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**JOB DESCRIPTION and**

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

**Job title:** Student Communities Manager

**Department:** Student Engagement

**Salary:** Students’ Union Grade C (£32,713 to £36,109)

**Hours of work:** Full-time, 37.5 hours per week

**Responsible to:** TBA

**Responsible for:** Student Communities Advisor

3 x Student Communities Coordinators

**Preamble:**

Sunderland Students’ Union (Your SU) is at the final stages of the Democracy & Governance review due to complete early 2025. The review is being led by external consultants at Counterculture. The review has included consultation with Your SU Staff, university stakeholders and most importantly, students.

Current findings of the review are indicating the need for Your SU to make a clear shift from the more traditional styles of SU democracy, facilitating instead, a community organising model. This new vision forms a key part of our incoming strategic refresh 2025-28.

Community Organising within a Students’ Union context is the mobilisation of students to collectively address common issues or areas of passion e.g. catering on campus, housing crisis, environmental sustainability. It aims to foster a sense of community, belonging, and self-advocacy, both on and off campus.

The role of Student Communities Manager has been designed with this shift in mind, ahead of our new strategy 2025-28.

**Purpose of Role:**

Lead and manage the Student Communities team to increase and deepen student involvement with Your SU, ensuring that student issues, interest, and passion is harnessed and mobilised.

Drive the empowerment and involvement of student communities within academic courses, social interest and change making, utilising the community organising model.

Lead and manage the Student Communities team to provide ongoing support to students to initiate change within areas of self-interest at the university, locally, regionally and nationally.

Lead and manage Your SU governance and democracy mechanisms including the support of elected officers.

Led by data insight and student involvement, the role will provide policy development expertise, campaign planning, a range of social and academic societies, volunteering opportunities and lead Your SU’s democracy and governance processes.

This post will help build the Your SU brand and reputation as an evidence-based, influential organisation that genuinely makes a difference to the quality of students’ lives and University provision. The post holder will be fundamental in leading conversations with key stakeholders, to boost collaboration between the Union and University in terms of opportunities for our students.

**Accountabilities:**

The key accountabilities of the post holder will be:

* Enthusiastic advocate for student leadership, co-creation, and student mobilisation.
* Build a culture of empowerment, involvement, and activism whereby students, student leaders and volunteers are firmly at the heart of Your SU decision-making and representation to the university.
* An effective operational plan for student communities that will contribute to the overall delivery of the Your SU strategy.
* KPIs and targets set by the Board in relation to student communities are consistently met and within the agreed budget.
* A positive, high-performing and inclusive culture across the Student Communities team.
* Continuous and sustainable growth in engagement within Your SU opportunities, democracy, including elections, referenda and policy development.
* An outstanding academic representation system built on our students’ needs, recruited fairly, inducted, trained and supported to create change and improve the student experience.
* A framework, processes, and support to ensure student involvement opportunities can be undertaken inclusively and safely.
* High-quality development and recognition schemes to ensure that student leaders are developed and recognised for their contribution.
* Your SU can clearly articulate the impact of community organising and the student led activities therein i.e. campaigns, representation, policy, society activities, volunteering opportunities.
* A high standard of candidates nominating themselves for elected officer roles.

**Responsibilities and Duties:**

**Strategy**

* In conjunction with the Trustee Board and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), implement and monitor the relevant parts of the Your SU strategic plan, advising on short, medium, and long term operational improvements within the department.
* Work with the Head of Student Engagement & Insight to develop, design, implement and monitor the student communities departmental plan, including departmental KPIs.
* Ensure the effective use of research and insight to inform the development of student involvement.
* Ensure the work within the Student Communities team is constantly developing to improve accessibility, increase participation and remove barriers to engagement.
* Lead the design, delivery, and monitoring of annual election processes within Your SU.
* Support the Head of Student Engagement & Insight to gather critical information about our students and how best to implement across the Student Engagement team for future development.
* Work with Your SU in London to ensure wider strategic collaboration.

