

Representation Community Support RAG
Condoms Access Libraries Supervision Colleges
Finances Living Out LGBTQ Charities BME
Volunteering Target Schools Campaigning
Sustainability Ethics Gender Equality Common
Rooms Academics Women's Officers Welfare
Enough! Safety Bus Sexual Health Wear it Pink

Winning for Students

Finals Forums Postgraduate Assembly Parents
Environment Mature Students Council Elections
Democracy Graduates Participation Delivering
Change Flair and Drive Funding and Fees
Accountability Confidentiality Student Advice
Service Freshers' Fair Well-Being Week LadyFest
International Students Festival Shadowing
Scheme Tuition Fees Academic Feedback
Affiliation Back Yourself 10:10 Springboard Night
Safety Accommodation Information Advice
Collaboration Influence Student Newspaper
Oxide Handbooks Training Workshops Events
Diversity

Sabbatical Candidates' Handbook



Oxford University Student Union

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Glossary

CR – Common Room

CROs – Common Room Officers

JCR – Junior Common Room (typically undergraduates)

MCR – Middle Common Room (typically graduates)

NUS – National Union of Students

RO – Returning Officer; the person who oversees and administers the elections

Hustings – events for candidates to make brief speeches to explain why they're running and students can pose questions to the candidates.

If you would like this handbook in an alternative format, please contact the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) on welfare@ousu.org.

The need for a strong students' union

Colleges can chuck out students for their prelims results, even if students in other colleges, with identical results, will be supported and thrive.

The help you get depends on the college you go to, financially, academically and socially.

Students who pay the same fees will get different quality of supervisors.

Students aren't automatically consulted on issues that affect their lives.

Female students, in some subjects, are less likely to get a first than their male colleagues.

Students are more likely than Oxford residents to be victims of crime.

Every year thousands of talented students don't apply to Oxford because they think 'somewhere like Oxford isn't for someone like me.'

Dodgy landlords take particular advantage of students.

When it comes to tuition fees, students have to fight to be heard.

...and that's not even half of it.

Students need a strong voice
in the University, in Oxford and
nationally.

What are you going to do about it?

It's unlike any other graduate job

You get to spend your day working on issues you're passionate about

You get to work on challenging projects from day one, and have a real impact

You have access to seriously influential people

There is no better way to develop new skills

You can make lasting improvements to the student experience

Beyond the core work, you can choose projects that interest you and play to your strengths

You're your own boss

It will be a while before you're this important again(!)

Why be a sabbatical officer?

Is being a sabbatical officer for me?

It's an exciting and challenging job, but it's not for everyone. Here are some traits of successful sabbatical teams:

Willingness to campaign on issues that matter to students

Commitment to strong student representation

Ability to cope with demanding jobs

Good communication skills

Relishing a challenge

Determination

Confidence

Enthusiasm

Resilience

Initiative

Energy

There's no such thing as a 'typical sab.'
Sabbatical officers come from diverse backgrounds and have different experiences that make them suitable for their jobs.

Your contract

- A sabbatical officer's year starts in 9th Week of Trinity Term, and finish one year later, with an additional fortnight for handover
- The salary is approximately £1180 per month after tax
- The contracted hours are 37.5 per week, usually 10-6 Monday-Friday.
 - NB: Many events and campaigns take place outside of these hours.
- Holiday allowance is 26 days per year, plus standard holidays (e.g. bank holidays, Christmas)
- The working hours are quite flexible (e.g. if you need to start early and leave early on one day).

Student Advice Service

The Student Advice Service is a confidential, free and impartial service for students, providing information, advice and advocacy. The Service works with individual students on a range of issues, from unplanned pregnancy and financial problems to harassment and academic problems. This 'casework' takes approximately 10-40% of a sabbatical officer's time (varying for different officers). More than 300 students were seen in 2009-10.

Four of the sabbatical officers are members of the Student Advice Service: Welfare and Equal Opportunities, Access and Academic Affairs, Graduates and Women, and they work alongside the permanent Student Advisor.

