



JOB DESCRIPTION

Student Communities Manager

Grade D: Departmental Manager

Reports to: Membership Services Manager

About Us

Our vision

A place for everyone, we inspire and empower students to change the world.

Our mission

At Reading Students' Union, we strive to help students be their most authentic selves. We celebrate the diverse backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences that make up our student body, and pride ourselves on creating spaces and opportunities where everyone feels they belong and are empowered to grow, thrive and achieve their goals.

Our strategic focus

We will:

- ✓ make data-informed decisions that reflect and respond to our students' realities and their evolving needs.
- ✓ deliver consistent, safe, and supportive services for students.
- ✓ provide opportunities for students to achieve balance and build meaningful connections.
- ✓ champion student futures and skills development.

Our 4 pillars of performance

1. ENTERPRISE & DEVELOPMENT
2. CLEARLY SIGNPOSTED STUDENT JOURNEYS
3. OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE
4. DATA DRIVEN INSIGHTS

Our Values

- ★ **AMBITIOUS**
we are trailblazers
- ★ **DELIBERATE**
we focus on the right things
- ★ **DISRUPTIVE**
rebellious spirit; pragmatic mind
- ★ **RESPONSIBLE**
a force for good
- ★ **OPTIMISTIC**
obstacles are the path

The role of a Grade D Departmental Manager

Leads a department, aligning delivery to priorities and turning strategy into action.

This job description is not an exhaustive list and may be subject to change. The post holder is expected to demonstrate flexibility, undertaking additional reasonable duties to support our mission and enhance the student experience.

Job Title: Student Communities Manager



Role purpose: *why the role exists*

To provide operational leadership for the Students' Union's approach to student-led communities, ensuring students can create, lead and participate in safe, inclusive and sustainable communities that enable connection, belonging and personal development.

The role holds departmental accountability for Student Communities, including people leadership, performance, governance, risk, budgets and continuous improvement. It will own and develop robust governance and assurance frameworks for student-led activity and continually identify new approaches to community-building, ensuring opportunities evolve in response to changing student needs and are not limited to traditional models of clubs, societies and volunteering.

Reports to: Membership Services Manager

Direct Reports: Societies Development Coordinator, Sports Development Coordinator, Community Engagement Coordinator, Student Staff Assistants

Role Responsibilities:

what the role 'does' within our strategy (the golden thread)

1. Enterprise & Development

(Brand, strategy, sector leadership, income generation, partnerships, innovation)

Strategy Delivery

- Translate organisational strategy into the annual departmental plan for Student Communities, setting clear objectives, delivery priorities, resource requirements and measures of success.
- Lead the development of the Students' Union's approach to student-led communities, identifying new and emerging ways for students to connect, organise, participate and build belonging beyond traditional sports clubs, societies and volunteering models.
- Lead the continuous development of the Student Communities service, using student insight, sector practice and innovation to improve and expand provision.
- Develop the long term capacity and sustainability of student-led communities, ensuring the Union's model continues to respond to changing student needs and patterns of participation.

	Volunteering & Community Engagement • Set the departmental approach to volunteering and community engagement, ensuring opportunities are safe, impactful and responsive to student interests and community need. • Build key relationships with community organisations and develop opportunities for students to contribute to causes, develop skills and build meaningful connections with the wider Reading community. Partnerships & Influence • Alongside the Membership Services Manager, build and maintain key relationships with senior University stakeholders, SportsPark, national governing bodies, BUCS, community organisations, funders and other partners. • Identify and develop partnerships, funding opportunities and sustainable models that increase the reach, quality and impact of student-led communities. • Represent the Students' Union on relevant University and external groups, influencing decisions and advocating for the conditions, resources and infrastructure required for student communities to thrive. Organisational Development • Lead significant departmental development projects and contribute to major cross-organisational initiatives as a member of the Membership Services management team.
2. Student Journeys <i>(Advocacy, campaigns, democracy, belonging, events)</i>	Access, Participation & Belonging • Ensure students can easily understand how to join, create, lead and develop sports clubs, societies, volunteering opportunities and other student-led communities. • Lead the development of approaches that reduce barriers to participation and improve belonging for underrepresented and underserved student groups. • Ensure the Student Communities offer provides meaningful opportunities for students to connect, develop skills, lead others and shape their student experience. Student Leadership & Development • Set the framework for a consistent and high-quality student leader journey, from establishing or adopting a community through to leadership, development and succession. • Oversee the development of training, resources and support frameworks that enable student leaders to understand their

