

trustee handbook



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Last updated March 2021

This handbook aims to answer some of the fundamental questions for Trustees and those involved in governance. It also aims to introduce new Trustees and committee members to Greenwich Students' Union (GSU).

The handbook covers the role and function of students' unions and the specific aims and objectives of GSU. It moves on to outline the legal status of student unions, the specific status of GSU and the implication of such for the Union's Trustees. The role and responsibilities of Trustees are outlined before the relationship with the Union's 'parent body' University of Greenwich (UoG) is explored. Finally, the handbook refers to the Union's Strategic Plan, known as the 'Big Plan' for the period 2017-2020, outlining the eight themes of the plan and explaining the development of the annual Operating Plan. Due to the impact of COVID-19 the trustees have agreed to extend The Big Plan until July 2021 whilst our services and finances recover.

Our vision is for our members to make the most of their journey at Greenwich. Our mission is to empower students to have life changing experiences, which help them shape their futures and the world around them. Our values are: Approachable, Trusted, Dedicated, Courageous, and Empowering.

Being a Trustee or Committee Member of GSU requires time and commitment. Please feel free to ask questions, request more information, documents, policies or procedures. We hope you enjoy being part of Greenwich Students' Union and wish you a warm welcome.

Liz Jones
Chair of the Board

John Schless
Chief Executive

Role and Function of a Students' Union

GSU was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee and Charity in 2012 in line with the Charity Act 2006¹ and Companies Act. It is regulated by the Charity Commission² and the University of Greenwich (UoG) Governing Body³.

The Education Act (1994)⁴ defines a students' union as "*an association of the generality of students at an establishment...whose primary purposes include promoting the general interests of its members as students; or a representative body...whose principal purposes include representing the generality of students at an establishment in academic, disciplinary or other matters relating to the government of the establishment*".

The Act goes on to outline some key legal requirements of students' unions. The Act places the burden of compliance scrutiny for these requirements on the University, but as Trustees it is important to be aware of and monitor performance to these requirements. These (paraphrased) requirements are listed below:

1. The Union should have a written constitution (called the Articles).
2. The Articles should be subject to the approval of the University Governing Body and be approved regularly. **It was last reviewed and updated in 2020 and approved on 11th May 2020 by the Governing Body.**
3. A student should have the right not to be a member of the Union.
4. Appointment to major Union offices should be by a fairly and properly conducted election in a secret ballot of all members.
5. No person may hold sabbatical office for more than two years.
6. The financial affairs of the Union should be properly conducted and the budget and accounts should be approved by the University Governing Body.
7. The Union should produce financial reports at least annually, and these should be made available to the University and all students.
8. The procedure for allocating resources to student groups should be fair, set down in writing and made available to all students.
9. The details of all Union affiliations should be made available to the University and all students.
10. All affiliations should be reviewed annually.
11. The Union should have a complaints procedure.

At a minimum, and at their heart, students' unions are organisations that exist to represent and further the interests of students as a collective and as individuals. In the vast majority of cases in the U.K., this representative function is enhanced by the provision of services for students, whether non-commercial (or 'membership'), such as societies and welfare advice, or commercial (such as shops and bars). Greenwich Students' Union is no exception to this. We realise that there must be a balance between the three in terms of focus and performance. This belief is reinforced by the fact that the University, as our key funder, expects the funding it provides to result in the provision of services that enhance the student experience, playing a central role in the recruitment and retention of students for

1. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/50/pdfs/ukpga_20060050_en.pdf
2. www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission
3. www.gre.ac.uk/about-us/governance/university-court
4. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/pdfs/ukpga_20110021_en.pdf

Introduction to Greenwich Students' Union

Greenwich Students' Union is a company limited by guarantee and not having share capital. A company limited by guarantee (LBG) is an alternative type of corporation used primarily for non-profit organisations that require legal personality. A company limited by guarantee does not usually have a share capital or shareholders, but instead has members who act as guarantors. The guarantors give an undertaking to contribute a nominal amount (typically very small) in the event of the winding up of the company.

GSU is also a registered charity. The Board of Trustees is the main governing body of the Students' Union, however the Board must listen to the membership and make decisions on changes voted by the Student Assembly ⁵.

Student Assembly

The function of the Student Assembly is to have reflective and informed discussion to lead to decision making that will:

- Improve a student's university experience
- Address a disadvantage a group of students are facing
- Enforce what students expect/want from their Students' Union and representation.

Student Assembly is conducted through round table group deliberation. This means everyone has the opportunity to input their views and opinions through facilitated groups, working towards an agreed set of actions to address a particular issue affecting the student community. Therefore every single attendee is shaping proposals and policy through an engaging and accessible format.

The action points drafted by the Student Assembly (all table groups) are taken to an online vote from which our student representatives have the opportunity to vote on. Those eligible to vote include:

Faculty Officers (x16 across the four faculties)
Executive Committee Members (x10 between the Sports and Society executive members)
Programme reps (x2 for every programme, in each year group)
Society group leaders (x2 committee members from each Society)
Sport club leaders (x2 committee members from each Club)

GSU is led by the four elected full-time sabbatical GSU Officers, elected in March and working summer to summer. They are either taking time out of their studies or have finished their degrees to lead GSU, implement new ideas, support student-led activities, and represent the voice with the University at every level.

Scrutiny Panel

Scrutiny of the GSU Officers work is done through our Scrutiny Panel that meets five times a year. Scrutiny Panel is an essential part of our democratic system in holding GSU Officers (full-time representatives and Student Trustees) accountable to students and ensuring they are working in the interest of our membership.

Location

The University is based on three campuses, and five sites: Greenwich, Medway, Avery Hill Mansion Site, Avery Hill Southwood Site, and Bathway. Greenwich and Avery Hill students are represented by Greenwich Students' Union.

Students at Medway are represented by Greenwich and Kent Students' Union (GKSU)⁶, a partnership between Greenwich, and Kent Students' Unions. GKSU runs and supports the following for students on the Medway campus: an Advice Centre, The Deep End bar, Sports Clubs, Societies, Events, and Give-It-A-Go Activities (where students can try out different sports and societies).

Together the Students' Unions support the development of student representation across all campuses via the elected Programme Representatives, Faculty Officers and elected Full-time officers. This means that each SU role is to support students to have their 'voice' heard/represented on education issues.

GSU Services

We provide support and encourage our members to get involved with the university experience as much as possible, the below are to main areas where we engage with our members.

Membership Services

- Student Voice – Involvement with Student Council, Campaigns, Elections and members representation.
- Student Advice – Provide advice to all our members regarding Health, Housing, Employment, Money, International Students, safety, academic and other issues not covered in the aforementioned.
- Student Activities – Encompasses Societies, Sports groups, Academic Communities, Student Media, Varsity, Awards and more.
- Employability and Volunteering – Identifying opportunities and providing support to members.

Commercial Services

- Greenwich - **Change**, a café that serves speciality coffee with personality. The **Lower Deck** is a 500-capacity bar and nightclub with an outside garden in the depths of Dreadnought.
- Avery Hill – The Dome houses a **pop-up bar** for social events for students who are residents or visitors and **The Village Shop** sells take-away food and coffee, snacks and confectionery, in addition to a 'convenience' offer including groceries and toiletries.

Charitable Purpose, Values and Legal Status

Greenwich Students' Union is a registered charity whose charitable purpose is to support and work with students at the University of Greenwich.

Our vision

With you to make the most of your journey at Greenwich.

Our mission

We empower students to have life changing experiences, which help them shape their futures and the world around them.

Values Statement

The Values Statement details the specific principles that guide our day-to-day work. All activities should conform to these values, they should be consulted when making decisions and the culture of the organisation should reflect them.

Greenwich Students' Union is proud of its values:

Approachable

We will be as approachable as possible, promoting diversity in our teams and creating open and welcoming spaces. Our activities will be joined up, effectively communicated by visible champions and always centred by our customers.

Dedicated

We are dedicated to listening to our members, always aiming to improve our services. We will ensure equality of representation and will work hard to develop and care for ourselves, our teams and our members.

Courageous

We will be courageous in our endeavours, facing down any challenge with pro-active innovation. We will take risks, accept and learn from our mistakes, striving always to improve and grow.

Trusted

We will earn trust by living our values as a democratic body. We will put Fairtrade, ethics and sustainability at the centre of our work as a not-for-profit organisation. We will provide responsive advice and care to a membership that will come to rely on the strength of our word.

Empowering

We will seek to empower our members and ourselves, ensuring we all increase our capacity to live well and find enrichment in our work. We will ensure all diverse voices are liberated, that students and their needs lead our organisation and that we celebrate our successes together.

Legal Status of Greenwich Students' Union

The **Articles of Association** (usually referred to as 'the Articles') is the governing document for Greenwich Students' Union. Agreed with the membership, the University, Companies House and the Charity Commission, it sets out the core purpose and key sovereign principles of GSU. The document is designed to secure the highest and most fundamental principles of the Union in the eyes of the law as opposed to detailing more extensive interpretations or wider rules and procedures which are covered in the Bye-Laws. The Articles can only be changed with agreement from a critical majority of student members at a General Meeting AND approval from the Trustees AND the University AND (in some cases) the Charity Commission. Any updates must be filed with Companies House.

The GSU Articles and Bye-Laws can be found here at greenwichsu.co.uk/aboutus/constitution.

The Bye-Laws provide more detail about specifics including how we run elections, meetings, clubs and societies and what Student Assembly and Executive Committee do.

The Articles should be reviewed every five years (last reviewed 2020) with any recommendations for change put to the membership to agree at a General Meeting. The section of the Articles that sets out rules for the makeup, conduct and powers of the Board of Trustees is titled 'Trustees' and runs from rule 24 - 45 inclusive.

The Articles sets out GSU core objects (or purpose) as:

- Ensure that the diversity of its members is recognised and that equal success is available to all members of whatever origin or orientation.
- Pursue its aims and objectives independent of any political party or religious group.
- Pursue equal opportunities by taking positive action within the law to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society.

A copy of the articles can be found at greenwichsu.co.uk/aboutus/articles

Role and Responsibilities of Trustees

The Charity Commission summarises Trustees as being “*responsible for the general control and management of the administration of a charity*”. In short, Trustees accept ultimate liability for the affairs and the operations of a charity and, as such, must ensure that their level of influence and control is appropriate and sufficient to ensure that this duty is discharged. This section looks at the eleven requirements of Trustees that are outlined by the Charity Commission and the particular requirements for Greenwich Students’ Union Trustees that are outlined in the Constitution. Where appropriate, GSU current practice in terms of Trustee business is offered as an example.

Charity Commission Guidance for Trustees:

Trustees have and must accept **ultimate responsibility** for directing the affairs of a charity, and ensuring it is **solvent, well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes** for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up.

Ultimate Responsibility

As a Trustee you must ensure that you are exercising an appropriate level of scrutiny of the organisation to ensure you can be confident that the organisation is operating properly.

Being a Trustee of Greenwich Students’ Union carries with it at least a theoretical chance of personal liability. This liability could be financial or in extreme cases, legal. Further to this, your financial liability as a Trustee is unlimited. However, incidents of Charity Trustees being sued or prosecuted are very rare, and unheard of at Greenwich Students’ Union.