Officers are not expected to have pre-existing knowledge – this is part of the training to be on the Service. Officers are typically expected to undertake listening skills training after they are elected but before they start. This is not an official requirement. It is advisable to train with Nightline before running, to get an insight into this aspect of sabbaticals' portfolios.

Contact welfare@ousu.org or advice@ousu.org if you have any questions about the Student Advice Service.

Role Description: VP (Women)

Primary Responsibilities:

- Representing students on University committees and working groups related to gender equality or female specific welfare concerns
- Formulating policy on gender equality and related issues for OUSU and implementing it
- Running campaigns to promote gender equality across the University, in the city of Oxford and in the UK.
- Supporting common room officers and exec officers (mainly women's officers and equal opportunities officers, but also female welfare officers and common room presidents) through training, information, one-to-one support and advice.
- Being a member of the Student Advice Service and taking casework on topics that fall in the VP(Women) portfolio – Disordered Eating, Unplanned Pregnancy, Student Parents, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Harassment

Recent Projects

- Springboard for Undergraduates – (Academic year 09/10) – a project to launch the pilot of Springboard for Undergraduates. Springboard is a personal and professional development programme for women.
- Well-Being Week – (Hilary 2010) - a week dedicated to promoting a positive attitude towards mental health (organised with the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities).
- Support for Supporters – a twice-termly group for students whose friends or loved ones have difficulties with food or body image (run with the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities).
- Thirst Lodge Campaign – (Hilary 2010) – campaigned with students and community groups to get the lap dancing licence revoked.

You should run for this job if...

You care about gender equality and you want to spend a year working towards creating a more equal community here at Oxford; you want to support students and ensure that they have as good an experience of Oxford as possible; you want to gain some incredible experience working in a team, in a job that has a lot of responsibility, potential and possibilities.

Find out more:

Get in touch!

- Kat Wall (until July) / Katharine Terrell (from July) – women@ousu.org
- Lisa Stokes-King (Student Advisor) – advice@ousu.org
- Rachel Cummings (VP Women, 2008/09) – rachings@gmail.com

Role Description: VP (Access & Academic Affairs)

Primary Responsibilities

- Representing students on upwards of 20 University decision-making bodies related to education policy, admissions policy, access and strategic planning.
- Caseworker for the Student Advice Service, specialising in undergraduate educational issues.
- Supporting Common Room Officers (primarily Presidents, Access Reps and Academic Affairs Reps) and Divisional Board representatives through training, briefings, information and individual advice and assistance.
- Producing publications and information (e.g. the Alternative Prospectus & contributing to other publications).
- Acting as a point of contact for the collegiate university when they engage students on the quality of their education or access work.
- Supporting the work of 'Target Schools', Oxford's largest access campaign.
- Supporting Executive Officers with related portfolios (e.g. helping with regional access conferences and organising Finals Forums)

Recent Projects

- Successfully lobbying the university for a review of published marking criteria for undergraduates (Hilary 2010).
- Campaigning for improved complaints & appeals procedures across colleges and the university (2009/10)
- Leading on the higher education funding campaign including producing student responses to the Browne Review (Hilary & Trinity 2010)
- Successfully campaigning for colleges to improve the information they provide to prospective applicants (Trinity 2010)
- Working with the university on improving degree ceremonies (Michaelmas 2009)
- Co-ordinating a student response to the university's response to its review of its teaching model (Trinity 2010)

You should run for this job if...

You're hard-working and want to improve how students experience Oxford and are willing to speak out to make this happen. You are committed to fair access to the university and want to engage students on this issue.

You should think carefully about running for this job if...

You don't want to read very long agendas for incredibly long meetings.

Find Out More

Get in touch!