**Leadership and Management**

* Support, champion and role-model a high-performing, inclusive culture across Your SU.
* Ensure alignment between the work of the Student Communities team and our strategy – enabling the team to have a clear understanding of how they contribute to our mission and vision.
* Manage staff within the team effectively providing coaching, 1-2-1s, support and performance management in line with our performance framework.
* Effectively manage the resources of Your SU, including managing the activities of the department within agreed budgetary parameters.
* Lead collaboration work with university colleagues to boost engagement and involvement on campus.

**Delivery**

* Passionate about student engagement, leadership, and community building.
* Lead and drive a new vision towards a community organisation approach as it develops with Your SU.
* Seek to remove barriers to participation and ensure our democratic structures are accessible to the full student population.
* Oversee the coordination of development plans, governing documents, membership growth strategies and student led event planning, ensuring effective monitoring.
* Ensure officer elections are candidate focussed with robust processes to deliver a quality experience for both students and staff.
* Manage the Your SU elections processes, finding innovative ways of improving candidate understanding and quality alongside engagement from wider members in the nomination and voting process.
* Strong organisational skills, including the ability to plan, coordinate, and deliver multiple projects or events.
* Ensure the effectiveness of the course representation scheme, ensuring students receive training and support to succeed in their roles and evaluating their progress; work with these individuals to ensure that the feedback loop is closed.
* Ensure the effectiveness of the society’s framework for both academic and social based societies. Ensure students receive training and support to succeed in their roles and evaluating their progress.
* Ensure the effectiveness of the campaigns framework, utilising theory of change and change management systems to support students and elected officers succeed and learn from their experience. Evaluate this experience effectively and ensure feedback loops are closed where necessary.
* Utilising external relationships empower students and elected officers to influence public affairs and social change, beyond the direct remit of the University.
* Alongside the Student Experience Manager [Sunderland], ensure that data from the National Student Survey is analysed and used to improve the experiences of students across the University; through developing relationships with key stakeholders, identify areas of good practice and support departments which need improvement.
* Maintain existing membership, involvement, and participation data specific to student involvement.

**Relationships**

* Work with the elected officers to ensure there is a departmental focus in supporting them to achieve their manifesto points, in the delivery of their campaigns and ensuring they understand the importance of impact and evaluation.
* Develop strong links with university departments to support and enhance student communities to access support, facilities and resources across the University where required.
* Manage key long-term relationships within the University – particularly at senior academic level.
* Liaise with the Student Experience Team to promote involvement opportunities, democratic information and guidance on governance to students and university staff where relevant.
* Be the key contact with the university’s Head of Security concerning all matters related to student groups and guest speakers on campus.
* Maintain and establish positive relationships with key stakeholders, internally and externally, ensuring that they are aware of how we can support the University to achieve their joint objectives of meeting student needs.
* Effectively represent Your SU across all levels, attending meetings internally with the SU and university alongside external meetings with key stakeholders in the city, region and nationally.
* Act as the key link to Citizens UK, maintaining a positive relationship.
* Maintaininvolvement in, the five North East Student Union’s [Sunderland, Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria & Teesside].

**Compliance and Risk**

* Help ensure all activities within the Student Communities team are fully compliant with all Students’ Union and relevant University policy and legislation including Education Act, OfS regulations, Charity Commission, Health and Safety, GDPR, licensing, fundraising and are fully insured.
* Ensure excellent operating standards within community organising and campaigning including the use of external quality marks where appropriate.
* Ensure the team adheres to strict procedures relating to room bookings and external speakers.
* Ensure risk assessments are in place for all relevant student activity, both on and off campus.