Greenwich Students’ Union currently holds **Trustee Indemnity Insurance**⁷ which covers you personally in the event of legal action against the Trustees, unless negligence can be proved on your part.

Solvency

As a Trustee, you will receive regular financial updates from the Union’s management, in the form of management accounts, budgets and financial position updates. If you would like further information or would like help interpreting the documents that you are presented with, please contact the Chief Executive or Head of Finance and Compliance.

Well-Run

The Union is managed by a team of managers, led by the Chief Executive across the departments within the SU. Central Services, which consists of Marketing and Communication, Finance and Office and HR management. Membership Services, which includes Representation and Advice, and Student Activities. Commercial Services, which includes the Village Shop and venues. As a Trustee, you need to scrutinise the work of the management team and, in particular, the Chief Executive. This currently happens through the submission of updates and proposals to the Board of Trustees, and through the line management of the Chief Executive, which Trustees play a role in via the Chair. The Chief Executive also provides a detailed report to each Board meeting, outlining key activities since the last meeting and progress towards agreed objectives, plans and key performance indicators.

Delivering the Charitable Outcomes

1. The core functions of Greenwich Students’ Union are outlined in the Articles, and further developed in the Statement of Charitable Purpose and Vision and Values statement. As a Trustee, you must be satisfied that the operations of the organisation (outlined in the Union’s Strategic Plan and the annual operating plan) further the aims of the organisation. Activities that are beyond the scope of the organisation may be considered “*ultra vires*” activities. Ultra vires activities are discussed elsewhere in this document, but suffice to say that ultra vires activities could, at best, put the organisation’s charitable status at risk and, at worst, leave the organisation (and the Trustees) open to legal action.

2. Trustees must ensure that the charity complies with charity law and company law, and with the requirements of the Charity Commission as regulator, in particular they must ensure that the charity prepares reports on what it has achieved and Annual Returns and accounts as required by law. Two main pieces of legislation apply to charities: The Charities Act (1993) and The Charities Act (2006). Both these documents are available from www.opsi.gov.uk. The Charity Commission’s website, www.charity-commission.gov.uk, has a number of helpful documents outlining requirements for charities and the responsibilities of Trustees.

3. Trustees must ensure that the charity does not breach any of the requirements or rules set out in its Articles and that it remains true to the charitable purpose and objects set out there. Greenwich Students’ Union’s governing document is the Articles and Bye-Laws, a copy of which can be found at greenwichsu.co.uk/aboutus/constitution. The Articles are reviewed every five years, and is approved by the members at a General Meeting, before receiving final assent by the University governing body, the University Governing Body. The current version was approved in April 2020.

4. Trustees must comply with the requirements of other legislation and other regulators which govern the activities of the charity. There is particular legislation that applies to students’ unions within the Education Act (1994). The particular requirements of the Act are outlined elsewhere. A general implication of the Act is that a number of regulatory requirements are placed on the University, in practice setting the University up as a regulatory body for the Union. Combined with the fact that the majority of discretionary income for the Union comes directly from the University, this means that the relationship between the Union and the University is critical. This relationship is managed in a number of different ways – regular meetings take place between the President, Chief Executive and the University Vice Chancellor. University staff are invited to serve on Union Committees including the Board of Trustees and the Union reports regularly to University Committees, particularly in terms of financial performance and budgeting.

5. Trustees must act with integrity, and avoid any personal conflicts of interest or misuse of charity funds or assets.

6. Trustees must ensure that the Charity is and will remain solvent.

7. Trustees must use charitable funds and assets reasonably, and only in furtherance of the charity’s objects.

8. Trustees must avoid undertaking activities that might place the charity’s endowment, funds, assets or reputation at undue risk.

9. Trustees must take special care when investing the funds of the charity, or borrowing funds for the charity to use. Points 6-9 expand on some of the earlier points, and focus on the Trustees responsibility to ensure that resources are managed effectively.

⁷ shorturl.at/qDJOV

As mentioned earlier, you will receive regular financial updates at Board meetings. Further to this, any significant financial decisions (such as large capital expenditure projects) will be brought to the Board of Trustees or Finance and Risk Committee for approval. The Head of Finance and Compliance produces annually a 'Financial Position of the Union and Risk Management Report', which will equip you with the information required to exercise judgement when making financial decisions for the Union.

10. Trustees must use reasonable care and skill in their work as Trustees, using their personal skills and experience as needed to ensure that the charity is well-run and efficient. If you are a selected Trustee, you will have been selected due to your skills and experiences being of potential benefit to the organisation. Although it is important that you impart these particular skills and areas of knowledge, do not feel that you can only contribute to a discussion within your area of expertise!

11. Trustees must consider getting professional advice on all matters where there may be material risk to the charity, or where the trustees may be in breach of their duties. It goes without saying that the Union management team are on hand to give you advice on their area of expertise should you require it. Further to this, a number of senior University staff can provide support and we have regular contact with a number of legal and financial professionals. If you feel that you need further advice in order to inform your decisions, please let us know.

Role of the Board of Trustees

The Articles set out that:

The Trustees of the Union shall be made up of the following persons:

- 24.1.1 not more than four Sabbatical Officer Trustees appointed in accordance with Article 25;
- 24.1.2 not more than four Student Trustees appointed in accordance with Article 26;
- 24.1.3 not more than six External Trustees appointed in accordance with Article 27; and 24.1.4 one University Trustee appointed in accordance with Article 28.

The following section outlines the particular powers of the Trustees, as detailed in the Articles, paragraphs 37 – 39.

64. Powers of the Board of Trustees

- 37.1 The Trustees shall be responsible for overseeing the management and administration of the Union and (subject to any applicable law, the Articles and Bye Laws) may exercise all the powers of the Union.
- 37.2 A meeting of the Trustees at which a quorum is present may exercise all powers exercisable by the Trustees. 37.3 The Trustees' powers under Article 37.1 shall include but not be limited to ultimate responsibility for:-
 - 37.3.1 the governance of the Union;
 - 37.3.2 the budget of the Union; and
 - 37.3.3 the strategy and direction of the Union.
- 37.4 The Trustees may, by power of attorney or otherwise, appoint any person to be the agent of the Union for such purposes and on such conditions as they determine.
- 37.5 No person may be appointed as a Trustee in circumstances that, had they already been a Trustee, they would have been disqualified in accordance with Article 30 or otherwise from acting.
- 37.6 Trustees shall at all times exercise a primary fiduciary responsibility to the Union, notwithstanding any personal or representative interest or interest relating to their employment that they might have.

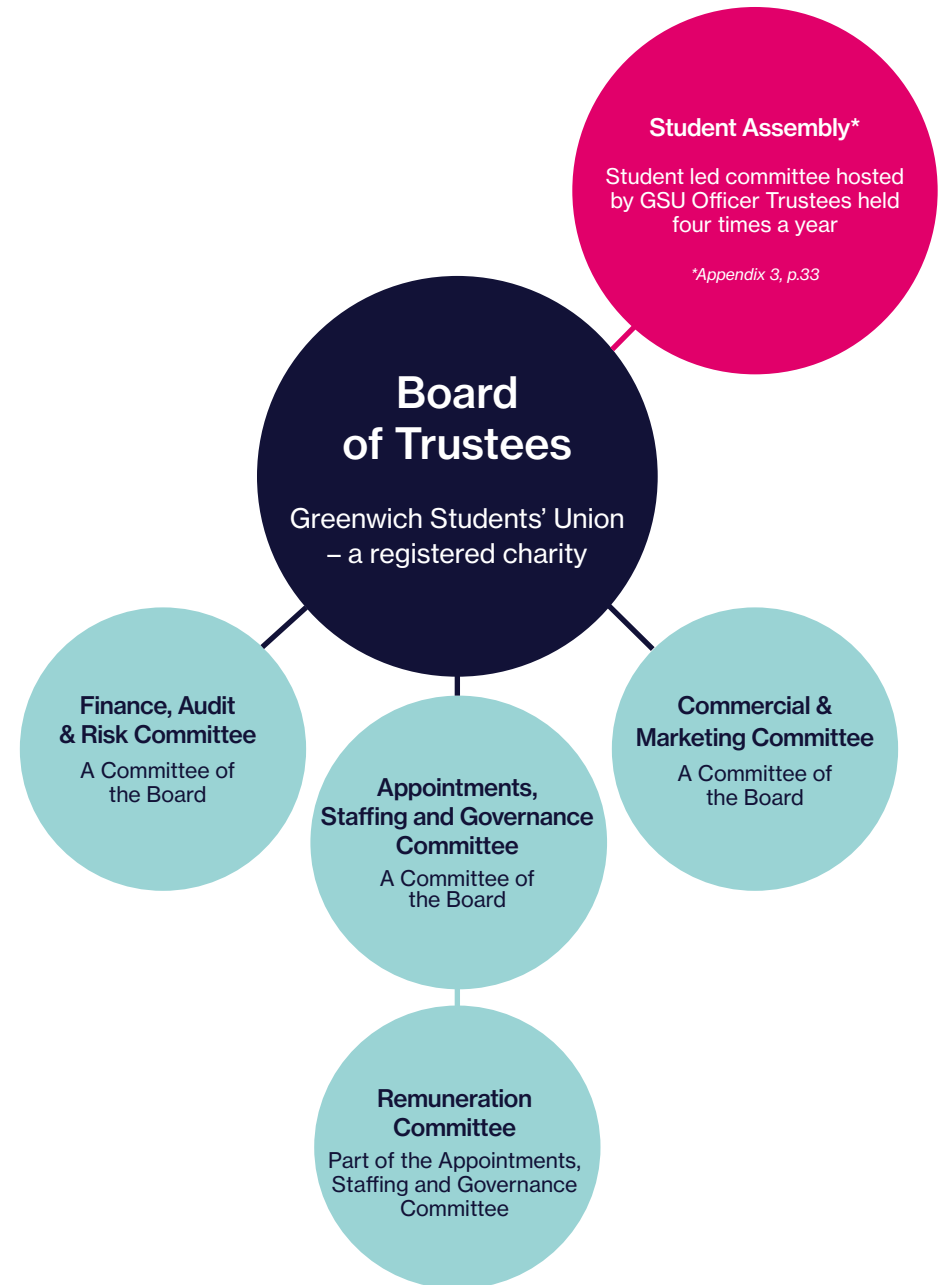
38. Guidance and Strategy Documents

- 38.1 The Trustees shall have the power, from time to time, to make, repeal or alter guidance and strategy documents provided that such guidance and strategy \ documents shall not be inconsistent with these Articles.

