About us:

Sheffield Students' Union is a student-led charity with approximately £10 million in annual turnover and a substantial, varied trading operation.

Our commercial activity helps us deliver excellent services, opportunities and experiences for students. We are seeking an independent External Director to bring commercial insight, financial scrutiny and constructive challenge to the board of our trading subsidiary.

The opportunity

This is a board-level, non-remunerated governance role, not an operational management post. You will help the subsidiary remain commercially successful, responsibly managed and aligned with the Union's values and student-centred mission. Our activity spans nightlife and live music, bars, retail, advertising and nursery provision, creating a distinctive mix of markets, opportunities and risks.

Role at a glance

Position	External Director (non-executive), SUSU Services Limited
Accountability	To the subsidiary company through the company's governance arrangements
Location	Anywhere (although an understanding of the Sheffield region would be beneficial). Trading committee meetings are primarily held virtually, although there is an expectation that you visit our premises for one in person meeting a year, so there should be a willingness to travel to Sheffield for this..
Term / time	4 years, with option for extension for another 4 years

What you will contribute

- Provide independent, informed scrutiny of business plans, budgets, management accounts, cash flow, investment proposals and financial performance.
- Challenge and support the development of sustainable income streams, customer propositions, partnerships and business development opportunities.
- Help the board assess commercial risks and opportunities across a diverse portfolio, balancing financial return, service quality, reputation and student benefit.

- Contribute to strategic direction, performance monitoring and proportionate oversight of management, while respecting the distinction between governance and day-to-day delivery.
- Ensure the company operates lawfully and responsibly, with appropriate attention to controls, reporting, safeguarding, health and safety, licensing, employment and other sector-specific compliance.
- Maintain a constructive relationship with the Students' Union Trustee Board as the parent charity's governing body, including clear reporting, transparent transactions and appropriate management of conflicts of interest.
- Champion inclusive, ethical and environmentally responsible business decisions that support an outstanding student experience.

Your legal and governance responsibilities

As a statutory company director, you will share collective responsibility for the subsidiary's governance and exercise the duties set out in the Companies Act 2006. These include acting within powers; promoting the success of the company; exercising independent judgement and reasonable care, skill and diligence; avoiding or properly managing conflicts; not accepting improper third-party benefits; and declaring interests in relevant transactions.

You must act in the interests of the subsidiary in accordance with your legal duties, while understanding its relationship with the parent charity and the importance of appropriate charitable oversight. Directors remain responsible for ensuring suitable arrangements exist for accounts, records, statutory filings and financial and regulatory compliance, even where tasks are delegated to staff or professional advisers.

Directors are expected to prepare for and participate actively in meetings, ask proportionate and constructive questions, maintain confidentiality, undertake induction and relevant development, and declare potential conflicts promptly.

Person specification

Essential

1. Strong financial literacy and commercial judgement, including confidence interpreting management information and assessing investment, profitability and risk.
2. Experience of commercial strategy, business development, enterprise growth or oversight of a trading operation.
3. Ability to challenge constructively, think independently and contribute effectively to collective board decisions.

4. Understanding of good governance and willingness to discharge the legal duties of a company director.
5. Commitment to inclusive, ethical trading and to the Union's student-centred purpose.

Desirable

- Experience as a non-executive director, company director or trustee.
- Knowledge of one or more of hospitality, licensed venues, events, retail, marketing/advertising or early years/nursery operations.
- Experience of a Students Union or charity trading subsidiary, social enterprise or similarly purpose-led commercial organisation.

Working with us

We welcome applicants from a broad range of commercial backgrounds. You do not need to have worked in higher education or a students' union, nor to be an expert in every part of our portfolio. We will provide an induction and relevant information to support effective participation.

Appointment information

Appointment will be subject to eligibility to act as a company director, declarations of interests and the subsidiary's governing documents. Any additional checks relevant to the role will be explained during recruitment.