	responsibilities, govern their groups effectively and provide safe, inclusive and sustainable opportunities. • Champion student leadership and ensure students have meaningful opportunities to shape the development of the Student Communities service. Service Quality & Student Experience • Set clear service standards and development pathways for sports clubs, societies, volunteering and other student-led communities, ensuring effective delivery through the Student Communities team. • Use escalated feedback, complaints and complex student group issues to identify systemic barriers and improve the student experience. • Ensure major Student Communities programmes and events contribute to clear organisational outcomes and are effectively integrated into the wider student journey.
3. Operational Excellence (Governance, leadership, people management, delivery, compliance, systems, efficiencies)	Departmental Leadership & Accountability • Hold overall accountability for the performance, quality and effective management of the Student Communities department. • Make accountable departmental decisions on priorities, resource allocation, service standards and operational responses, escalating matters where organisational or strategic authority is required. • Lead delivery through the Student Communities team, setting clear accountabilities and empowering Coordinators to own specialist services, programmes and operational delivery. • Contribute to operational leadership across Membership Services, working with other managers to resolve cross-departmental issues and deliver Directorate priorities. • Lead departmental change and service improvement, ensuring changes are effectively planned, communicated, implemented and evaluated. • Maintain a clear and effective departmental operating model, ensuring responsibilities are allocated at the appropriate level across managers, Coordinators and student staff. People, Resources & Performance • Line manage, develop and hold accountable the Student Communities team, including responsibility for recruitment, induction, probation, performance management, development, wellbeing and the appropriate management of conduct or capability concerns.

	• Set departmental priorities and allocate staff, student staff, budgets and other resources according to organisational objectives, student need, risk and service demand. • Own departmental workforce planning and budgets, monitoring financial performance and ensuring resources are used effectively and provide value for money. • Establish clear service standards, performance expectations and quality assurance arrangements across the department. • Maintain oversight of the annual Student Communities cycle, ensuring major deadlines, events, affiliations and periods of operational demand are effectively planned and resourced. Student Group Governance & Assurance • Own the governance framework for student groups, ensuring constitutions, affiliations, elections, financial controls, codes of conduct, risk management and accountability arrangements are robust, proportionate and consistently applied. • Act as the organisational expert for complex student group governance matters, advising colleagues and senior leaders on constitutional, regulatory and procedural issues. • Lead the development, review and implementation of departmental policies, procedures, standards and governance frameworks. • Hold departmental accountability for safeguarding, health and safety, welfare, financial controls and risk management across student-led activities, ensuring appropriate systems of assurance, escalation and mitigation are in place. • Oversee the fair, consistent and timely management of membership complaints, conduct concerns and disciplinary matters, ensuring compliance with relevant byelaws, policies and procedures. • Own the governance and assurance framework for student media, including the media charter, accountability arrangements, editorial independence, organisational responsibilities and appropriate risk controls. Major Projects & Events • Hold overall accountability for Varsity, setting the project framework, governance, resources and delivery expectations, with
--	--

	operational delivery undertaken through the team and project partners. • Lead Student Communities delivery and assigned workstreams within major organisational projects and events, including Welcome and the SU Awards. • Ensure major Student Communities projects and events are effectively planned, resourced, governed and evaluated.
4.Data Driven Insights (Strategic planning, research, innovation, impact evaluation, engagement, communication)	Performance & Assurance • Establish and monitor departmental KPIs covering participation, inclusion, student leadership, service quality, governance, safety, financial sustainability and student outcomes. • Analyse participation, demographic, financial, operational and feedback data to assess departmental performance and identify risks, gaps and opportunities. • Produce regular performance, impact and assurance reports for the Membership Services Manager, Director of Membership Services and relevant organisational governance bodies. Insight-Led Development • Use student insight and evidence to shape the development of student-led communities and identify new models of participation and belonging. • Ensure departmental decisions and investment priorities are informed by reliable evidence rather than historic practice alone. • Benchmark performance and practice against the wider sector, identifying opportunities for innovation and improvement.
Role KPIs	• Delivery of the annual Student Communities plan and agreed departmental objectives. • Effective departmental performance against agreed service standards, KPIs and budget parameters. • Strong governance, compliance and assurance across student-led communities. • Measurable improvement in participation, inclusion and belonging. • Evidence of new or improved models of student-led community developed in response to student need.

