

Chair of Trustees
Information Pack



Welcome from our CEO & President

“ Thank you for your interest in the University of Birmingham Guild of Students and this exciting new opportunity to become our next Chair of Trustees.

The Guild of Students plays a key and pivotal role in the student experience at Birmingham, offering a range of services and activities which not only help to attract students to the University, but which also contribute to a vibrant student experience, as well as supporting the wider sense of community and belonging.

The breadth of the Guild's service and activity portfolio is comparable with other large students' unions in the Russell Group and as an organisation the Guild is well regarded within the sector. As leaders in the field, the Guild has paved the way in key areas such as representation, student groups and societies, social opportunities, events and activities.

Our Officer Team shape everything that we do. Each year seven full-time and six part-time Officers are elected to lead the Guild for the academic year and represent all Birmingham students, ensuring they get the most out of University life.

Full-time Officers also sit across the Guild's strategic and operational committees, providing student leadership and ensuring the issues that matter most to students are represented in decision making throughout the organisation.

The Guild of Students is ambitious, which is demonstrated in our strategic planning and funding framework. Our ambition is to be a trusted partner of the University and to deliver a best-in-class students' union.

We are in the final year of the Guild's 2022-27 strategy, which is aligned to University priorities under its strategic framework, 'Birmingham 2030', making this a formative time as we look beyond 2027 in what is a challenging time for the sector. The Trustee Board will be instrumental in ensuring that the organisation is able to deliver on its commitments and promises to both students and the University.

Find out more about the Guild at guildofstudents.com



Welcome from our CEO & President continued.

The Birmingham community is distinctive, and it is vital for the Guild to remain at the heart of student life with representative and democratic frameworks, services and participative opportunities that are designed to enable students to thrive and flourish. The student body continues to diversify and change and many of our members are struggling with the cost of living. The Guild must remain adaptive and responsive to students' needs and continue to equip them with important life skills for their futures.

Our 2022-27 Strategic Plan has focused on the core aims of Engagement & Participation, Representation, and Community & Support. Successful strategic delivery requires the organisational foundations to be strong, and able to support work in these areas. To support this the Guild has and will continue to focus on its funding and financial management, partnerships and relationships, and its infrastructure - both physically and digitally. As one of its strongest assets people and associated culture continue to be a key part of our supporting framework.

We know that our organisational foundations are strong and we seek skilled leadership to continue to support us to deliver at this level. We are therefore looking for an experienced leader, with demonstrable experience of supporting organisations at Board level.

In this pack, you will find information about our activities, history, strategy and achievements, as well as the structure of our governance and Trustee Board, and information on how to apply for this unique opportunity.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Warmest regards,



Jo Thomas
Chief Executive Officer



Olly Ashton
Guild President 2026/27



Who We Are & Where We're Heading

The Guild is a successful, vibrant and exciting organisation, with an extensive history leading the student movement and a bright future ahead. A registered charity, we are the students' union for more than 38,000 students at the University of Birmingham.

We represent our members to the University and aim to be the authoritative voice on the issues that matter the most to Birmingham students. We help students develop skills outside of study, have fun, meet new people and make sure that they get the best from Birmingham! [Find out more.](#)

We're very proud that our work for Birmingham students has been recognised as sector-leading and we've recently been awarded:



As we come to the end of our 2022-27 strategic plan and look beyond 2027, a strong and active Trustee Board will be essential to support and guide the organisation's work.

Our Values

Our values, which filter into every corner of Guild activity are:

INCLUSIVE:

Embracing diversity in all its forms

REPRESENTATIVE:

Standing up for the issues that matter

SUPPORTIVE:

Offering help and advice when needed

FUN:

Making Birmingham the best place to be

Our Mission

We're here to make sure students get **a distinctive Birmingham and best-in-class student experience.**





Our Services and Impacts

Like many in the Higher Education sector, the Guild has been faced with various challenges over recent years and since the pandemic. We've reviewed our approach to planning activities and engaging students, and have been required to keep up with both demands on members' time and increasing 'noise' in the digital landscape.

