



University of  
Sunderland

# BOARD OF GOVERNORS ROLE



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE ROLE OF GOVERNOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND

## About the Board of Governors

Fundamentally, the Board of Governors ('the Board' or governing body) has ultimate responsibility for the University's mission, values and strategy, which is shaped and delivered by the Vice-Chancellor and the University Executive.

### As a governor, your key responsibilities are varied and would include:

- **Strategic oversight:** determining the educational character and mission of the University and for oversight of all its activities;
- **Financial oversight:** the financial sustainability and viability of the University;
- **Policy and governance:** approving key University policies and overseeing the governance framework to ensure it operates efficiently and in compliance with relevant laws and regulations;
- **Regulatory accountability:** upholding the higher education regulator's public interest governance principles and complying with its conditions of registration;
- **Appointment of senior leaders:** the appointment, remuneration and terms and conditions of the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the University Executive;
- **External relations:** engaging with external stakeholders as appropriate, to promote the University's interests and reputation.

## About the role

As a governor, you will work alongside a dedicated and engaged governing body which includes people with experience of higher education, industry, commerce and other professional backgrounds which align with the strategic ambitions of the University.

You will be supported by a committed Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive and University Executive team. In addition, you will have many opportunities to engage directly with our students, staff, external partners and stakeholders.

Governors are appointed for an initial three-year term of office and can be re-appointed for a maximum of another two three-year terms;

### You would also be expected to join at least one of the Board's committees:

- Finance, Development and Resources Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee
- People and Remuneration Committee
- Academic Assurance Committee



### This role is ideal for you, if you:

- **embrace the University's values** – collaborative, innovative, inclusive, inspiring and excellent;
- **commit personally and professionally** to the role of governor and want to contribute to the advancement of higher education, always acting in accordance with the accepted standards of behaviour in public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership);
- **are willing to be accountable** through your understanding of the Board's role and are willing to question and challenge on matters relating to educational and financial sustainability;
- **adopt a collaborative working style**, maintaining an active engagement with governance activities beyond planned meetings;
- **approach risk with balance**, demonstrating sound judgment when considering the implications of new or different initiatives;
- **are willing to engage across university locations** (when necessary) for meetings and discussions, and actively interact with a wide range of stakeholders to gain valuable insight into experiences across the University.;
- **adopt an engaging and supportive approach** in your relationships and interactions with students and staff;
- **develop a clear understanding** of the role and governance processes within a highly regulated and complex environment, including understanding the fiduciary duties of a trustee, promoting a culture of continuous improvement, and contributing openly and honestly to reviews of governance effectiveness;
- **are motivated to learn about the University's activities and culture**, actively seeking to connect with and contribute to a range of value-added and discretionary activities; and
- **are committed to promoting a positive culture** which supports ethical behaviours, and equality, diversity, and inclusion principles.

### Experience in one or more the following areas would be highly valued:

- **Higher education:** expertise at a senior level in university-level education, with an understanding of the UK higher education environment.
- **International:** knowledge of global education systems, international partnerships or cross-cultural business relationships.
- **Digital:** experience in digital transformation, particularly within an education sector.
- **Commercial:** a background in driving commercial initiatives or an understanding of the business side of education.
- **Entrepreneurial:** a proactive, innovative mindset with the experience and ability to create and support new ventures or initiatives.

### What will you gain from being a governor?

- The opportunity to directly contribute to the University's life-changing purpose.
- Being part of a dynamic and forward-thinking University, committed to student success, innovation, and contributing positively to the wider community.
- Making a difference to the local communities across the University's locations in Sunderland, London, and Hong Kong.
- Helping to shape the University's position within national and international education and through its research activity.
- Enjoying opportunities to be directly involved in a wide range of activities, including graduation ceremonies, degree shows, student events and strategic planning days.
- Benefiting from ongoing training and professional development opportunities to develop your personal and professional skills, knowledge, and experience.
- Sharing rewarding experiences with capable, committed and engaged colleagues.



## What do our governors say about their experience?

*“This is a dynamic, innovative and progressive University with campuses in Sunderland, London and Hong Kong. I have found being a governor immensely rewarding from both a learning and development prospective. Representing and supporting the University has been a great privilege.”*

*(Farooq Hakim - Chair of Board of Governors)*

*“Since joining as a governor, I have been able to develop a deeper understanding of the running of a large organisation at macro level and how the University and the local councils and communities work in concert for the betterment of the area. It is an enriching experience in terms of professional development, but it has also been an excellent opportunity to add to my skill-set and experience and to feel that my input is contributing to both the University and the area’s progression.”*

*(Ian Elliott - Staff Governor)*

*“I was interested in a university that engaged students through contextualised and project-based approaches, and which had a large, first-in-family cohort, and a community-anchored focus. I was also keen to join a university that improved the lives of people and businesses in the community. Seeing the outcomes of the students and being part of their journey has been an honour. In addition, helping, in some small way through monitoring progress, tracking metrics, and providing challenge for the Executive as a governor has been immensely satisfying.”*

*(Sara de Freitas - independent governor)*

*“I joined the Board late last year after a long career in the NHS. As a local, I was keen to contribute to the education and training of our young people and also to the economic regeneration of the area. With its London and international links, the University has a large reach and is very well managed despite all of the risks facing the higher education sector. I have been made very welcome by the Executive and fellow governors, and I am looking forward to a long and rewarding relationship.”*

*(Richard Barker - independent governor)*

## How to apply

If you are interested in becoming a governor and joining the University’s vibrant, collaborative environment, please send your CV and a covering letter outlining your motivation for applying, as well as your skills, knowledge and experience, to:

[talent.acquisition@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:talent.acquisition@sunderland.ac.uk)

Should you have any questions about the role, feel free to reach out, and we would be happy to arrange an informal conversation with Andrea Walters, Chief Operating Officer (and Clerk to the Board of Governors).

We value diversity and different life experiences, recognising that people from a wide variety of backgrounds bring valuable skills and knowledge. Therefore, please do not limit your reflections to professional roles alone—any relevant experience will be considered for the position.

We strive to create a welcoming and inclusive University community that recognises and respects the differences of all individuals. We particularly encourage applications from underrepresented groups or communities.

For more information on our ongoing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, please click here

[sunderland.ac.uk/about/equality-diversity-inclusion/](https://sunderland.ac.uk/about/equality-diversity-inclusion/)

## Selection process

The application window will close on 30 April 2025.

Candidates who meet the criteria outlined will be invited to a conversation with the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer (via Microsoft Teams) in early May.

The final stage will be an on-campus interview with the Chair of the Board and senior governors in late May/early June.

## Where can I find out more?

University of Sunderland - [sunderland.ac.uk/about/](https://sunderland.ac.uk/about/)

University Strategic Plan - [sunderland.ac.uk/about/about-the-university/how-university-managed/strategic-plan-supporting-statements/strategic-plan/](https://sunderland.ac.uk/about/about-the-university/how-university-managed/strategic-plan-supporting-statements/strategic-plan/)

Board of Governors - [sunderland.ac.uk/about/about-the-university/how-university-managed/leadership/board-of-governors/](https://sunderland.ac.uk/about/about-the-university/how-university-managed/leadership/board-of-governors/)





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[SUNDERLAND.AC.UK](http://SUNDERLAND.AC.UK)