Committee Structure

39. Delegation of Trustees' Powers⁸

- 39.1 Subject to Article 39.2, the Trustees may delegate any of their powers or the implementation of any of their resolutions:
- 39.1.1 to such person or committee,
 - 39.1.2 by such means (including by power of attorney),
 - 39.1.3 to such an extent,
 - 39.1.4 in relation to such matters, and
 - 39.1.5 on such terms and conditions as they think fit
- 39.2 Delegation under Article 39.1 is subject to the following conditions:
- 39.2.1 the resolution making the delegation shall specify those who shall serve or be asked to serve on any committee (though the resolution may allow the committee to make co-options up to a specified number);
 - 39.2.2 the composition of any committee shall normally include at least one Sabbatical Officer Trustee and one External Trustee, and may include the Chief Executive Officer and any other members at the discretion of the Trustees;
 - 39.2.3 the deliberations of any committee shall be reported regularly to the Trustees and any resolution passed or decision taken by any committee or person to whom powers are delegated shall be reported forthwith to the Trustees and for that purpose every committee shall appoint a secretary;
 - 39.2.4 all delegations shall be revocable by the Trustees at any time;
 - 39.2.5 all decisions made by any committee shall be revocable by the Trustees at any time;
 - 39.2.6 all delegations will ensure the solvency of the Union and the safeguarding of its assets at all times;
 - 39.2.7 the expenditure of any monies of the Union by any committee shall require prior authorisation of the Trustees, except where such expenditure is within such limits as the Trustees shall have notified in writing to such committee;
 - 39.2.8 the Trustees may make such regulations and impose such terms and conditions and give such mandates to any committee or committees as they may from time to time think fit.
- 39.3 Committees may include (but shall not be limited to) the following committees, the members and terms of reference of which shall be defined in the Bye Laws and in accordance with Article 39:-
- 39.3.1 Appointments Staffing and Governance Committee;
 - 39.3.2 Remuneration Committee;
 - 39.3.3 Finance, Audit and Risk Committee; and
 - 39.3.4 Commercial and Marketing Committee.



8. Appendix 2 – The Delegation of Authority.

Terms of reference

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of Greenwich Students' Union, ensuring it is solvent, well-run and delivering its objects, as detailed in the Articles of Association.

Remit

1. To ensure compliance with the objects, purposes and values of the organisation and with its governing document.
2. To review the Union's Memorandum of Association, Mission, Vision and Values regularly.
3. To ensure development of a strategic plan for the Union.
4. To monitor implementation of such plan on a periodic basis.
5. To ensure the solvency, financial strength and good performance of the organisation.
6. To oversee management of the Union's financial affairs, including ensuring preparation of the Union's annual accounts and annually agreeing a programme of work with the Union's auditors.
7. To review and oversee the Union's audit framework, approve internal and external audit systems and ensure that audit checks are carried out in all key areas of the Union, including legal, financial and tax management, health and safety and insurance.
8. To review the University Internal Audit reports and monitor implementation of any recommendations detailed therein.
9. To receive the Union's Financial Statements and discuss any issues arising from the External Auditor's accompanying report.
10. To ensure that the organisation complies with relevant laws, regulations and requirements of its regulators.
11. To review and approve the Union's terms and conditions of employment and other staffing policies and to consider matters relating to staff discipline and grievance.
12. To oversee the appointment (and if necessary the dismissal) of the Chief Executive.
13. To oversee the performance of the Chief Executive and to appoint members to appraise and performance-manage the Chief Executive (normally the Chair).
14. To determine and maintain a framework of delegation and internal control, including authority to establish committees of the Board as deemed necessary.
15. To agree or ratify all policies and decisions on matters which might create significant risk to the organisation, financial or otherwise.
16. To appoint members to the Committees of the Board and to empower such members to act on behalf of the full Board, within parameters set by the Board.

Responsibility and Authority

- The Board must ensure that the organisation's vision, mission and values and activities remain true to its objects.
- Trustees are bound by an overriding duty, individually and as a Board, to act reasonably at all times in the interests of the organisation and of its present and future members.
- All Trustees are equally responsible in law for the Board's actions and decisions, and have equal status as trustees.
- Trustees must act personally, and not as the representative of any group or organisation, this applies regardless of how that person was elected or selected to become a trustee.
- The Trustees must ensure that they remain independent, and do not come under the control of any external organisation or individual.
- The Board also has the responsibility for Risk Management of GSU. It is all responsible for the Health and Safety of all its staff and Members; for data protection under GDPR and Safeguarding. Trustees are legally responsible for these issues and could face prosecution if they fail to undertake these duties properly.

More details about the role and duties of trustees can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-what-you-need-to-do.

Membership of Board of Trustees

- Chair (Co-opted Trustee)
- Deputy Chair (one of the Trustees)
- Four Full-Time Officer Trustees
- Four Student Trustees
- Up to six External Trustees
- One University Trustee appointed by the Vice Chancellor
- Chief Executive (in attendance)
- Members of GSU Staff invited to attend/report of items (in attendance)

Quorum of meetings

- The quorum for the transaction of business is seven.
- The quorum must include at least two Sabbatical Officer Trustees and at least two Co-opted Trustees.
- Quorum for decisions must be made with a majority of student trustees in attendance.

Resources

- Any financial resources necessary to achieve the Board's objective.
- Any management resources necessary to achieve the Board's objective.
- Chief Executive to draft papers and reports for the Board and to develop the agenda for Board.

Regularity of Meetings

- At least five meetings per annum.

Committees

Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

Overall purpose: The Committee has delegated responsibility from the Board of Trustees to scrutinise all aspects of GSU's financial affairs to ensure that it is in sound financial health.

Remit

1. Review and advise the full Board of any matter that may threaten GSU and propose actions necessary to mitigate such risk.
2. Offer an ultimate 'port of call' for any urgent or highly sensitive concerns raised by staff (including whistleblowing), in respect of GSU's integrity, financial or otherwise.
3. Act as a 'sounding board', providing advice and guidance for the CEO regarding financial, and other related matters, as required.
4. Approve risk management policies and procedures, monitor the compilation and implementation of the risk register and resulting action plans.
5. To monitor and review 'internal audit and control' across SU working practices.
6. Review the terms of reference and scope of the external auditor, oversee the appointment process, and monitor their performance.
7. Receive the draft annual accounts from the auditors, provide feedback to the CEO, and draft a Trustee report, sign off the final audited accounts.
8. Receive and approve GSU's annual budget and accompanying commentary prior to final submission to the full Board.
9. Receive and approve GSU's annual capital expenditure budget and accompanying commentary.
10. Receive GSU's monthly management accounts with accompanying commentary, provide feedback to the CEO, and agree any actions necessary to improve financial performance.
11. Receive other information including annual pay settlement, related to GSU's finances as relevant, provide feedback to the CEO.
12. Make other decisions of a financial nature as delegated by the full Board.
13. Ensure that meetings are minuted, minutes sent to the Board of Trustees, and published once agreed.

Membership and meetings

1. Members of the Committee will be a minimum of two External Trustees and two Sabbatical Officers, to be agreed by the Board of Trustees at the last meeting of each year (ie prior to 31st July). The Chair can co-opt external members onto the Committee to support with the strategic financial management of the SU.
2. In the period between the end-date for one year's Sabbatical Officer team (30th June) and the last Board of Trustees meeting of that year, the Sabbatical Officer members of the Committee will be on an ex-officio basis, based on the roles of Sabbatical Officers who were members of the Committee as at 30th June.
3. The CEO will attend all meetings.
4. GSU's Head of Finance and Compliance may be invited by the CEO to attend meetings as necessary.
5. A nominated secretary will attend and minute all meetings.
6. A Chair will be appointed by the Committee at its first meeting.
7. The quorum for meetings will be three members.
8. Minutes will be sent to the Board of Trustees, and published once agreed.
9. Meetings will be held with a frequency to be agreed by the Committee.

Appointments, Staffing and Governance Committee

Overall purpose: The Committee has delegated responsibility from the Board of Trustees to examine issues related to SU staff and governance. Staff policies, proposals for changing staffing structure, pay changes, training and development will be covered.

Remit

1. Offer an ultimate 'port of call' for any urgent or highly sensitive concerns raised in respect of GSU's integrity, in relation to staffing policies and procedures.
2. Act as a 'sounding board', providing advice and guidance for the CEO regarding staffing and related matters, as required.
3. Receive information regarding staff recruitment from the CEO and provide feedback.
4. Receive and approve proposals for permanent or temporary changes to staff salaries.
5. Receive and approve proposals for changes to staff terms and conditions.
6. Agreement of small scale redundancies e.g. management teams.
7. Receive information regarding volunteer policies and procedures from the CEO and provide feedback.
8. Receive staff satisfaction survey and agree subsequent actions.
9. Receive communications from the CEO's direct reports as necessary, relating to appeals against disciplinary action taken by the CEO and GSU's grievance procedure.
10. Approval of Union wide pay award (e.g. cost of living) and feedback on negotiations in line with annual budget affordability.
11. Review and amendment to employee policies in line with policy review schedule.
12. Recommending appointment of new student and co-opted trustees.
13. Appointing the CEO, Chair, External trustees and Student Trustees.
14. Review and develop the SU governance guidelines, following the Charity Code of Practice and wider sector practice to ensure the Board of Trustees properly fulfilling it's duties.
15. Review and amend the SU's Articles and bylaws related to Governance (a vote from the membership may be required for certain changes).
16. Remuneration of the CEO – with CEO out of the room. This will take place during the final meeting of the financial year.
17. Receive other information related to GSU's staffing as relevant; provide feedback to the CEO.
18. Ensure that meetings are minuted, minutes sent to the Board of Trustees, and published once agreed.

Membership and meetings

1. Members of the Committee will be a minimum of two External Trustees and two Sabbatical Officers, to be agreed by the Board of Trustees at the last meeting of each year (i.e. prior to 31st July). The Chair can co-opt external members onto the Committee to support with SU development.
2. In the period between the end-date for one year's Sabbatical Officer team (30th June) and the last Board of Trustees meeting of that year, the Sabbatical Officer members of the Committee will be on an ex-officio basis, based on the roles of Sabbatical Officers who were members of the Committee as at 30th June.
3. The CEO will attend all meetings.
4. A nominated secretary will attend and minute all meetings.
5. A Chair will be appointed by the Committee at its first meeting.
6. The quorum for meetings will be three members.
7. Minutes will be sent to the Board of Trustees, and published once agreed.
8. Meetings will be held with a frequency to be agreed by the Committee.

Commercial Services and Marketing Committee

Overall purpose: The Committee has delegated responsibility from the Board of Trustees to scrutinise all aspects of the SU Commercial Services, income activities and associated marketing activity, to help provide a clear vision for future development and investment to increase income for the SU.

Remit

1. Support with the planning for new commercial services and income streams.
2. Act as a 'sounding board' and 'ideas generator', providing advice and guidance for the CEO and Commercial Services Manager regarding future developments within SU Commercial Services.
3. Assist in the approval process of budget to Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and Board of Trustees.
4. Outline annual capital expenditure recommendations to Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and Board of Trustees.
5. Ensure that meetings are minuted, minutes sent to the Board of Trustees, published once agreed.
6. CSC needs to have a finger on current trading, monitoring and developing trading performance, KPIs around trading and trading operations.
7. Support the student executive and SU management to ensure commercial services are providing value for money to members and that the income is making a positive overall contribution to SU life as a not for profit enterprise.
8. To support and scrutinise the marketing strategy of the commercial offer, ensuring the commercial brand ethos is in line with the values of the Union, and supporting the staff team on Union wide marketing and communication initiatives.