	• Effective leadership, performance and development of the Student Communities team. • Successful delivery and governance of Varsity and assigned major organisational projects. • Evidence that insight, feedback, complaints and evaluation result in meaningful service and organisational improvement.
--	--

Competency Matrix: what good performance looks like (by grade)

Guide: this Core Competency Matrix below defines *how success is demonstrated –across our pillars of performance- for all Grade D Departmental Managers - regardless of role specifics.*

CORE COMPETENCY MATRIX (Grade D Manager)				
LEVEL	Leader			
WHAT THIS LEVEL DOES	LEADS			
HOW THEY OPERATE	"Leads work and makes clear, accountable decisions"			
Reporting line	E-FF			
HOW THE ROLE CREATES VALUE	Leads a department, aligning delivery to priorities and turning strategy into action			
CULTURE	All activities must demonstrate our values and Culture Code in how we act and deliver			
Pillar 1: ENTERPRISE & DEVELOPMENT	Pillar 2 CLEARLY SIGNPOSTED STUDENT JOURNEYS	Pillar 3 OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE	Pillar 4 DATA DRIVEN INSIGHTS	
Turns strategy into action	Leads teams to deliver seamless experience and create student opportunities	Leads delivery and owns team performance and standards	Uses insight to drive team performance and service improvement	
Turns strategy into clear departmental plans and delivery	Puts student impact first. Always.	Leads day to day team delivery - owns solutions not problems	Uses insight to drive performance and improve services	
Drives growth, innovation and meaningful partnerships	Delivers in real partnership with elected student leaders- making change happen	Manages a high-performing, accountable team. No passengers	Focuses on meaningful outcomes, not just activity	
Aligns people, resources and priorities to maximize impact	Champions student voice through democratic structures and action	Communicates with clarity and confidence-no silos, no gatekeeping, no gossip	Tracks performance, challenges issues and takes action quickly	
Contributes as an active and visible member of the management team to support change and share information	Leads team to deliver high impact student experiences	Operates within governance, managing risk without slowing progress	Communicates insight clearly and drives visible improvement	
		Drives efficiency, quality, and continuous improvement with strong SOPs	Builds a team culture of accountability and evidence-based decision-making	
KPIs to measure success				
1. Strong compliance with governance, policies, and procedures				
2. Delivery of departmental objectives in line with organisational strategy				
3. Demonstrable service impact and continuous improvement				
4. Effective team performance and engagement with good professional boundaries				
5. Strong stakeholder feedback				



Person Specification: what to hire for

Student Communities Manager

	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
QUALIFICATIONS	• Educated to degree level or equivalent relevant professional experience.	• Management or leadership qualification • Relevant professional qualification in areas such as governance, volunteer management, community development or project management.
EXPERIENCE	• Significant experience leading and developing student communities, membership services or comparable provision. • Experience holding accountability for the performance and development of a service or department, including people, resources and outcomes. • Experience managing complex governance, conduct, complaints or high-risk operational matters. • Experience leading large-scale, multi-stakeholder projects. • Experience managing budgets and resources.	• Experience in managing, supervising or leading others. • Experience within a Students' Union/charity or membership organisation • Experience of student groups, volunteering or community engagement • Experience of major events and/or student media
KNOWLEDGE	• Health and safety, safeguarding and risk management within activities, events or community settings. • Inclusion, data protection and sustainability practices. • Strong knowledge of governance and accountability	• Knowledge of the Students' Union sector • Understanding of Higher Education structures and student representation • Knowledge of BUCS, NGBs or student media governance

	within member-led, volunteer-led or student-led organisations, including constitutions, elections, conduct and disciplinary frameworks.	
SKILLS	• Departmental planning and operational management • People leadership/management • Organisation, planning and prioritisation • Problem-solving and decisions • Communication and stakeholder working • Basic data and systems (M365) and digital tools • Risk management • Strong numeracy and literacy (spoken and written) • Budget and resource management • Performance analysis and reporting • Ability to interpret and apply complex governance frameworks, policies and procedures.	• Process improvement/SOP development • Networking and partnership development
APPROACH	• Leadership mindset • Student focused • A champion of our brand and values driven Culture Code • High standards • Proactive, collaborative and solutions-focused • Resilient • Flexible (including occasional evenings and weekends to support events)	• Passionate about the SU sector and our charitable purpose

	• Confident managing challenging and difficult situations.	
--	--	--