Our determined and resilient staff and Officer team have risen to these challenges and worked to ensure the Guild has remained focussed in the delivery of its objectives, and motivated to provide the very best services to students and stakeholders.

As we continue to look at new ways of engaging students into the future, we are also looking at ways in which we can respond to the changing landscape of higher education and the needs of our members.

The role of our Trustee Board is key to the development of a sound and deliverable new strategy to make sure we provide the best possible student experience.

Impact Report 2024-25

[View our Impact Report video](#)





Our History

In 1880, Mason College Students' General Meeting established an 'Association of Students' known as Mason College Union; seen as the birth of the modern Guild of Students.



GUILD COUNCIL (1930)

Now, at over 140 years old, the Guild of Students continues to be the voice of Birmingham students. We have a rich and varied history – from a founding member of the NUS, to the 1970s rent strike, pushing the liberation agenda to the forefront, helping battle apartheid and demonstrating against a rise in tuition fees.

Every year, the Officer Team Elections give students the chance to determine who will lead and represent them. The first President of the Guild of Students, was recorded in 1901. The President became a full-time sabbatical position in 1960. Today, the Guild elects seven full-time sabbatical Officers, including the President.



MASS SIT-IN, GREAT HALL (1968)

In 2008, a campus-wide referendum was held to approve the Guild's transition to a Company Limited by Guarantee and included the creation of a Trustee Board. In 2010 the Guild gained charity status.

Guild History

Find out more about the Guild's history at:
guildofstudents.com/about/ourhistory





How the Guild works and our Governance Structure

The Trustee Board

The Board oversees the Guild. Comprised of full-time Officers, external and student trustees with a wealth of experience, the Board ensures the good governance of the Guild. Its role is to ensure the Guild is legally, reputationally and financially viable.

Guild Officers

Every year, students elect Officers to represent them and lead the Guild. Each Officer looks after a different area of university life and it's their job to represent student views and improve the student experience. There are seven full-time and six part-time Officers.

Staff

Our staff team, which includes 80+ core staff and almost 350 students working part-time, supports the Officer Team to achieve the Guild's plans. The Staff team also manage the Guild's departments and services.

Volunteers

Many students volunteer their time in different ways to support the work of the Guild – from student representatives and society committee members.

18 TRUSTEES

7 OFFICER
TRUSTEES

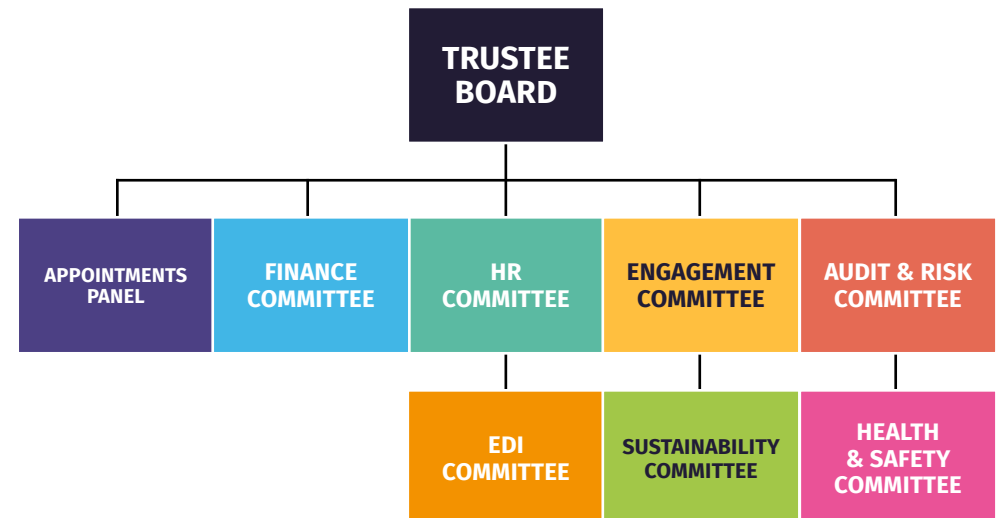
4 STUDENT
TRUSTEES

6 EXTERNAL
TRUSTEES

1 UNIVERSITY
TRUSTEE

11 STUDENTS

7 NON-STUDENTS





Directorate Summaries

Engagement

Delivering Strategic Aim 1 – ‘Engagement & Participation’.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

To facilitate and support students wishing to volunteer and become involved in Student Groups.