Membership and meetings

1. Members of the Committee will be a minimum of two External Trustees and two Sabbatical Officers, to be agreed by the Board of Trustees at the last meeting of each year (ie prior to 31st July). The Chair can co-opt external members onto the Committee to support with the commercial SU development.
2. In the period between the end-date for one year's Sabbatical Officer team (30th June) and the last Board of Trustees meeting of that year, the Sabbatical Officer members of the Committee will be on an ex-officio basis, based on the roles of Sabbatical Officers who were members of the Committee as at 30th June.
3. The CEO, Head of Commercial Services and Head of Marketing and Communications will attend all meetings (other commercial and marketing staff members may be invited to join when asked).
4. External specialists may be called to sit on the Committee, on an adhoc basis to provide ideas and challenge.
5. The Office Manager will attend and minute all meetings.
6. A Chair will be appointed by the Committee at its first meeting.
7. The quorum for meetings will be three members.
8. Minutes will be sent to the Board of Trustees, and published once agreed.
9. Meetings will be held a minimum of five times a year.

Trustees and Managers

Trustees

Current (June 2020)

Chair of the Board

Dr Elizabeth Jones

(2nd four-year term from April 2020)

President 2020/21 (Vice Chair)

Bilal Ijaz (appointed 1st July 2020)

GSU Officer 2020/21

Mayo Femi-Obalemo (appointed 1st July 2020)

GSU Officer 2020/21

Othniel Lewis (appointed 1st July 2020)

GSU Officer 2020/21

Zoë Campbell (appointed 1st July 2020)

Student Trustee (selected)

Soma Mohacsi (appointed March 2020)

Student Trustee (selected)

Oghenero Ologide (appointed November 2019)

Student Trustee (selected)

Vacancy

Student Trustee (selected)

Vacancy

University Trustee

Paul Butler (2nd four-year term from April 2020)

External Trustee

Vacancy

External Trustee

Zohra Hamidi (appointed July 2019)

External Trustee

Tyron Woolfe (appointed January 2020)

External Trustee

Judith Baines (appointed January 2020)

Co-opted

Antony Haddley (Commercial and Marketing

Committee, appointed January 2018)

Shahidul Miah (Staffing and Governance Committee,

appointed January 2020)

Co-opted

Management Structure and Staff

Greenwich Students' Union employs approximately 34 core staff and roughly 100 student staff to provide services for its members. Student staff work whilst completing their studies at the University of Greenwich, core staff are professionals who have made working at Greenwich Students' Union part of their career. The Board oversees the work of staff through the Chief Executive, who in turn manages staff through the Heads of Department, each of whom is responsible for one of the Union's departments or a strategic function.

Chief Executive

John Schless

Deputy Chief Executive

Uzma Arif-Fryer

Head of Marketing and Communications

Shakira Hylton

Head of Commercial Services

Georgina Roffey

Head of Finance and Compliance

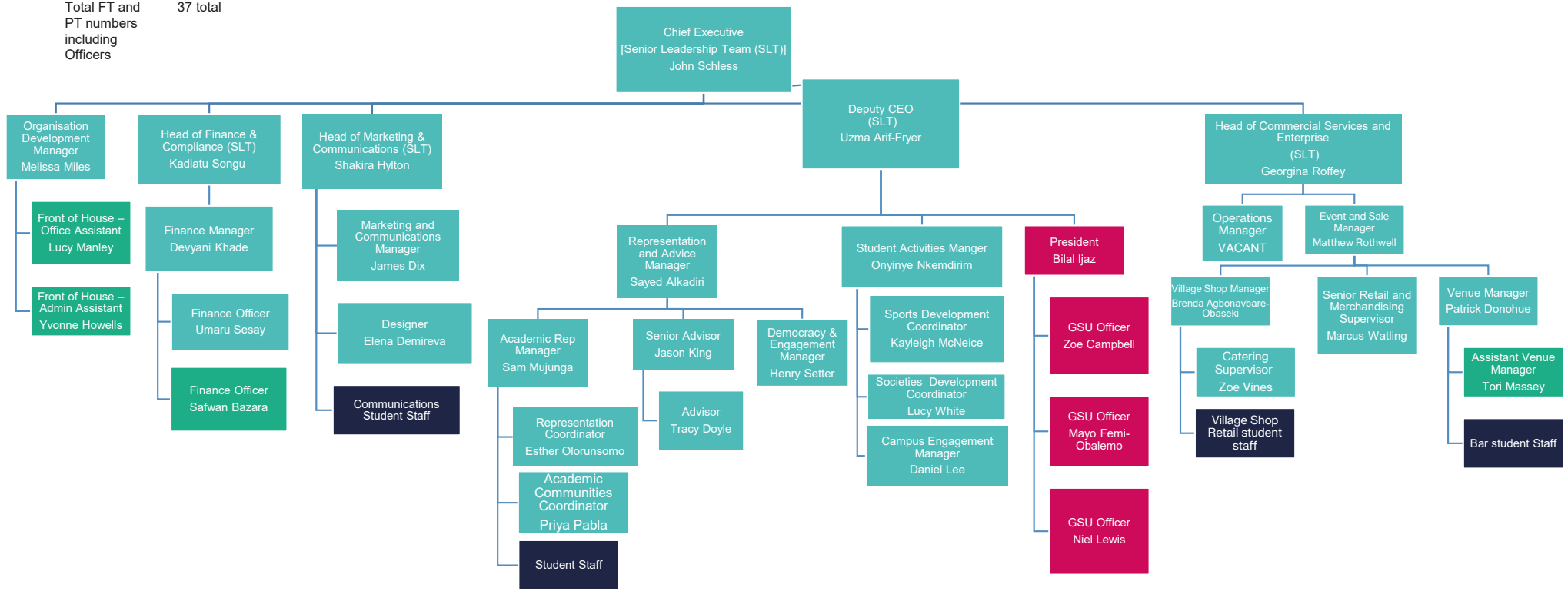
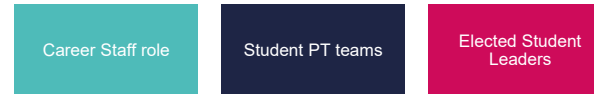
Kadiatu Songu

Greenwich Students' Union

Staff Structure As of March 2021

Full-time (FT)	32 Staff 4 Elected Officers
Part-time (PT)	4 Staff
Student staff	10 role types

Total FT and PT numbers including Officers 37 total



Running as a viable/ efficient business

Internal/ external comms

Providing membership services

Commercial Services providing revenue & cost effective services

The University of Greenwich, Relationship with Greenwich Students' Union and Key Personnel

The University

The University of Greenwich is a public and research university located in Greater London. It has three campuses across London and Kent. These are located at Greenwich, in the grounds of the Old Royal Naval College, and in Avery Hill and Medway. Previous names include Woolwich Polytechnic and Thames Polytechnic. The Complete University Guide for student satisfaction ranked Greenwich 93 out of 129 in its league table for 2018.

The University's comprises of four faculties which are; Architecture, Computing and Humanities (ACH), Education and Health (EH), Engineering and Sciences (ES) and Business. The university's [range of subjects](#) includes architecture, business, computing, mathematics, education, engineering, humanities, maritime studies, natural sciences, pharmacy and social sciences. In 2019, the [University of Greenwich was rated as the greenest in the UK](#) by People & Planet Green League Table. The university is ranked in the top 750 by QS World University Rankings.

Avery Hill Campus

The Avery Hill Campus, Southwood Site, is located in the 86-acre Avery Hill Park in Eltham, south-east London. Mansion site in due to close in 2020/21 and consolidate onto the Southwood site.

For over 80 years the campus was home to Avery Hill Training College, some of whose 19th- and 20th-century buildings are listed by English Heritage, whilst the former Mansion Site used to house a library in a former ballroom. A new library has been built on the Southwood Site ready for September 2020.

Facilities

Students can use computing and laboratory equipment, lecture theatres and a TV studio with 1,000 square feet of floor space. The library has an extensive collection of books and journals and its staff provide expert media support. The university bookshop offers a wide range of course texts and has an online service for ordering over the Internet. The David Fussey Building is home to a sports and teaching centre with a multi-purpose sports hall for staff and students and a 220-seat lecture theatre. The upper floors include four clinical skills laboratories, which replicate NHS wards, allowing trainee health professionals to get real hands-on experience.

A piazza-style courtyard, with wide, curved steps linking upper and lower levels, will offer ample social areas. The new Mary Seacole Building is the main base for the School of Health & Social Care and has teaching space for all Schools on campus.

The Student Village

The village complex on Southwood Site offers accommodation, a general shop (The Village Shop - ran by GSU) and a launderette, plus nearby sporting amenities for tennis, rugby, football and cricket. 'The Dome' in the centre of the complex, houses a food outlet and a gym. Down the road at Sparrows Farm, there are student facilities, such as the Airdome, an indoor football facility shared between Charlton Athletic Football Club and the University.

Greenwich Campus

The Greenwich Campus is on a World Heritage Site on the banks of the River Thames. The University's largest campus is centred on three baroque buildings designed by Sir Christopher Wren at the end of the 17th century. The Independent newspaper described it as "more breath-taking than the Versailles of Louis XIV".

The University of Greenwich has invested heavily in its learning and social spaces to offer world-class study facilities in London.

The £76 million Stockwell Street Building opened in 2014 and is now home to the campus library, film and TV studios, and state-of-the-art editing suites.

Our new £25 million Dreadnought Building is a central hub for the Greenwich Campus and home of GSU, with further teaching and social spaces. The neighbouring Stephen Lawrence Gallery showcases the work of contemporary artists.

Greenwich Campus also has an on-site bar (Lower Deck - ran by GSU), gym and two coffee shops, and a number of food outlets.

Medway Campus

Located on the Kent coast, approximately 30 miles from central London, this splendid Edwardian redbrick and ivy-clad campus – dating from 1903 – has benefited from £50 million in investment since 1996. It is home to the Faculty of Engineering and Science, and also hosts programmes from the Faculty of Education and Health.

Extensive new purpose-built laboratories and research facilities have been opened at Medway. The centrepiece of the campus is a magnificent learning resource centre, the Drill Hall Library, converted from a naval drill hall and offering 100,000 square feet of space. It houses a library, computers, study areas and teaching rooms. The Pilkington Building next door, converted from the naval canteen, contains a lecture theatre, exhibition space, teaching rooms and a bistro-style café. Pilkington is used to host a variety of events, from the annual Christmas Dinner and Dance to Robot Wars.

Study facilities

The Medway Campus has benefited from a recent renovation of many of its principal laboratories and teaching spaces. From the state-of-the-art computing facilities in the Nelson Building to the specialist engineering laboratories in Hawke, you will find all the industry-standard facilities required to support the delivery of the full range of engineering and science degree programmes on offer.

In addition to the laboratories, the campus is also home to the Wolfson Centre, which is one of only three research centres in the world specialising in bulk solids handling. The Natural Resources Institute was the recent recipient of the Queen's Anniversary Prize for excellence in research and development on cassava, an important food security crop in Africa.

Furthermore, the campus is also host to many bespoke research facilities, such as:

- The largest ground slab tester in Europe.
- A fully functional anechoic chamber.
- A wide range of spectroscopy and microscope platforms.
- A robotics laboratory (including RoboThespian and a wide range of advanced prostheses).
- 3D whole body movement trackers and force analysis equipment

Our Relationship with the University

Greenwich Students' Union, despite being a legally autonomous and separate entity from the University of Greenwich, is inextricably linked to the University. The Union's existence is enshrined in the University, much of Greenwich Students' Union's funding is derived from the University, and the Union is based in buildings wholly owned by the University. Greenwich Students' Union's success and strategy are fundamentally tied to those of the University of Greenwich. The Union plays a vital and proactive role in the decision-making processes of the University, ensuring that student opinion is voiced and fully considered.