**General**

* Help our elected officers achieve their manifesto commitments.
* Be enthusiastic advocates for student leadership and the organisation’s values.
* Be the key SU contact for academic relationships.
* To actively engage in student-facing projects and activities of all kinds as required.
* Maintain an up-to-date understanding of relevant legislation and trends affecting us or our members.
* Undertake appropriate training, including in relation to Health and Safety and compliance.
* Be administratively self-supporting.
* Conduct regular democracy reviews to ensure the Union is forward thinking in their approach.
* Maintain own professional networks and promote the Students’ Union on a local / national level.
* Any other associated or similar duties that may be necessary as determined by your manager.

**Person Specification:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Essential** | **Desirable** | **Method of assessment** | | | |
| **A** | **I** | **T/P** | **D** |
| **Qualifications** | | | | | | |
| Evidence of ongoing CPD. | ü |  | ü |  |  | ü |
| Relevant professional qualification (i.e. policy development, research, campaigning) or equivalent experience. | ü |  | ü |  |  |  |
| Educated to degree level standard. |  | ü | ü |  |  | ü |
| **Experience** | | | | | | |
| Line management. | ü |  | ü | ü |  |  |
| Working in a higher education, democratic, charity, community organising and/or campaigning organisation. |  | ü | ü |  |  |  |
| Substantial experience in a policy, campaigning or community organising role. | ü |  | ü | ü |  |  |
| Managing and coaching others to build high performance. | ü |  | ü | ü |  |  |
| Devising and implementing effective campaigns plans that have resulted in change. | ü |  | ü |  |  |  |
| Producing written reports and presentations to a high standard. | ü |  |  |  | ü |  |
| Developing, implementing and evaluating operational plans. |  | ü |  | ü | ü |  |
| Conducting risk assessments and coordinating budgets, financial systems and processes effectively. |  | ü |  |  |  |  |
| Organising and delivering engaging and effective training. | ü |  |  |  | ü |  |
| Managing relationships with a variety of stakeholders in order to build influence and create change. | ü |  |  | ü |  |  |
| Undertaking primary research in order to inform policy development. |  | ü |  | ü |  |  |
| Volunteer management and development. |  | ü |  | ü |  |  |

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| **Skills and Knowledge** | | | | | | |
|  | **Essential** | **Desirable** | **A** | **I** | **T/P** | **D** |
| Comprehensive knowledge of sector expectations, practices, and trends in student engagement including student opportunities and development. |  | ü | ü | ü | ü |  |
| Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate effectively in a variety of ways and situations (including group situations). | ü |  |  |  | ü |  |
| Confident IT skills including using Microsoft Office and use of a variety of digital technologies. | ü |  | ü | ü | ü |  |
| Excellent time management and organisational skills including consistency in meeting deadlines. | ü |  | ü | ü |  |  |
| Ability to motivate and engage team members to build a high-performing student communities' team. | ü |  | ü | ü |  |  |
| Ability to establish positive work relationships, working effectively in a team and independently. | ü |  | ü | ü |  |  |
| Ability to thrive in a busy, fast paced and change-driven environment. | ü |  |  | ü |  |  |
| Knowledge of community organisation |  | ü | ü | ü |  |  |
| Expertise in the production or management of resources to support volunteer activities. |  | ü |  | ü |  |  |
| Able to respond positively to challenging situations and solve problems quickly and creatively. | ü |  |  | ü |  |  |
| Good understanding of best practice in relation to training design, delivery and evaluation. |  | ü |  | ü |  |  |
| Knowledge of the role and activities of Students’ Unions. |  | ü |  | ü |  |  |
| **Values and Behaviours** | | | | | | |
| A demonstrable commitment to our organisational values. | ü |  |  | ü | ü |  |
| Strong commitment to, and understanding of, the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. | ü |  |  | ü | ü |  |
| Comfortable working in a democratic, student-led environment with the ability to empower and build constructive relationships with elected leaders. | ü |  |  | ü | ü |  |

**\*A = Application form, I = Interview, T/P = Test or Presentation, D = Documentary Evidence**

This job specification is non-contractual and is subject to alteration after consultation with the post holder.

**Reviewed:** November 2024