VENUES

To provide a range of entertainment events and social functions internally and externally, supporting the organisation in line with its business plan.

Operations

Supporting the Guild’s Strategic Enablers.

PEOPLE & ADMINISTRATION

To provide HR and administrative functions for the Guild. Ensuring the Guild is legally compliant with employment law, advising and supporting on all staffing matters. Providing executive support to the President and Chief Executive, and the Guild governance processes.

FACILITIES

To ensure the highest standards of presentation and quality in the Guild building and its facilities.

COMMS & MARKETING

To provide a range of marketing and communications functions and services that support the organisation.

Chief Executive

Finance & Systems

Delivering the Strategic Enabler – ‘Sound Financial Footing’.

FINANCE

To manage the finances of the Guild of Students in accordance with the Guild’s Financial Procedures and company legislation.

SYSTEMS

To deliver the Digital Plan, improving and digitising internal processes and CRM handling, commission new digital systems, supporting departments to transition to new systems.

Community & Representation

Delivering Strategic Aim 2 – ‘Representation’ and Aim 3 – ‘Community & Support’.

RESIDENCE LIFE

To provide the Guild’s support and engagement activity for UoB students living in university accommodation.

STUDENT VOICE & REPRESENTATION

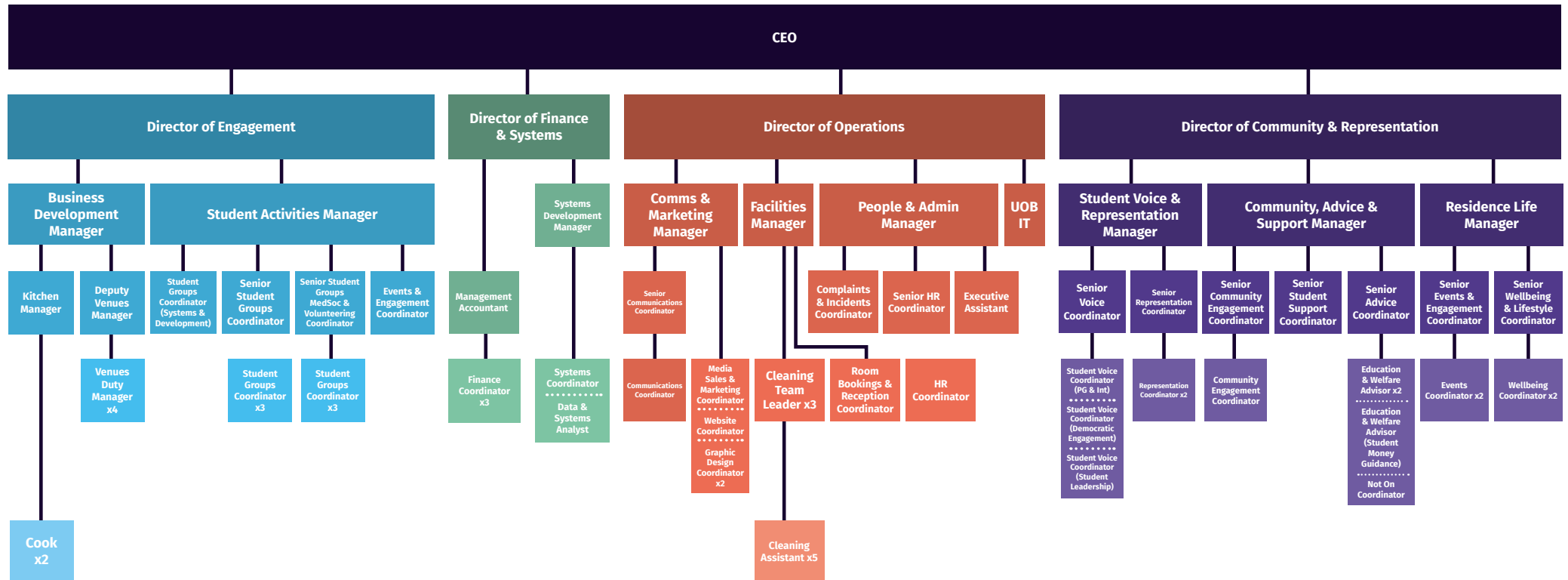
To administrate, support and develop the representation and democracy functions of the Guild, and support the Student Reps System.