The relationship is complex. Both organisations often have to play a 'critical friend' role. For instance, it may be the case that the Union's Officers need to hold the University to account on an issue such as academic policy or accommodation fees, either through lobbying or a University Committee. Likewise, the University scrutinises the activities and especially the financial security of the Union and takes its responsibility (enshrined in the Education Act 1994) to scrutinise the activities of the Union very seriously. In practice, the staff and Officers of the Union work hard to ensure that relationships with University staff are developed and maintained.

Below is a list of senior University staff, along with their key responsibilities. As well as these staff members, there are dozens of middle managers and junior staff who interface with the Union on a regular basis.

Chancellor - Lord Paul Boateng

The Chancellor presides at ceremonial occasions and acts as an ambassador for the university. Lord Boateng, a Barrister who first rose to prominence as a campaigning civil liberties lawyer, has a long and distinguished political career as an MP for Brent South (1987-2005) holding many ministerial positions, including Minister of State (Home Office) and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and was Britain's first Black cabinet minister in 2001.

He served as the High Commissioner to South Africa between 2005-2009 and was introduced to the House of Lords in 2010. He currently chairs the Nairobi based African Enterprise Challenge Fund, a multi donor fund to promote businesses that link small farmers to global markets, and the Board of Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor which works in Africa, India and Bangladesh to promote and deliver pro-poor services by urban utilities.

Vice-Chancellor - Professor Jane Harrington

The Vice-Chancellor is the Chief Executive of the university and has overall responsibility for the management of the institution and its direction. They are accountable to the University Court. Professor Jane Harrington became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Greenwich in December 2019. The GSU President meets with the Vice Chancellor monthly. Jane was previously Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost at UWE Bristol. In this role she was responsible for academic faculties, student facing professional services, research and business engagement and partnership activities. Prior to this, Jane held the post of Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Business and Law.

Jane has worked in Higher Education for over 25 years and has held international posts in the Canary Islands and India and has worked for the United Nations University of Peace. Jane is an alumna of Bristol Business School. She has researched and taught human resource management and has a specific interest in the areas of gender and work and research methodology.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) - Professor Javier Bonet
Chief Financial Officer - Louise Watson
Interim Chief Operating Officer - Peter Taylor
University Secretary - Peter Garrod

Pro Vice-Chancellors

The four Pro Vice-Chancellors head each of the academic Faculties. They are responsible for the strategic leadership of the Faculty and have line management responsibility for all academic, financial and other resource aspects of their areas.

The Pro Vice-Chancellors are supported by Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellors and a Faculty Operating Officer.

Pro Vice-Chancellor - Faculty of Business (until December 2020)	Jon Sibson
Pro Vice-Chancellor - Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences	Mark O'Thomas
Pro Vice-Chancellor - Faculty of Education, Health and Human Sciences	Derek Moore
Pro Vice-Chancellor - Faculty of Engineering and Science	Martin Snowden

Faculty Operating Officers

Faculty Operating Officers are responsible for the professional services leadership of the Faculty. Together with their responsibility for the management and development of their academic disciplines, the Faculty Operating Officers have specific cross-university roles and assist the Pro Vice-Chancellors in their strategic leadership of the Faculty and contribute to a Faculty portfolio.

Faculty of Business	Rachel Ashton (Interim)
Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences	Lee Devlin
Faculty of Education, Health and Human Sciences	Jeremy Williams
Faculty of Engineering and Science	Stuart Ashenden

Directors of Professional Services

Director of Communications and Recruitment	Heidi King
Director of Estates and Facilities	Christopher Forster
Director of Information and Library Services	Paul Butler
Director of Human Resources	Gail Brindley
Director of Research and Enterprise	Peter Griffiths
Director of Student and Academic Services	Chris Shelley
Director of Strategic Planning (until August 2020)	Dr Christine Couper

University Governing Body

Bronwyn Hill CBE (Chair of Governing Body)

First term of office, appointment expires as current Vice Chair on 31.8.2020

Non Executive Director at the Office for Nuclear Regulation. Former Permanent Secretary, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Craig McWilliam (Vice-Chair of Governing Body)

to commence as Vice-Chair on 1 August 2020

Former Chief Executive Officer, Grosvenor, Britain & Ireland (privately owned global property business) 2010-2020. Previously Managing Director, Fortress Investment Group (listed US private equity business) 1999-2010.

The Big Plan⁹

Greenwich Students' Union's strategic plan for the period 2017-2020, was developed through widespread consultation with all of the Union's stakeholders during academic years 2016-17. The plan was formally approved by the Board of Trustees at its meeting in May 2017 and began roll-out from 1st August 2017. The Board delegates implementation of the Plan to the Chief Executive and progress against the Plan is monitored by the Board of Trustees at every Board meeting.

Due to the impact of Covid-19 the strategy has been adapted for a further 12 months until July 2021. The GSU Senior Leadership Team are outlining a one-year recovery plan to support this. The Plan is divided into eight themes, as shown below:

1. REPRESENTATION

The needs and aspirations of the SU's diverse membership are reflected in our activities, services and policies.

2. INFLUENCING THE UNIVERSITY

We have influenced the activities, services and policies of the university in a way that reflects the needs and aspirations of our diverse membership.

3. WIDER INFLUENCE

We have influenced local and national activities, services and policies in a way that reflects the needs and aspirations of our diverse membership.

4. EMPLOYABILITY

Student staff, elected representatives, volunteers and group leaders recognise they have gained skills that contribute to their employability.

5. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our members can identify health and wellbeing benefits of engaging with SU services, activities, societies and sports clubs.

6. STUDENT COMMUNITIES

Our members feel connected with, supported by, proud of and enjoy being part of the student communities and SU.

7. MONEY MANAGEMENT

Our members feel that the SU is helping them to manage their finances effectively.

8. LOCAL COMMUNITY

Our members, and the SU as an organisation, are viewed by local partners as a positive asset to the local community and vice versa. A full copy of the strategic plan will be circulated to trustees as part of their general induction.

9. greenwichsu.co.uk/bigplan

Certificate of Insurance



Appendix 1

Certificate of Employers' Liability Insurance(a)

(Where required by regulation 5 of the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 2008 (the Regulations), a copy of this certificate must be displayed at all places where you employ persons covered by the policy or an electronic copy of the certificate must be retained and be reasonably accessible to each employee to whom it relates).

Policy No.	XAO-12E001-1813
1. Name of policyholder	Greenwich Students' Union Limited
2. Date of commencement of insurance policy	01 August 2020
3. Date of expiry of insurance policy	31 July 2021

We hereby certify that subject to paragraph 2:

1. The policy to which this certificate relates satisfies the requirements of the relevant law applicable in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Island of Jersey, the Island of Guernsey and the Island of Alderney (b)
2. (a) the minimum amount of cover provided by this policy is no less than £5 million (c)

For Zurich Insurance plc. Authorised Insurers

Signature

Tulsi Naidu

Head of UKGI, Zurich Insurance plc (UK Branch)

Notes

- (a) Where the employer is a company to which regulation 3(2) of the Regulations applies, the certificate shall state in a prominent place, either that the policy covers the holding company and all its subsidiaries, or that the policy covers the holding company and all its subsidiaries except any specifically excluded by name, or that the policy covers the holding company and only the named subsidiaries.
- (b) Specify applicable law as provided for in regulation 4(6) of the Regulations.
- (c) See regulation 3(1) of the Regulations and delete whichever of paragraphs 2(a) or 2(b) does not apply. Where 2(b) is applicable, specify the amount of cover provided by the relevant policy.

Zurich Municipal
Zurich Municipal is a trading name of Zurich Insurance plc. A public limited company incorporated in Ireland. Registration No 13460. Registered Office: Zurich House, Ballsbridge Park, Dublin 4, Ireland. UK Branch registered in England and Wales Registration No. BR7985. UK Branch Head Office: The Zurich Centre, 3000 Parkway, Whiteley, Fareham, Hampshire PO15 7JZ.

Zurich Insurance plc is authorised by the Central Bank of Ireland and authorised and subject to limited regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority. Details about the extent of our authorisation by the Financial Conduct Authority are available from us on request. Our FCA Firm Reference

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Verification of Insurance
 Public / Products Liability
 For
Greenwich Students' Union Ltd.

We, the undersigned Insurance Brokers, hereby certify that the following described insurance is in force at this date.

PUBLIC/PRODUCTS LIABILITY

Insurer: Zurich Insurance PLC
 Policy Number: XAO-12E001-1813
 Period of Insurance: 01/08/2020 to 31/07/2021
 Total Public Liability Indemnity Limit: £10,000,000 any one event
 Total Products Liability Indemnity Limit: £10,000,000 for all claims in the aggregate during any one period of insurance

Signed:  Dated: 24 July 2020

Amanda Price
 For and on behalf of
 Endsleigh Insurances (Brokers) Limited

Statement of Fact

This Policy, Schedule and Statement of Fact should be read together as they form your Insurance Contract.

They have been prepared in accordance with information that we have received from you through your Insurance Adviser.

It is important that you check all the information immediately. If any of the information is incorrect you must contact your Insurance Adviser immediately. Failure to do so could invalidate the policy from inception or result in a claim being repudiated.

We strongly recommend that you keep a record of all information you have provided to your Insurance Adviser.

Policy No:	18/LB/13309097/08
The Insured:	GREENWICH STUDENTS' UNION LTD
Effective Date:	01/08/2020
Insurance Adviser:	Endsleigh Insurances (Brokers)
Business Description:	Student Union

Basis of Acceptance

Allianz Insurance Plc has accepted this risk based on the provision of the following information:

Date incorporated	14/03/2012
Company registration number	07990838
Legal Trading status	Limited
An Insured Party is disqualified, or has been disqualified in the past, from holding a licence or post	No

Company Entity Employment Practice Cover:

Employment and grievance policies not communicated in writing to all employees	No
External Human Resources consultants or Legal Advisors not used to review all employment terminations	No
Redundancies have been made in the last 3 months or are planned in the next 12 months	No

Claims Experience as at Inception of Policy

All circumstances, incidents, losses or claims which the Insured, any partner(s) or past/present director(s) or officer(s) (in connection with this or any other business in which you or they have been trading)

- have incurred in the last 5 years
- including events which have or could have resulted in a claim relating to covers to be insured under this policy (whether insured or not at the time of loss).

The Delegation of Authority

Appendix 2

The Delegation of Authority is a guide to Trustees and managers as to who is responsible for making decisions at GSU related to key strategic priorities.

