.cam.ac.uk) by:  
**11.59pm (midnight) on 30 April 2018**

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## Eligibility:

All trustees must not:

- have an unspent conviction for an offence involving dishonesty or deception
- be currently declared bankrupt (or subject to bankruptcy restrictions or an interim order) or have an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA) to pay off debts with creditors
- be disqualified from being a company director, or an order made under section 429(2) of the Insolvency Act 1986
- have previously been removed as a trustee by us, the Scottish charity regulator or the High Court due to misconduct or mismanagement or anybody under section 34(5)(e) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 (or earlier legislation)

External Trustee	Alumni Trustee
Must not have been a University of Cambridge Student or held Union Office for at least 2 years prior to the date of appointment.	Must not have been a University of Cambridge Student, or held Union office for at least 1 year prior to the date of appointment.

## What is the role of a trustee?

The charity commission sums up the role of the trustee in 6 points (below):

1. *Ensure your charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit*
2. *Comply with your charity's governing document and the law*
3. *Act in your charity's best interests*
4. *Manage your charity's resources responsibly*
5. *Act with reasonable care and skill*
6. *Ensure your charity is accountable*

Though we do encourage possible trustees to have a look at the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>

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Cambridge University Graduate Union  
17 Mill Lane Cambridge CB2 1RX

Telephone: 01223 333313  
Email: [enquiries@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)  
Website: [gradunion.cam.ac.uk](http://gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

Charity Number: 1147864



## Important information for prospective Trustees

### 1. What are the Unions Objects that Trustees will help achieve?

The Union's objects are the advancement of education of graduate students at the University and any other persons who are members of the Union by:

- Promoting the interests and welfare of graduate students and other members of the Union, and providing support and advice to them;
- Being a recognised representative channel between graduate students (other than those who are not members of the Union) and the University and bodies external to the University; and
- Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of graduate students and any other persons who are members of the Union.

### 2. Context / background

The GU's three "external trustees" (technically two external trustees, and one alumnus trustee – though all can be alumni) serve for terms of up to four years. The terms of office of our all three current Trustees will end in June 2018. Hence, we are going through this appointment process.

External trustees are nominated by the Executive Committee, and appointed by the Council, though a prospective trustee can appeal to the Trustee Board the decision of the Executive committee.

Ultimately, we are looking for trustees to help the Union strategically to grow financially, in increased relevance to our members and the University.

As there is limited space for trustees, if you are not successful, we hope this is not the end of your relationship with the Graduate Union. We are also looking to start a Friends and Patrons programme.

### 3. How to apply

We ask prospective trustees to supply a Curriculum Vitae (CV), as well as a cover letter about what skills they will be able to bring to the Union by 11.59pm (Midnight) on the 30 April 2018. We ask applicants to read through this pack on what skills or experiences they should highlight.

Prospective Trustees are also asked to make sure they are eligible for the role, and are asked to sign an attached declaration

### 4. What skills are we looking for?

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We are looking primarily for those who care about our Members: Postgraduates and Mature Students, and their education at Cambridge, but there are a number of key skills that will enhance the role. Though niches skills are important, you need to be willing and able to question and contribute across the whole organisation.

<b>Skills that would (collectively) be needed</b>	<b>Skills that would add to the organisation</b>
Audit / Risk Management	Commercial Acumen
Finance	External Representation
Governance	Income Generation/Fundraising
Human Resources	Investment
Legal	IT/ Data Protection Systems
Monitoring / Evaluation	Operational Management
Organisational Development	Policy
Performance Management	Social Entrepreneurship
Relationship Management	Staff Development
Volunteer Management	Strategic Planning

Board members also need listening and communication skills to make a cogent, clear and compelling case on behalf of the organisation. We also would want to see strong personal commitment and empathy with the GU's objectives, and to act as advocates of the Union in promoting its work.

To this extent, the ability to show intellect, commitment, personal presence and standing would be important to this post.

## **5. Recommending a trustee**

This will begin initially through a paper based short listing process, and some simple background checks by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will come to a decision on those on the short list, by interviewing prospective trustees with inputs from key stake holders.

## **6. Appointing trustees**

Once the Executive Committee has come to a decision on who they wish to appoint, they must nominate their chosen candidates for appointment by the GU Council. The GU Council will be given a short biography of each nominee, alongside the reasons that the Executive Committee has nominated them.

One of the primary purposes of the Board of Trustees is to ensure continuity. Therefore, not all of the appointments will be made for four years – as this results in a large-scale one-off recruitment, rather than gradual replacement. The terms will be staggered, so at least that no more than two come to an end in any one year. This will be discussed with the successful candidates, though re-appointed to a further term is an option.



### ***About the Graduate Union: Introductory information***

The University of Cambridge Graduate Union is a small and specialist Students' Union representing the postgraduate students at the University of Cambridge. It is a registered charity, number 1147864.

The Graduate Union was founded in the 1950s by humanitarian Greta Burkill, essentially as a combined soup kitchen and social hub for postgraduate students and their spouses, who she felt were neglected as a consequence of the University's focus on undergraduates. Over the years, the union has evolved from a University-run members' club into a student-lead representative organisation, becoming first in the late twentieth century a modern students' union and then in 2012 a registered charity. It is officially recognised by the University, and is responsible for providing postgraduate student representation to a large number of University bodies, including the University Council and the General Board of the Faculties.