COMMUNITY, ADVICE & SUPPORT

To provide the Guild’s support and activity associated with the health, wellbeing and support of students at the University.



Core Staffing Structure





About the Role of Chair of Trustee Board

The responsibilities of the Chair covers two areas: those as an External Trustee (see next section); and those specifically designated to the Chair (see below)

The Chair provides leadership to the Trustee Board, ensuring the Board fulfils its responsibilities in the governance of the Guild of Students, and that the organisation meets the needs of its members. The Chair works closely with the President and Chief Executive Officer and supports them to achieve the aims and objectives of the Guild's Strategic Plan. The Chair stewards the work of the Guild at the highest level, in accordance with its vision, strategy and values, acts as a role model for the Trustee Board, and ensures the highest standards of good governance are met.

Responsibilities

- To ensure that the Trustee Board meets its responsibilities for the good governance of the Guild in line with charity law and guidance.
- To facilitate and guide the Trustee Board in their role of setting the organisation's strategy and providing strategic oversight of the delivery of the strategic plan on a regular basis.
- To oversee the annual cycle of Trustee Board meetings, away days and Trustees' training and development.
- To oversee agenda setting for Trustee Board meetings, in liaison with the Chief Executive, President and Guild staff.
- To chair Trustee Board meetings, making sure all Trustees are supported to contribute to discussions and voice their views and expertise, and to ensure that decisions of the Board are implemented.
- To act as a role model for the Trustee Board and represent the Guild at formal events and meetings as requested, subject to availability.
- To liaise regularly with the Chief Executive Officer and President on high-level decisions, maintaining an overview of the Guild activities and providing support and advice, focusing on strategy, risk and long-term sustainability.
- To act as the key channel of communication between the Trustees and Guild Staff team, via the Chief Executive.
- To always act in the best interest of the Guild and its beneficiaries and to champion student democracy.
- To oversee the process of appraising the performance of the Chief Executive Officer, on behalf of the Trustee Board.
- To liaise with University colleagues as required, representing the Trustee Board and Guild at a strategic level.
- To chair the Appointment and Disciplinary Panels, as required.
- To perform the duties as a Trustee, outlined in the External Trustee role description.

About the Role of Chair of Trustee Board continued.

Experience

The Guild of Students is looking for an experienced chair that will support the vision and values of the Guild:

- A leader with experience of facilitating strategic change in organisations.
- A good networker with relationship-building experience.
- A good understanding of the public, third or Higher Education (HE) sector, and current HE issues.
- A familiarity and interest in the work of Students' Unions, their importance and role in HE, and the needs of its members.
- Experience and knowledge of charity and governance processes.
- Able to provide direction, leadership and support in a way that inspires confidence in and commitment from others.
- Demonstrates willingness to engage with students and attend high profile events in order to gain greater understanding of the role of the Guild and foster and encourage strong relationships.
- Knowledge and close association with the West Midlands preferably as a resident.

Time Commitment

The role of Chair involves an average minimum time commitment of 3-4 hours every month to chair the Trustee Board meeting (6 times per year, generally on a Monday evening between 17:30 and 20:00) and reading time to support those meetings, in addition to time involved in planning for meetings and liaising directly with the CEO and President on other matters.

Meeting commitments on an annual basis include:

- Two Board Away Days (usually September and January, prior to Board meetings)
- Membership of at least one Committee of the Board, as well as the Appointments Panel (to appoint new Trustees as required).
- Regular meetings with the Chief Executive.
- Conducting the Chief Executive's annual appraisal (five to six hours per year).
- Attendance at Guild and University high profile events e. g Elections Results Night, Guild Awards; approximately 3 times per year.