GSU Committees of Board of Trustees: Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FSC), Commercial and Marketing Committee CMC), Appointments, Staffing and Governance Committee (ASGC), Remuneration Committee (RC)

Governance

Chair responsibilities

Recruitment and Staffing

Lead on recruitment of CEO
Recruitment of new Trustees (supported by CEO)
Staff disciplinary panel and appeals if involving CEO
Annual appraisal of the CEO
Trustee induction and training

Trustee responsibilities / decision for approval

Creation and approval of new Senior Management posts
Approval of changes to senior management structure
Involvement in appointment of senior managers
Approval of proposals for strategic redundancies (e.g. Senior Managers)
Appointment and approval of external and student board members
Note staff satisfaction survey and agree any subsequent action to be taken
Oversight of Trade Union recognition

Subcommittee of Board reporting back to Board

Approval of Union wide pay awards (e.g. cost of living) and feedback on negotiations (ASGC)
Approval of Business cases from CEO/Deputy CEO for new staff roles
Approve amendments to employee policies (ASGC)
Recommending the appointment of new student and external trustees (ASGC)
Appointing the CEO via a trustee panel led by the Chair (ASGC)
Receive staff satisfaction survey and agree subsequent actions (ASGC)
Approve the remuneration of the CEO (RC)
Agreement of small scale redundancies e.g. management teams (ASC)

Operations

CEO/ Deputy CEO decisions/ responsibilities reporting back to Board

Approval of business plan for the creation of new posts below line manager level within approved budgets
Development of new line management posts and other new posts outside of budget
Changes to management structures at line manager level
Oversight of significant staffing restructuring in a department involving staff responsibilities
Involvement in appeals against dismissal
Annual summary of fees paid to agencies/ consultants e.g. insurances
Receive and approve proposals for small scale redundancies outlined to ASGC
Specific approval of staffing commitments funded by external sources
Lead Trade Union negotiation with recognised Union
Lead employment satisfaction work
Ensure updates to the staff handbook and organisational policies are in line with legal requirements and organisational need
Lead annual appraisal of the Senior Managers
Support the Chair with recruitment of new trustees
Lead on recruitment of student trustees

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) decisions/ responsibilities

Development of the business plan for the creation of new posts below line manager level within approved budgets
Increments and re-grading staff where resources are available
Minor departmental restructuring
Disciplinary process except appeal against dismissal
Minor update amendments to staff handbook (subject to trade union approval)
Lead staff appraisal and performance management

Governance

Chair responsibilities

Budgets and financial procedures

Approval of spend and leases between £5,000 - £20,000 if the Finance Committee are not due to meet
Approval of CEO training expenditure

Trustee responsibilities / decision for approval

Overall approval of annual budgets
Receipt of by-monthly updates on financial forecast and decision arising thereafter
Approval of any borrowing and leases in excess of £20,000
Receive and approve annual accounts
Receive, note and question the management accounts
Approving investment policy

Subcommittee of Board reporting back to Board

Formal, detailed approval of annual budget, including capital expenditure (FSC)
5 times a year review and scrutiny of union financial results with departmental analysis, balance sheet, cash flow and capital expenditure (FSC)
One off urgent items over £20,000 which are unusual or urgent and needed for the proper running of the business for legal reasons. (FSC) (Signed off by Chair of Board and Chair of Finance Committee)
Approval of spend and leases between £5,000 - £20,000 e.g. minibuses
Approval of specific capital expenditure of over £10,000 (FSC)
Approval of annual depreciation expenditure (FSC)
Formal approval of an increase in any budget over 10% or £10,000, whichever is greater (FSC)
Setting of reserves policies (FSC)
Appointment of auditors and bankers (FSC)

Operations

CEO/ Deputy CEO decisions/ responsibilities reporting back to Board

Overall management of the budgets and forecasts to ensure that resources are utilised efficiently and effectively to deliver the strategic plan
Formal preparation of budgets and bi-monthly forecasts
Approval of spend and leases up to £5,000
Approval of specific capital expenditure under £10,000
Decisions on additional expenditure up to 10% of departmental budget needed for the proper running of the business or for legal reasons (subject to approval by the Chair of Finance Subcommittee) (Signed off by Chair of Board and Chair of Finance Committee)
Ability to amend capital expenditure operational requirements within previously agreed budget set by board.
Approval of staff training expenditure over £500 and terms of training investment

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) decisions/ responsibilities

Financial management below thresholds specified in budget
Preparation of budgets and forecast
Approval of staff training under £500 and terms of investment

Governance

Chair responsibilities

Trustee responsibilities / decision for approval

Expenses

Approval of CEO expenses and other trustees

Vice Chair to approve Chair Expenses

Operations

CEO/ Deputy CEO decisions/ responsibilities reporting back to Board

CEO approves SLT and Full-time Officers expenses

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) decisions/ responsibilities

SLT approves line report expenses within budget

Governance

Chair responsibilities

Trustee responsibilities / decision for approval

Setting and monitoring strategy

Support the CEO with the strategic implementation of the plan

Agreeing the Union plan/ vision based on research of members and advice of stakeholders
Approval of any amendments to the Union's plan with resources
Ensuring delivery of the strategic plan
Determining values and reviewing them in line with the strategy
Receiving regular updates on the plan with an opportunity to question senior managers – measuring performance
Monitoring the needs of the membership and ensuring that the plan continues to meet their needs.

Subcommittee of Board reporting back to Board

Approval of the financial strategy to support the strategic plan, and monitoring performance against the Strategy (FSC)
Approving amendment to the Financial Strategy (FSC)
Approving research and engagement to support the planning process

Operations

CEO/ Deputy CEO decisions/ responsibilities reporting back to Board

Manage the strategy cycle
Crafting the plan, following a strategic review
Reporting on progress against the plan
Approval of new projects or change to projects to support the plan
Ensuring that there is no cross-over between departments and each project leader is supported
Reporting on the needs of the membership and ensuring that the plan continues to meet their needs
Coordinate the input from staff teams and members into the planning cycle

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) decisions/ responsibilities

Lead on the development of departmental and organisational strategies as part of the strategy
Ensuring that staff work towards the organisation's objectives and adhere to the organisation's values
Making minor changes to department plans
Feed new ideas into the plan

Governance

Chair responsibilities

Trustee responsibilities / decision for approval

Monitoring Risk

N/A

Receiving reports from appropriate subcommittee e.g. finance subcommittee
The Board to receive an annual report on the Strategic and Operational Risk Register and approve Risk Appetite levels
Approval of changes to the Strategic and Operational Risk Register
Undertake training related to trustee role looking at strategic risk

Subcommittee of Board reporting back to Board

Reviewing and approving the SU approach to risk management and monitor the Strategic and Operational Risk Register (FSC)
Approving activities that fall above the risk profile (to define Risk Appetite) (FSC)
Receive updates on implementation of recommendations from internal audit work
Awareness of any health and safety incidents and action planning (FSC)

Operations

CEO/ Deputy CEO decisions/ responsibilities reporting back to Board

Overview of the risk profile of the SU ensuring that it is being managed effectively
Delegated responsibilities for managing and reporting actions to support the Strategic Risk Register
Approval of Operational Risk Register
Responding to internal audit recommendations and implementation of actions
Undertake health and Safety training

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) decisions/ responsibilities

Identifying and minimising risk and reviewing on an on-going basis
Delegated responsibilities for managing and reporting actions to support the Operational Risk Register
Delegated action from internal audit

Governance

Chair responsibilities

Trustee responsibilities / decision for approval

Monitoring Board performance and Good Governance

Undertake annual trustee members appraisal
Undertake a skills audit and shape the team based on organisational requirements

Oversee regular reviews of organisational governing documents
Monitor compliance with governing documents

Subcommittee of Board reporting back to Board

Monitoring governance function of the board (ASGC)

Operations

CEO/ Deputy CEO decisions/ responsibilities reporting back to Board

Support the Chair with the administration management of monitoring Board performance
Monitor changes in key legislation

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) decisions/ responsibilities

Ensure union governing policies are followed by staff teams for the benefit of members

Governance

Chair responsibilities

Trustee responsibilities / decision for approval

Subcommittee of Board reporting back to Board

Operations

CEO/ Deputy CEO decisions/ responsibilities reporting back to Board

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) decisions/ responsibilities

Commercial and Marketing and Development

N/A

Receive annual members satisfaction research
Ensuring commercial income and fundraising opportunities sit within our clause and companies that we can work with
Approve the content and delivery of annual outcome report

Review GSU outcomes and impact data to ensure the Activities, Services and Policies are shaped and delivered in line with membership needs

Ensure GSU monitors outcomes
Identify new opportunities for funding development

Lead on the development, capture and analysis of student outcomes and impact data to ensure the Activities, Services and Policies are shaped and delivered in line with membership needs
Monitor key changes to commercial income fundraising practices

Governance

Chair responsibilities

Trustee responsibilities / decision for approval

Operations

CEO/ Deputy CEO decisions/ responsibilities reporting back to Board

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) decisions/ responsibilities

Full Time Sabbatical Officers

To take part in Sabbatical Officer induction

Receive reports from the Sabbaticals on significant campaigning and policy issues that may impact GSU as an organisation

Mentor, support and coach Sabbatical Officers

Attend meetings and ensure that Officer have the necessary support and resources to carry out their priorities effectively

External Speakers

Monitoring of external speakers

Attend with the President the University Safeguarding and Compliance Committee

Ensure student groups follow GSU and University speaker check and room bookings policy

Student Assembly

Appendix 3

The Student Assembly is the highest decision-making body at Greenwich Students' Union (GSU). Its purpose is to reflect and represent the views of members. Assembly sets out a course of action for the organisation and its representatives through the decisions it makes. The guidance below is a tool for students to understand how they can engage with the assembly and influence the change they want to see.

1. Role/Function of Assembly Members

It is the role of assembly members is to represent their cohort of students (as defined in their role) by engaging with the assembly through learning, deliberation and decision making. Assembly members will meet four times a year to learn about, deliberate and make decisions on an issue or set of issues brought to the meeting by students. Members are defined as:

- Group leader (two leaders nominated from each group committee to attend)
- Programme rep (two reps nominated from each programme to attend)
- Faculty Officers x16
- Sports and Societies Executive members
- GSU Officers (to attend but have no voting rights on the assembly)

Assembly members are encouraged to seek out the views of their cohort/peers they represent and channel this feedback into the student assembly to inform their own understanding which they can share with other members.

The function of the assembly is to have reflective and informed discussion to lead to decision making that will:

- Improve a student/student's university experience
- Address a disadvantage a group of students are facing
- Enforce what students expect/want from their Students' Union and representation.

Definition of deliberation process: 'Deliberation' is long and careful discussion crafted towards making a decision. Deliberative processes emphasise the importance of reflection and informed discussion in decision-making. (Electoral Reform Society, "What are Citizen Assemblies", June 2019)

2. Assembly Values

At its core, the purpose of the assembly is to empower student voices from a wide range of different perspectives, experiences and backgrounds. To ensure every voice is valued and respected, the assembly will conduct itself to the following principles:

Inclusive - Assembly will always endeavour to be inclusive in allowing all members to participate and be involved in the discussions/decisions at hand. Members should not feel isolated or alienated by this.

Safe Space - Assembly always conducts itself under the safe space policy which respects the protected characteristics of others.

Accessible - Members should not feel isolated or alienated by other assembly members conduct or discussions to the point where assembly is not accessible to them.

Empowering - Assembly empowers all voices and values the contributions given by its members.

Open-Minded - Members are open-minded to the information and views relayed by others to support a stance on a decision.

Balanced - Assembly will always give an avenue and opportunity to hear opposing views and opinions to ensure a fair and balanced debate informs the decisions it makes.

Members can raise a complaint with the Chair or member of staff if they feel these principles have been contravened.