In 2016-17, the operating budget of the union was c. £240,000. The union's income streams include direct University support, affiliation fees paid by Collegiate students' unions, and commercial income generated in the course of providing services to students (e.g. hard-case thesis binding, gown rental).

### ***Membership profile***

The postgraduate student body at the University of Cambridge is a highly diverse and international community of advanced students and early-career researchers working at the highest international standards of academic excellence.

A way of an illustration of the diversity of the community, roughly two-thirds of postgraduate students at Cambridge are from outside the UK. In addition, over a tenth of the community are studying part-time, and around a twelfth are student parents. Roughly a fifth are on taught courses, while the remaining four-fifths undertaking research.

The Graduate Union represents all postgraduate students, mature undergraduate students, and undergraduate students in their fourth or higher year of study (e.g. clinical medicine students). In addition, the union seeks to include the partners and children of its membership in as many of its activities as possible and includes the partners of full members as associate members.

### ***Organisational context and partnerships***

The union operates within a complex and diverse institutional environment, a consequence of the Collegiate structure of the University and the natural evolution of students' unions at the institution over its long history. Every student of the University is also a member of one of the 31 autonomous, fiercely independent Colleges – and each College has its own students' unions (usually one for undergraduates called the JCR and one for postgraduates called the MCR).

Students are represented at University-level by two central students' unions to which College unions



may affiliate: the Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU), which represents all Cambridge students, and the Graduate Union, which specifically represents postgraduate and mature undergraduate students. Members of the Graduate Union are therefore also members of CUSU and their college union, and the Union works closely with these institutions to ensure the best outcomes for their shared membership.

The union's relationships with CUSU and the MCRs are critically important. CUSU is a much larger organisation than the Graduate Union (although still small by the standards of the sector), and the two unions share many resources, including office space and an increasing number of joint staff employed to support both unions. Although the two unions are politically independent and organisationally autonomous of one another, their shared goals and values are laid out in a memorandum of understanding between the two which commits each to a constructive working relationship with the other. The Graduate Union is better able to achieve its objects with the aid of CUSU's organisational infrastructure, and CUSU is better able to fulfil its representational duties towards postgraduate students through collaborating with the specialist Graduate Union.

The Graduate Union relies upon the MCRs in order to effectively represent postgraduate students – generally speaking, MCRs have a more direct relationship with their members while the Graduate Union is best placed to effect changes in policy at the University-level. Without a strong relationship between the union and the MCRs, postgraduate voices will not be heard by the central University. Fostering a strong relationship with MCRs based on mutual trust and interdependence is therefore imperative to the success of the Graduate Union.

## **Governance**

The union is primarily governed by its Board of Trustees, comprising two full-time student officers, two current postgraduate students, one alumnus trustee and two external trustees. The Board have ultimate responsibility for the day-to-day management and operation of the union, through delegation to the President, Vice-President and the General Manager. The Trustees ensure the union remains legally compliant, solvent, and functions in accordance with the Constitution.

The full-time student officers are directly elected for year-long terms by the postgraduate students of the University. Presently, the President and shared GU/CUSU Welfare & Rights Officers take office in July, while the Vice-President's term of office begins in January – their term is deliberately offset to provide a measure of continuity. All full-time officers have the opportunity to be re-elected for a further term.

All other trustees are appointed by the Union's Council, on the nomination of the Executive Committee (comprising all full- and part-time student officers). Student trustees serve for one-year terms of office and the alumnus and external trustees serve for up to four-year terms of office, all renewable for a further term.

The General Manager reports directly to the Board via the President (who is ex officio chair of the





Board) and a second nominated trustee who provides a further avenue of support and direction. The General Manager's authority arises through delegation from the Board.

### **Democratic structures**

The union's membership is represented through the Council, on which all University faculties and all affiliated MCRs have a representative. The Council sets the policy of the union and holds the elected officers to account.

The student activities of the union are coordinated through the Executive Committee, of which all elected student officers are members, and which is formally a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee is also responsible for maintaining a coherent record of policy adopted by the Council, and developing and proposing new policies for the Council to consider.

### ***Recent history and future goals***

The Graduate Union has recently undertaken a significant expansion and restructuring, as a response in part to a challenging period following the union's conversion to registered charity status in 2012. In the last two years the union has established for the first time both a full-time permanent member of staff, the General Manager, and a second full-time elected student officer, the Vice-President, thereby tripling the number of full-time team members. In 2015-16 the University undertook a full and thorough review of the representation of postgraduate students and committed to recognising and supporting the continued existence of the Graduate Union as an independent representative body for its postgraduate student community, working alongside CUSU.

The union is now therefore at a stage of consolidation and strategic planning following a period of upheaval. The organisation is in a strong financial position, with reliable income streams and appropriate amount of reserves. Furthermore, the recent expansion and restructuring have left the organisation with the capacity to begin expanding the range of projects and campaigns undertaken using these resources, from a position of institutional security and stable governance. Further, ensuring the quality of the postgraduate student experience is of high strategic importance to the University.

The Union is excited to make the most of these opportunities by developing an ambitious strategic plan, and board member will be aiding the Union its monitoring and implementation.

### ***Further information***

[Charity commission annual returns, including accounts](#)

[Brief history of the Graduate Union](#)

[An overview of the structure of the Collegiate University](#)

[Recent articles published on Wonkhe, a higher education blog, concerning postgraduate education](#)