The post of Chair is appointed for a period of 3 years, with the option to serve a second term (at the discretion of Appointments Panel).

Remuneration

This role is not remunerated but reasonable expenses will be reimbursed. The Guild can offer administrative support and materials if needed.

Person Specification

QUALIFICATIONS	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Good general education, A level or beyond	✓	
A degree qualification or equivalent evidence of continuous professional development and / or significant comparable practical experience.	✓	

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
An understanding of the issues facing students in higher education today and the role of a students' union	✓	
Experience of operating at a strategic leadership level	✓	
Experience and understanding of charity governance	✓	
Experience of chairing meetings and ensuring collective decision making	✓	
Previous experience as Chair of a Board, a Trustee or Non-Executive Director	✓	
Knowledge of Health and Safety issues including duty of care principles		✓
Knowledge of Financial Management		✓
Knowledge of Human Resources		✓
Knowledge of Charity Law and Charity Governance	✓	
Knowledge of Marketing & Communications		✓

SKILLS AND ABILITIES		
Ability to establish strong working relationships with a wide range of individuals and stakeholders.	✓	
Strong leadership skills, the ability to motivate and bring people together	✓	
Ability to work effectively within a democratic structure	✓	
Ability to use judgement to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Guild.	✓	

PERSONAL QUALITIES	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
A team focused approach building a culture of openness, collaboration and trust.	✓	
Inclusive – champions equity, diversity and inclusion and encourages others to do the same.	✓	
Diplomatic - uses high levels of tact and diplomacy.	✓	
Self-motivated and confidence to speak openly - communicates clearly and effectively.	✓	
Integrity and Objectivity – Committed to continuous advancement of the Guild of Students, motivated by leading in a student-led, democratic workplace.	✓	
Accountability - to ensure continuity and strategic direction.	✓	
Honesty and a commitment to transparency.	✓	
Flexible and able to commit to approximately six hours per month.	✓	



About the Role of External Trustee

The responsibilities of the Chair covers two areas: those as an External Trustee (see below); and those specifically designated to the Chair (see previous section)

The Trustee Board ensures that the Guild meets the needs of its members and fulfils its responsibilities for the good governance of the Guild, in line with charity law. The role of the Trustees is to support the work of the Guild in line with our visions and values.

This is a brilliant opportunity to join an award winning, multi-faceted, and complex charity. The Trustee Board is ultimately responsible for overseeing the affairs of the Guild. Our Trustees must ensure that the Guild is well run and delivers the objectives for which it has been set up. They must also ensure that the Guild works for and with its membership in all that it does, with a collective responsibility for the strategic direction of the organisation.

In this role you will harness and develop your skills and experiences, and be part of a team that makes key decisions regarding the long-term future of the Guild. We are looking for individuals who are able to establish strong working relationships and take a cooperative approach to reach objective decisions.

The Guild welcomes applications from a wide range of backgrounds that are reflective of the full diversity of Birmingham's community, in particular from Black, Asian, and minoritised ethnicities as we seek to continually increase diversity within our governance structures.

We would encourage candidates with current or previous experience in a membership or charitable organisation but this is not an essential requirement.

Time Commitment

The role involves an average minimum time commitment of 3-4 hours every 2 months to attend the Trustee Board meeting (6 times per year, generally on a Monday evening between 17:30 and 20:00) and reading time to support those meetings. Online attendance at meetings is possible but cannot always be guaranteed. Please get in touch to discuss if you would like to enquire about this. Regular commitments on an annual basis include:

- Two half development/away day Board meetings (usually prior to a Board meeting).
- Attendance at Guild and University high profile events e.g. Elections Results Night, subject to availability.

The position of External Trustee is appointed for a period of 3 years, with the option to serve a second three-year term.