3. Submitting a Topic/Issue

Any student or assembly member can submit a subject point to be discussed such as an issue or topic that is affecting themselves or other students, with the intention of reaching a decision in line with the assembly's Role (as defined in pt. 1 of the guidance). The Chair (with staff support) will support students' submissions, clarifying the following points:

- Identify the problem: A clear issue is placed before the assembly that identifies the problem faced by students.
- What are we analysing: Information needs to be provided to ensure members can clearly understand the dilemma or issue.
- Impact on students: How have students been affected by this issue and what impact is this having on the student experience?

** The SU can aide in research and building context around the issue to ensure assembly members are informed prior to the meeting.*

Topics/Issues need to be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the meeting (unless the Chair gives special permission) via email to the Chair, representation team, feedback mechanism or reps@gre.ac.uk.

[Prior to Assembly] The Chair will follow a process of categorising the submission into a low-high issue category to determine how the submission is processed:

- 1. Low:** a small issue that can be resolved in a 1-1 meeting or relayed to a relevant committee.
- 2. Medium:** an issue affecting a group of students which is taken to assembly with work already conducted to reach a quick consensus amongst assembly before taken to the "online vote".
- 3. High:** research is conducted before the meeting to build assemblies understanding. The issue is then taken to the assembly with a structured analysis and solution process set in place via the round table café format. Each table is given an aspect of the issue to draft a solution too, which is then taken to the online vote.

The Chair will translate the student's submission into a supporting document template, which help prepare members to deliberate the issue at the meeting. The submitter will need to approve the final submission and will receive confirmation of its place in the agenda for the meeting.

4. Assembly Process

Any student or assembly member can submit a subject point to be discussed. Each meeting will follow a defined but flexible process by which members convene and the Assembly forms. The step by step Assembly process will be communicated out to students and assembly members in the lead up to each meeting. Every effort will be made to ensure accessibility, paying particular attention to barriers such as jargon or unnecessary deadlines. The process is as follows:

1. Registration & Attendance

Registration to vote and attend the meeting will be open to all representatives year round, with an internal process in place to identify the two voting members in each course and student group. At least three weeks before a meeting, members will be reminded to confirm their attendance to a meeting.

2. Student Submissions & Agenda

Submissions must be made via the appropriate channels (as defined in pt. 3 of the guidance) within the deadline of two working weeks before the meeting. This is to ensure the agenda/supporting papers can be sent out at least five days before the meeting. The Chair has the power to "temperature check" the room to assess the preferred order submissions should be looked at.

3. Deliberation & Consensus Building

Assembly will be conducted in a "world café" format to provide an accessible and open platform for members to participate. The Chair will open each meeting and get a sense from the room for which agenda items will be prioritised. Each submission will follow a loose process of:

A - Introduction: The submission is presented by the chair. This sets out the question for discussion and provides some context on the submission. The chair decides whether to include student testimonies, staff briefing or a community organisers research report to build context.

*This is only forming the narrative of understanding for members to access background and contextual information on the current situation (e.g. what has the SU done previously on the matter)

B – Discussion: Members familiarise themselves with the various aspects of the question, discuss and reflect on the question at hand and the impact on students.

C – Solution Analysis: The issues identified are weighed up with dialogue about the options which are analysed (cost/benefits, research from organisers or SU held research).

D – Recommendations: Formed by member table groups through active negotiation and consensus building to finalise a shared solution/s to go to a vote. The Chair will have the right to determine when/how the appropriate consensus is built.

* Recommendations can be in parts or as an entire package which is taken to the online vote. These include:

- Situations and beliefs
- Short term outcomes
- Long term outcomes
- Responsibilities (who is responsible for these outcomes)
- Accountability checks (how will we check on progress of outcomes)

4. Decision/Ratification

Through consensus building, the members and the chair will determine the course of action to take on the relevant topic with the recommendations formed by the assembly. These include:

A- Online Vote: to decide whether to approve/reject/abstain the final recommendations formed by the assembly if there are actions mandated to the Officers. This includes an online vote to refer the decision to a referendum.

B- Compose a statement: by the assembly from the recommendations formed to communicate out to the student body or relevant students as to what the submission involves.

C- Refer: to a sub-committee to investigate further, form an action plan or make an internal decision. (Committees can be formed by the Chair to investigate a matter and form a student action plan)

D- Defer: to the next student assembly to give time to investigate further (can be used with above "Refer" outcome).

E- Referendum: to the entire student body to make a decision on a particular issue. Assembly will have set out the questions and solutions for students to decide upon.

Assembly Members who cannot attend the meeting will not be able to take part in the deliberation but will approve the recommendations on issues/topics formed.

5. Action and Follow-up

Once a decision has been made on the relevant course of action to take, the following will happen:

i. **Online Vote Opens:** After assembly finishes, the voting link and minutes of the meeting are sent to all registered members. Members will have a week to cast their vote before the deadline.

ii. **Results:** The online vote results will be communicated by the Chair with the relevant next steps to all the points of business concluded in the assembly meeting.

iii. **Embedded:** How these results are embedded into the work of the Students' Union will be part of the agreed outcomes of the assembly and communicated out to students.

5. Type of Action

The Student Assembly can suggest various forms of actions to progress an issue or topic raised, particularly when forming recommendations to take to an online vote. These actions can range from (but are not limited to):

- Putting issue on Student Priorities ballot (all student vote)
- Consensus planning by embedding actions into representative roles
- Building an SU wide campaign with a clear position, means for student involvement and goals
- Launch research where community organisers will investigate a designated issue and findings will be presented in the next meeting.
- Lobby the University by creating a working group from the Student Assembly which is tasked to draft a paper to the relevant University committee.

6. Role of the Chair

The Chair's primary function is to empower members to access and participate in the student assembly through its various modes and channels. The Chair supports members by:

A. Supporting submissions: by communicating and meeting with students to build their case so that it can be taken to assembly for debate, decision and action.

B. Guiding students/members: through the function of the assembly and the process, ensuring members feel valued in their contributions and participation.

C. Upholding assembly values: which are imposed to ensure a healthy debate and

inclusive environment for all.

D. Remaining impartial: when giving recommendations to the assembly on what options are available to it and following up online votes.

E. Ensure action: by putting approved recommendations into the relevant avenues set out in the by-laws:

- Policy Change: this is a proposal to set an SU position or stance on an issue or current event.
- Petition Submission: a collection of student petitions has been gathered and sent to assembly with a recommendation on a course of action.
- Amend Union Procedure
- Amend Representative Job Description
- No Confidence
- Call for Referendum
- By-law Amendment

7. Role of the Facilitators

Each table at the Student Assembly will have a GSU staff member facilitating the group. Their primary role is to guide the group through the process of deliberation, solution analysis and forming the final recommendations. It is important that the facilitator ensures the table is productive and participatory through this process and keeps on track to the issue at hand.

Facilitators will need to ensure they:

- Help the group decide on its solutions and actions while keeping a realistic time frame for the meeting.
- Keep the meeting focussed on one item at a time until the group has decided on a course of action.
- Regulate the flow of discussion, e.g. drawing out quiet people, or those with the most relevant experience.
- Clarify and summarising points, checking for agreement in order to make clear decisions.
- Help the group address conflict when it arises, and to explore different needs in order to come up with a well-supported decision.
- Keep the meeting to time.
- Ensure that a written record is made of any action points and decisions agreed at the meeting.

When assessing the quality and success of the conversations, facilitators will need to:

- Record what has been agreed (what actions were agreed, decisions made and problems solved)
- How did the participants feel and how will this affect how they feel about their role in the Student Assembly
- Did the table make good use of the various student experience?
- Did everyone feel able to share their views?

Feedback will be collected from Assembly Members to measure engagement and assess how they view the process.



SUSS: An Overview

Briefing note for students' union sabbaticals and student trustees

2021

Introduction

This briefing note is intended to give SU sabbaticals and student trustees an overview of SUSS (the Students' Union Superannuation Scheme).

SUSS is an occupational pension scheme set up in 1981 to provide pensions in retirement to students' union staff members, including sabbaticals. Some 64 students' unions plus NUS are part of SUSS, with around 2,500 individual members either receiving pensions or due to receive pensions once they reach retirement age. SUSS is a defined benefit scheme, meaning there is a guaranteed sum paid annually to the individual after retirement. This sum is calculated based on the member's pensionable salary in the years leading to the earlier of retirement or leaving pensionable service, as well as the number of years the member contributed to SUSS. The calculation varies depending on when the member joined SUSS as explained further below.

SUSS closed to future accrual on 30 September 2011 – this means employees of SUs cannot join SUSS and existing members of SUSS all left pensionable service no later than 30 September 2011 and can no longer build up any further pension entitlement. However, for those SUs in SUSS there remain certain legal obligations towards SUSS, not least ensuring SUSS has enough money to pay the pensions due. At the moment, SUSS has less money than is required to meet its obligations, and for this reason, 'employer contributions' to SUSS will continue to feature in the budgets of member SUs for some years to come. Depending on the number of individual members from a given SU who joined SUSS, this can be a significant sum.

This note aims to help you understand certain key information about SUSS to aid you in your role as a trustee or executive member of your SU. It will set out a brief history of SUSS and the reasons it closed to future accrual; discuss the present situation and why member SUs must make continued contributions and what may happen next; look at an issue with the historic administration of SUSS that the trustees have identified and what this may mean for SUs; and indicate where further information on SUSS can be found. There is also a glossary of abbreviations at the end of the briefing.

A brief history of SUSS

When SUSS was launched in 1981, SUs did not generally employ large numbers of staff. However, numbers were steadily growing, and with them an understandable desire for some form of pension provision. Although some SU staff could access alternative arrangements through their parent institution, in many cases this was not possible, and SUs were often too small to be able to run their own scheme given the way pensions operated at that time. Moreover, staff would often move between different SUs (much as they do today) and leaving and joining separate schemes would be administratively complicated. Given these considerations, and as organisations founded on the principle of collective action, a joint pension scheme for the movement was seen as the ideal solution.

As with most occupational pension schemes, both the individual and the employer made contributions based on a percentage of the individual's salary. This money was invested in various financial assets including company shares, government or company bonds, property and so forth, with the aim of generating enough income from these assets to pay pensions when they fell due on retirement.

Originally SUSS offered pensions based on the final salary of the individual at the time they retired or left service with the SU and the number of years of contributions, in common with almost all pension schemes then available. However, by the early 2000s this arrangement became unaffordable, not least because of ever greater life expectancy – that is, pensions needed to be paid for more years than was assumed to be the case in the 1980s. In addition, a number of pension fund scandals, most notably that involving Robert Maxwell and the Mirror newspaper group, resulted in a much stricter regulatory framework which required far more caution when making assumptions). Finally, there were periods when investments did not perform as well as anticipated. For these reasons, by 2000 SUSS had a deficit of around £25m – in other words, it had fewer assets than it needed to pay the pensions due. For this reason, two changes were made: first, in 2000, the age at which pensions were paid was increased from 60 to 65. Secondly, SUSS changed in 2003 to a 'CARE' scheme (Career Average Revalued Earnings). Thereafter, pensions were based on the average salary over the period the individual paid contributions into SUSS rather than their final salary, although any entitlement that had built up by reference to their final salary before this date was preserved. This change to CARE reduced the final cost of pensions.

