

## **General Manager**

### **Job description and further particulars**

<b>Recruiter</b>	Cambridge University Graduate Union
<b>Location</b>	Central Cambridge
<b>Hours</b>	Full-time, predominantly during regular office hours; however, working outside of these is required on occasion, particularly during term-time, and there is the opportunity for flexible working arrangements
<b>Contract</b>	Permanent, subject to 6 months' probationary period
<b>Salary</b>	£27,629 to £32,958 plus pension (equivalent to Grade 6 on the University of Cambridge's pay scale)
<b>Reports to</b>	Board of Trustees (via the President and a second nominated Trustee)

#### **Purpose:**

The Graduate Union is the primary representative body of the postgraduate student community at the University of Cambridge. The General Manager is the chief executive of the Graduate Union, and the purpose of the role is:

1. to ensure delivery of the union's strategy, as directed by the Board of Trustees;
2. to oversee the day-to-day operations of the union;
3. to be responsible and accountable for the union's financial and commercial performance and regulatory compliance;
4. to support and coordinate the work of the union's small team of fixed-term full-time officers, part-time staff, and volunteers; and
5. to provide continuity and organisational stability as the union's only permanent full-time employee.

## **Key responsibilities:**

### ***Strategy***

- Support the Board of Trustees in the development of a strategic plan, ensuring membership engagement in the process, and take responsibility for its implementation
- Provide the Board with regular strategic reports on the fulfilment of the Board's vision and the union's mission
- Maintain and update the union's risk register, and ensure appropriate action to mitigate identified risks
- Improve and maintain the union's reputation with its membership, the University, and partner organisations through the maintenance of high professional standards within the union, and the successful execution of the union's strategic goals
- Provide strategic direction and guidance to the annually-elected student officers, as directed by the Board of Trustees
- Liaise and build strong relationships with partner organisations and institutions with aligned goals, especially the CUSU and the Collegiate MCRs

### ***Governance***

- Serve as Secretary to the Board of Trustees and, in this capacity, advise and assist the chair with the preparation of agenda, keep the minutes of meetings, ensure agreed actions are executed, and administer the practicalities arranging meetings
- Maintain the Board's portfolio of internal union policies, ensuring they are reviewed and updated by the Board regularly
- Establish and maintain strong relationships with key University stakeholders
- Provide institutional knowledge and continuity for the annually-elected full-time and part-time student officers

### ***Financial and commercial management***

- Provide the Board with regular reports on the union's financial performance
- Aid the officers with the creation of the union's annual budget
- Manage and develop the commercial student services and facilities provided by the union
- Undertake any financial or other administration necessary for the union's day-to-day business

### ***Compliance***

- Ensure the union's statutory compliance, including but not limited to the requirements of the Education Act 1994, charity law, employment law, data protection law, and health and safety law.
- Ensure the union's timely submission of its annual return to the Charity Commission
- Arrange the annual audit of the union's accounts

- Ensure the union's compliance with regulations made by the University concerning its students' unions, including but not limited to the University's Statutes and Ordinances and its Code of Practice under the Education Act 1994
- Alongside the President, represent the union at and report to the quarterly meetings of the University Council's Committee on the Supervision of the Students' Unions

### ***Staff and officer support***

- Manage the union's team of part-time personnel (presently the IT Manager, Financial Clerk, and Parent/Toddler Group Worker)
- Liaise with the General Manager of the CUSU in the activities of the staff serving both unions (presently the reception team, the advice service team, and a shared policy and communications manager).
- With the Board of Trustees, ensure that the union has appropriately skilled and qualified staff to deliver its strategy
- Provide administrative support to the projects of the elected student officers, advise the officers on the feasibility and practicalities of their plans, and provide strategic direction to the development of student activities
- Provide administrative support to the democratic activities of the union, including aiding the student chairs of the union's Council and Executive Committee and keeping minutes of these meetings where required

### ***General duties***

- Give a positive impression of the union, both internally and externally, by displaying high standards of service, integrity, punctuality, politeness and professionalism
- Contribute enthusiastically towards any project within the activities of the union, embracing the flexible working practises required when working as part of a small organisation
- Ensure the Board of Trustees stay informed about the activities of the union and are apprised of any matters requiring their attention in a timely manner
- Exercise a general superintendence of the operation of the union as a charity
- Perform any other tasks that are deemed to be suitable within this role as directed by line management or the Board

This job description reflects the key duties and responsibilities of the post at time of writing. Applicants should be aware that over a period of time, and as circumstances change, these duties and responsibilities might be required to change. It is therefore anticipated that from time to time this job description may be reviewed with the post holder.

## **Person specification:**

### ***Education/qualifications***

- Educated to degree level
- Professionally trained or qualified in skills relevant to the role (desirable)

### ***Experience***

- Working within the research or higher education sector, e.g. as a university administrator or postgraduate student (desirable)
- Working with students or early-career researchers (desirable)
- Working or holding office within a students' union or similar body, e.g. a charity, representative body or membership organisation (desirable)

### ***Knowledge***

- Awareness of, and a readiness to develop a good understanding of, relevant legislation, including that applying to charities and students' unions
- Financial and commercial literacy
- Understanding of the issues and current developments in higher education, particularly for postgraduate students (desirable)
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- Working knowledge of good practices in charity or students' union governance, committee servicing, and people management (desirable)
- Understanding of the structure the University of Cambridge (desirable)
- The ability to bring a fresh perspective on the activities of the union (desirable)

### ***Skills***

- Outstanding organisational and project-management skills
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, able to influence and build trust with diverse stakeholders and act as an external ambassador
- Ability to interpret and draw conclusions from quantitative data
- Sound judgement and strategic mind-set, able to identify, prioritise and implement actions with the maximum impact on the union's vision and mission
- Ability to fully utilise standard office software, and to gain proficiency with the University's finance system and the union website's CMS

### ***Values/characteristics***

- Displays high standards of professional ethics, honesty and industry
- Has a positive, solution-focussed approach to challenges
- Is determined, resilient, able to work under pressure and with various competing demands, and to take "tough" decisions when necessary
- Has a flexible attitude to work, comfortable working without supervision or as part of a team, and willing to support a very diverse range of activities

- Understands and champions the purpose of a students' union in general, and the Graduate Union in particular, and is committed to ensuring the union thrives as democratic, student-lead organisation

## **About the Graduate Union:**

### ***Introductory information***

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

The Graduate Union was founded in the 1950s by the wife of the Master of Peterhouse (the oldest extant College in the University), 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 undergraduate education. 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, advertisements).

### ***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.

By 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, with 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 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 Graduate Union works closely with these institutions to ensure the best outcome 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 CUSU 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 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 CUSU-GU Welfare & Rights Officers take office in July, while the Vice-President's term of office begins in January – their term is deliberately offset by six months to provide a measure of continuity. All full-time officers have the opportunity to be re-elected for one further term.

All other trustees are appointed by the union's student 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 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 significant 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 Board are excited to make the most of these opportunities by developing an ambitious strategic plan with the incoming General Manager, and aiding them in its 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](#)



## **Application process:**

Please submit your CV with a covering letter to the President of the union, via [president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk), with the phrase "General Manager application" in the subject line.

The deadline for receiving applications is 10am on Monday 24 July.

Interviews and assessment of shortlisted candidates are scheduled to take place on Monday 31 July.

The President can be contacted informally for information about this role.