Ethos

The Guild of Students is looking for External Trustees who will support the vision and values of the Guild:

- A good networker with relationship building experience.
- A good understanding of the public, third or HE sector, and current HE issues.
- A familiarity and interest in the work of Students' Unions and the needs of its members.
- Experience and knowledge of charity and governance processes.
- Able to provide direction, and support in a way that inspires confidence in and commitment from others.
- Robust judgement and the ability to seek and challenge information to reach and take decisions.
- Passionate about our organisation and wants to make a difference to students at the University of Birmingham.
- Undisputed personal integrity and a personal style that demonstrates authority, commitment and consistency.
- Ability to assimilate and analyse information quickly in order to debate issues at strategic levels.
- Demonstrates willingness to engage with students and attend high profile events in order to gain greater understanding of the role of the Guild and foster strong relationships.

Responsibilities

1. To ensure that the Guild of Students
 - a. complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
 - b. uses its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives
2. To actively contribute, together with the other trustees, the Officer Team, the Chief Executive to ensuring that the Guild of Students has a clear strategic direction that meets the needs of its members and is focused on achieving these.
3. To be an ambassador of the Guild of Students, safeguarding and developing the reputation and values of the Guild of Students.
4. To ensure the long-term financial stability of the organisation.
5. To protect and manage the assets of the Guild of Students taking all due care over their security, ensuring that they are used exclusively in pursuance of the agreed objectives.
6. To undertake appropriate training and personal development as required for the role.
7. To provide support to the elected Officers as required.
8. To contribute actively to the Board of Trustees, using any specific skills, knowledge or experience to help the Board of Trustees reach sound decisions. This may involve, but is not limited to:
 - a. Scrutinising board papers
 - b. Leading discussions
 - c. Focusing on key issues
 - d. Providing guidance on new initiatives
 - e. Hearing specific HR and/or membership discipline cases
 - f. Other issues in which the trustee has special expertise.
9. To adhere to all relevant Guild policy with particular reference to staffing, health and safety and environmental.
10. To support the work of the Guild of Students' Trustee Board and Sub-Committees, where necessary, in the event of sickness, holiday or other exceptional circumstances.

Expenses

This role is not remunerated but reasonable expenses will be reimbursed and the Guild can offer administrative support if needed.



Recruitment Process

New appointments to the Trustee Board and its sub-committees are made by our 'Appointments Panel', a body with representation from across all of the Guild's stakeholders. It includes senior staff from the University, the Officer team, and two elected students to comprise a panel of ten members.

The recruitment process for this position is as follows:

STAGE 1 - APPLICATION



STAGE 2 - SHORTLISTING



STAGE 3 - INTERVIEW



STAGE 4 - SELECTION & APPOINTMENT

1 - Application

To apply for this position, follow **this link** to the Guild's website and complete the application form for the position you are interested in, noting the role description and person specification. Please ensure that your application fully addresses the criteria in the role description (available on the same web page).

If you wish to discuss any adjustments that you feel you may need in order to be able to complete the application process, or to be able to carry out this role, please contact: **hrteam@guild.bham.ac.uk**

The deadline for applications is **Monday 21 September 2026 at 5pm**. Applications submitted after this time may not be processed.

2 - Shortlisting

After the close of applications, the Appointments Panel will receive the anonymised applications and shortlist those that will be taken forward for interview. The panel will shortlist each application based on the criteria as outlined in the role description and person specification.

Recruitment Process continued.

3 - Interview

Candidates shortlisted for interview will be informed on or around **Wednesday 30 September 2026**.

Interviews are scheduled to take place in-person, at the Guild of Students, in early October. Each interview will comprise a short tour of the Guild building, the formal interview and opportunities to ask the panel questions.

Note: Dates and deadlines may be subject to change and candidates will be informed in advance should this happen. We will do everything we can do to accommodate your availability to attend an interview, within the limits of the panel's availability.

4 - Selection & Appointment

After interviews have concluded, Appointments Panel will make their selection and contact the successful candidate to offer them the role.

The successful candidate will be invited to attend the Guild for one or more induction sessions with the Guild's Chief Executive and the outgoing Chair of Trustees, who is due to conclude their term in office in October 2026.

It is intended that the successful candidate will attend the Board meeting on **Monday 2 November 2026**.

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need any additional information or would like to arrange an informal discussion, please contact hrteam@guild.bham.ac.uk





University of Birmingham
Guild of Students,
Edgbaston Park Road,
Birmingham,
B15 2TU