Despite this change, the financial crisis of 2007 would mean even greater challenges as share prices fell and other investments suffered. The deficit increased to £48m by 2010 and, given the economic problems then facing the UK, it would likely only increase. Although most pension schemes faced similar pressures – the equivalent scheme for academic staff in universities, USS, saw its deficit reach £3bn by 2011 and may be as much as £7.5bn today – for SUSS there were particular risks. Each participating SU has a 'share' of this deficit based on the number of individual members of SUSS it employed. For most SUs this share would have been ruinous if the entire amount became due in one go – as would be the case under law if any SU ceased to employ an individual member of SUSS or suffered an insolvency event (known as triggering a 'section 75 debt' in the legal jargon – in fact the SU's share of the deficit would be based on a more cautious assessment of the liabilities based on the estimated cost of securing annuities for all members with an insurance company). If they could not pay, their share would then be apportioned among the remaining SUs, further increasing the burden on each of them.

Many SUs had only a few individual members and very limited cash or other assets of their own in the event they had to pay their share of the deficit. As such, the risks were clearly unacceptably high. Following an extensive consultation with SUs and NUS, the trustees took the decision to close SUSS to future accrual from October 2011. However, each SU who participated in SUSS remains responsible for its share of the deficit in regard to the pension entitlement built up prior to that date.

SUSS is managed by a trustee board of six: three employer-nominated trustees, two member-nominated trustees and one independent trustee who is an expert in pensions. There is a complex legal framework around pension schemes but in essence the trustees are responsible for ensuring the individual members receive the pension entitlement they are due, according to the rules that govern SUSS, through prudent investment of the scheme's assets. In this duty, they must be careful to consider the employer 'covenant' – that is, the financial health of the SUs and how this affects their ability to fulfil their obligations – but their ultimate responsibility is to the individual beneficiaries of SUSS. To be clear, employer-nominated trustees do not represent their individual SU, or the participating SU as a whole.

Instead, SUs who participate in SUSS are represented by NUS, in its capacity as 'principal employer'. NUS takes this role for two reasons: it is the membership body for SUs, and it is also the largest single employer in SUSS. A representative of NUS senior management attends trustee meetings in a non-voting capacity, and liaises with the other SUs in SUSS to ensure all participating SU views are

understood when the trustees make their decisions. Where employers are required to agree to changes, NUS will act on their behalf, following suitable consultation with the other SUs.

Day-to-day administration of SUSS is undertaken by a specialist company, Barnett Waddingham LLP, and the trustees are also advised by a number of professional experts, including actuaries, investment advisers and lawyers.

SUSS today – and what this means for your SU

Perhaps the most important matter for you as a sabbatical or student trustee is the contribution your SU is making to close SUSS's deficit. Where a 'defined benefit' scheme like SUSS has a deficit – that is, its assets are not large enough to meet the pension entitlement individuals have built up - their employer (or former employer) is obliged to make up the difference. Moreover, the Pensions Regulator requires trustees to have a recovery plan in place for SUSS so that the deficit is closed reasonably quickly (by the standards of pension schemes). If they do not, or if the recovery plan is deemed inadequate, the Pensions Regulator may impose their own recovery plan. SUSS' current recovery plan aims to close the deficit by 2035 – so that the annual deficit contributions are as low as possible for SUs.

However, the deficit does not necessarily remain static even though SUSS is closed to future accrual. One of the key drivers for the deficit is the price of government bonds (also known as 'gilts'). These are low risk investments, and pension schemes are strongly encouraged to invest in them heavily. The problem for pension schemes is that, although the face value of gilt investments has increased, the yields received (that is, the regular cash return) on gilts is currently very low by historic standards, driven by a strong demand for gilts as 'safe' investments in what has been a turbulent period for investments over the last decade.

SUSS has also had to deal with an historic issue arising from its legal documentation which has meant increasing pensions for a number of members who had accrued pensionable service in SUSS in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This issue has recently been resolved and is explained in more detail below.

As a result of both the fall in gilt yields and the historic legal issue, the SUSS deficit has continued to increase (as with many other schemes), despite both the closure of SUSS and above-expected returns on our other investments. This has caused increases in the annual deficit contributions for SUs.

Under pensions law, trustees must undertake a regular official valuation of their scheme by an actuary (a profession which deals in the assessment of risk). The results of this valuation show the extent to which the scheme does or does not meet its funding requirements. From these results, a revised recovery plan and changes to contributions are put in place, if they are required. This is captured in formal documents that are submitted to the Pensions Regulator.

The trustees must conduct a valuation on a triennial basis (that is, every three years). The last valuation process for SUSS looked at the scheme as it stood on 30 June 2019. This showed the deficit stood at £141m, up from £120m in 2016. As a result, SUSS required a higher contribution from the participating SUs. As part of the process the trustees reassessed the 'employer covenant' so that they could make informed decisions on the ability by SUs to pay additional contributions. Using this information, the trustees tried to balance the need to bring in sufficient payments to close the deficit with the knowledge that increases may be difficult for SUs to shoulder. The result was a decision to extend the recovery period by just over two years, but also increase deficit contributions in 2021. How much these contributions will rise depends on how much your SU is impacted by the historic legal issue but rises will range between 8 per cent and 44 per cent. In 2020 and in every year after 2021, deficit contributions will increase by 5 per cent per annum (this is an ongoing feature of our recovery plan).

To reiterate, in making such decisions the trustees are very conscious of the impact on SUs, but ultimately, they are responsible for ensuring pensions are paid and that the deficit is closed as quickly as possible. In closing SUSS in 2011 the most drastic action to limit the deficit has already been taken in respect of individuals. The trustees will continue to invest carefully to help reduce the deficit, including in 'liability driven investment' which reduces the impact of falls in gilt yields. If the yield (or return) on gilts improves in the next few years this should reduce the deficit – but this is by no means certain and investment alone will not eliminate the need for deficit contributions to be paid for the foreseeable future.

Note that an SU can pay contributions in larger lump sums and this may save some money – for example, paying three years of contributions in one go. It would also be possible for an SU to 'buy out' its entire share of the deficit in one transaction, although without assistance from a parent institution this is beyond the means of most SUs, as the 'buy out' sum is significantly higher than the normal ongoing payments.

The ultimate aim is to 'buy out' the benefits of SUSS completely by paying an insurance company to take over SUSS and pay pensioners from that point onwards. To do so, however, SUSS must have enough assets to pay pensions and to have built up a 'cushion' of extra assets. Although we can move towards this goal in stages, we will not be able to consider that exercise until the deficit is cleared, and that is still some years away.

Historic legal issue

As part of our work to prepare SUSS for such a 'buy out', the trustees undertook an exercise that, among other tasks, looked to ensure that the legal documentation governing SUSS was in order. Unfortunately, this exercise identified a historic issue with SUSS's administration which has had a significant impact on the deficit at the most recent valuation.

In summary, when SUSS was established in 1981, it was set up to provide increases of 7 per cent per year to pensions in payment to protect pensions from the effect of inflation. This was a very generous rate of increases but only applied to pension exceeding the Guaranteed Minimum Pension (known as the GMP). In 1988, the Government amended the law to provide that pension schemes must also pay increases of up to 3% on the GMP. In 1988 therefore, a decision was made by the trustees to reduce the rate from 7 per cent to 3 per cent per year and apply it to all pension (both GMP and the excess pension). This was recorded in the trustee board minutes and communicated to SUSS members through the usual channels and scheme booklets, and SUSS was administered on that basis in the years following. However, as part of the review exercise, SUSS's current lawyers identified that the rules governing SUSS had not been formally amended to incorporate the reduced rate of increases, until the change was captured in a separate legal process to refresh all rules in December 1993. Legally, the trustees must pay pensions in accordance with the scheme rules, and so the omission to formally amend the rules meant that members continued to be entitled to increases at 7 per cent per year on excess pension earned between 1988 and 1993, even though they were never expecting this. They also remained entitled by law to increases on the GMP they had earned during this period.

In addition, the decision in 1988 to reduce pension increases attempted to back-date the change to cover all benefits accrued since 1 October 1981, when SUSS was established. However, back-dating the change was not legally possible and so the members affected by that decision are entitled to increases at 7 per cent per year on their excess pension in respect of that period of service, and required these underpayments to be corrected.

With the compounding effects of this situation, this could have meant adding as much as circa £48m to the deficit. Clearly, such an increase in the deficit would have had a significant impact on SUSS and the participating SUs. Working with SUs and NUS, the trustees considered a range of options to address this problem, which could not be ignored due to the trustees' legal duty to pay pensions and increases in accordance with the scheme rules. The SUs felt however that the effects of this would be unaffordable and put many SUs under potentially devastating financial strain. Members who had service before 1988 had to have the underpayments made good, but a compromise position was offered to members with service between 1988 and 1993 (explained below), excluding certain categories of 'vulnerable' members whom we did not feel it was fair to contact.

The compromise position asked affected members to accept lower increases than they were entitled to for the period of service between 1988 and 1993. The justification for this compromise position was that members had not expected to receive the higher rate of increases (as all member communications had referred to the lower rate which was thought to have been adopted) and the viability of SUSS was threatened. Even under the compromise option, they would still receive higher increases for this period of service than would have been the case before the historic error was discovered.

Each individual member had to choose whether or not to accept the compromise. If they did not, or did not respond to us, they would receive the higher rate of increases. In the event, the response of affected members to this compromise offer was very positive. Around 80 per cent of affected members responded to us, and of those who responded around 80 per cent accepted the compromise position; a level of acceptance that is very unusual for this type of exercise and a testament to the values of our movement. As a result of this and other measures taken by the trustees, the ultimate impact of the issue fell to around £24.8m – still very significant but a level the trustees felt they can manage over the course of the recovery period. Even so, as we have outlined, those SUs with staff or former staff who receive higher pensions will see their deficit contributions rise in accordance with the specific impact on their liabilities, and the trustees understand this will present challenges to your SU at least in the short term.

While all underpayments have now been paid to affected individuals, any remaining members who have not accepted the compromise will continue to have the option to do so at any time, and will be reminded of the option at retirement. The trustees hope this may encourage further, albeit small, reductions in the deficit in future.

The future

Now that the historic issue has been resolved, the trustees will continue to manage SUSS, ensuring pensions are paid as they fall due, investments are made carefully, and deficit contributions are collected. Clearly, the coming years may be difficult for the student movement as the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic unfold, and the trustees have been working with participating SUs to outline what mitigations might be possible in the short-term.

More generally, the numbers of current SU staff who are individual members of SUSS is dwindling over time, and with them the institutional knowledge of SUSS. For this reason, it will also be vital to ensure that newer staff, as well as officers and SU trustees, have access to information, and this briefing is part of that work. There is also an annual meeting of SUSS open to all participating SUs and we encourage you to ensure your SU is represented.

Further information

We send regular newsletters to participating SUs with updates on SUSS. In addition, the trustees would be happy to answer any specific questions on SUSS. Please contact us at suss@rosstrustees.com in the first instance.

We would also be happy to receive comments on this briefing note and whether it is useful – again please email the address above.

Glossary of abbreviations

CARE	Career Average Revalued Earnings
LLP	Limited Liability Partnership
NUS	National Union of Students
SUs	Students' unions
SUSS	Students' Union Superannuation Scheme



2020/21
greenwichsu.co.uk