- Jonny Medland (until July) / Alex Bulfin (from July) – access@ousu.org
- Lisa Stokes-King (Student Advisor) – advice@ousu.org
- Paul Dwyer (VP AAA 2008-09) – paul.dwyer@education.ox.ac.uk

Role Description: Vice-President (Welfare & Equal Opportunities)

Primary Responsibilities

- Representing students on University committees and working groups related to student welfare or diversity/equality
- Manager of the Student Advice Service, and line manager for the Student Advisor; caseworker for the Student Advice Service
- Supporting Common Room Officers (primarily Welfare Officers, but also Equal Opportunities/Diversity officers, Accommodation Officers and Common Room Presidents) through training, meetings and advice
- Producing publications and information (e.g. Living Out Guide)
- Supporting three of the Equal Opportunities campaigns: LGBTQ Campaign, Student with Disabilities Campaign and Campaign for Cultural and Racial Awareness and Equality
- Campaigning on issues and topics related to Welfare of Equality of Opportunity
- Supporting Executive Officers with related portfolios (e.g. helping with Queer History Month)

Recent Projects

- Freshers' Week Buddying Scheme (Michaelmas 2009) - for students with Aspergers Syndrome
- Working with the University to improve the quality of sexual health and family planning provision in colleges.
- Well-Being Week (Hilary 2010) – a week dedicated to promoting a positive attitude towards mental health (run with the VP (Women))
- Chinese Nightline (ongoing project) – seeking to set up an additional listening and information service in Mandarin

You should run for this job if...

You care about students' experience at University beyond their academic work, and are passionate about promoting an Oxford where students are equally respected, valued and able to achieve, regardless of their background.

You should think carefully about running for this job if...

You care so much that you can't cope with distressing stories from individual students; you dislike making difficult or unpleasant decisions; you don't like to take the lead on projects and dislike making difficult decisions.

Find Out More

Get in touch!

- Dani Quinn (until July) / Tom Perry (from July) - welfare@ousu.org
- Lisa Stokes-King (Student Advisor) – advice@ousu.org
- Louise Randall (WEO, 2007-08) - randall.louise@gmail.com

Role Description: VP (Charities & Community)

Primary Responsibilities

- Representing students on university committees – SRI, committee, Environmental panel, Sustainable Steering group, domestic bursars environment sub committee.
- Supporting Common Room Officers (Charity reps, RAG reps and Environment and Ethics committee) producing handbooks, have regular meet-ups with officers, helping with motions and best practice, giving advice.
- Support RAG and Environment and Ethics committee as another member of the Exec, help with administration and treasury role as well as university liaison.
- Campaigning on Environmental and Ethical issues
- Representing students to the city and county council – by attending Neighbourhood Action Groups, meeting councillors, attending appropriate council meetings
- Community engagement – working with such as neighbourhood safety partnerships, community, the police, community and neighbourhoods office, OCVA
- Working with OxHub and other student groups to get students involved in volunteering
- Supporting Exec officers with their own projects

Recent Projects

- Volunteering Fair (Hilary 2010) in conjunction with city council and OxHub
- Big Brother Big sister (trinity 2009 – expanded Michaelmas 2010) - a student team of mentors who do activity days with children in care in Oxfordshire
- 10:10 (Michaelmas 2009) – The University should sign up this term, so this will need to be a continuous campaign to make sure we reach that target!
- 350 rally (Michaelmas 2009) – MPs, students and Oxford residents came together for this climate change campaign
- Community Engagement (ongoing) - This is going to become a very important part of the role now that funding has changed (in October 2010 it will no longer be focused on volunteering).

You should run for this job if...

You're passionate about the environment or students' contribution to the community, but are willing to throw yourself into a range of issues and projects.

You should think carefully about running for this job if...

You like a defined workload: this job is very much about coming up with your own job description; you are focused on 'students for students' issues.

Find out more

Get in touch!

- Eorann Lean (until July) / Daniel Lowe (from July) – charities@ousu.org
- Jack Wellby (VP C&C 2008-09)

Role Description: VP (Graduates)

Primary responsibilities

- Representing graduate interests on over 20 University committees and working groups, including University Council, Education Committee and the colleges' