

Birkbeck Students Union

Student Trustee Candidate Guide 2026/27

Prepared in line with the Birkbeck Students' Union Bye-Laws, Articles of Association, and governance framework.

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Student Trustee at Birkbeck Students' Union (BSU).

Student Trustees are an important part of the Union's governance structure. They help ensure that BSU remains democratic, accountable, financially responsible, and focused on improving the experience of students at Birkbeck.

This guide explains:

- What a Student Trustee does
- How the Board of Trustees works
- What skills and experiences are helpful
- What support is available
- How to apply

You don't need previous trustee experience to apply. We actively encourage applications from students with a wide range of backgrounds, identities, and experiences, but in order to diversify the voices which shape the work of the Union, we are particularly interested in applications from evening, part-time, postgraduate and UK-domiciled (Home) students.

About Birkbeck Students Union

Birkbeck Students' Union exists to represent, support, and empower students at Birkbeck, University of London. The Union is led by students and governed through a structure that includes:

- The Board of Trustees
- Officer Trustees
- Student parliament
- Liberation Committees
- Clubs and Societies

The Union's governance arrangements are set out in the Articles of Association and Bye-Laws.

What is the Board and what is a student trustee?

A student trustee is a student member of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is legally responsible for the Students' Union and they govern the Union as a charity.

Under Bye-Law D1.1, the Board of Trustees is made up of:

- Officer Trustees
- Up to two Student Trustees
- Lay Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the Students' Union.

Student trustees help ensure that the Union remains accountable, democratic, financially sustainable, and focused on the interests of students.

The role of a trustee is strategic rather than operational. Trustees are not responsible for the day-to-day management of the Students' Union; instead, trustees collectively discharge their responsibilities through the Board by:

- Setting and approving strategic direction and priorities
- Reviewing, scrutinising and challenging decisions where appropriate
- Monitoring organisational performance and impact
- Overseeing financial sustainability, risk and governance
- Ensuring accountability to students and members
- Supporting equality, diversity and inclusion across the Union
- Ensuring the Union operates democratically and fairly
- Acting in the best interests of the Students' Union and its members

The Board operates within and is responsible for ensuring compliance with:

- The Articles of Association
- The Bye-Laws
- The Code of Practice
- Charity law and company law
- The Education Act 1994

Under Bye-Law D4, Board minutes and papers are normally published for Ordinary Members unless confidentiality is required.

What are Student Trustees expected to do?

Student Trustees are expected to fulfil the duties set out within the Union's governance framework.

Attend and contribute to meetings

Student Trustees are expected to:

- Attend Board of Trustees meetings regularly
- Read papers and reports in advance
- Participate actively in discussion and decision-making
- Contribute constructively and professionally

Uphold governance responsibilities

Trustees are expected to:

- Uphold the Union's governing documents
- Follow the Equal Opportunities Policy
- Declare conflicts of interest where relevant
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- Act collectively with other trustees
- Support decisions made democratically through Union structures

Act in the best interests of the Union

Under the governance principles reflected throughout the Bye-Laws, trustees are expected to:

- Act responsibly and with integrity
- Support accountability and transparency
- Ensure fair representation of students
- Support inclusive decision-making
- Contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Union

Officer Trustees are additionally required under Bye-Law E1.3 to uphold resolutions and policies of the Union, act collectively, and adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life. These principles also help guide the conduct of all trustees.

Who can apply?

To apply for a Student Trustee role, you must:

- Be a registered Birkbeck student
- Remain eligible for Union membership during your term of office
- Be willing to undertake trustee training and participate in governance processes

The Students' Union is committed to equality of opportunity and inclusive representation in line with the Bye-Laws and Equal Opportunities Policy.

What skills and qualities are helpful?

We are looking for students who are:

- Interested in improving student experience
- Thoughtful and willing to learn
- Able to work collaboratively
- Reliable and professional
- Comfortable asking questions
- Interested in governance and accountability

Helpful experience might include:

- Academic representation
- Student leadership
- Volunteering
- Campaigning
- Community organising
- Committee participation
- Budgeting or project management
- Equality and liberation work
- Workplace or professional experience

Lived experience and different perspectives are valuable.

Time Commitment

The expected commitment includes:

- Attendance at Board meetings (each meeting is approximately 2 hours)
- Reading meeting papers in advance
- Occasional training and development sessions
- Participation in strategic discussions and events where possible

Most meetings are scheduled in advance and reasonable adjustments and accessibility support can be provided.

Training and Support

All Student Trustees will receive:

- Trustee induction and training
- Governance support
- Access to relevant policies and documents
- Ongoing support from students' union staff and trustees

You are not expected to know everything before joining - the role is designed to support learning and development.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Birkbeck Students' Union is committed to making the trustee process accessible and inclusive.

Support may include:

- Flexible participation arrangements
- Online attendance where appropriate
- Accessibility adjustments
- Additional guidance for first-time applicants
- Drop-in support sessions during the application period

If you require adjustments, you are encouraged to contact the Students' Union.

How to Apply

Applicants should complete the Student Trustee Application Form.

The form asks about:

- Your interest in the role
- Relevant experience, skills, or perspectives
- Why you would be an effective trustee

Applications will be reviewed after the deadline.

Shortlisted applicants may be invited to an interview.

Selection Process

The process may include: 1. Written application 2. Shortlisting 3. Interview 4. Recommendation and appointment process

The Union aims to ensure the process is fair, transparent, and accessible.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need trustee experience?

No. Training and support will be provided.

Is this a paid role?

No. Student Trustee roles are normally voluntary positions.

Can international students apply?

Yes.

Can part-time students apply?

Yes.

What if I have accessibility requirements?

The Students' Union will work with you to provide reasonable adjustments.

What if I am nervous about applying?

That is completely normal. Interested applicants can contact us for advice throughout the application process.

Governance Framework

This guide has been prepared in reference to the Birkbeck Students' Union Bye-Laws.

Relevant sections include:

- Bye-Law A: Membership
- Bye-Law D: Board of Trustees
- Bye-Law E: Officer Trustees
- Bye-Law F: Executive Committee
- Bye-Law G: Student Council and Committees
- Bye-Law K: Complaints Procedures and Disputes Committee

Contact

If you have questions about the role or application process, please contact Birkbeck Students' Union su-committees@bbk.ac.uk.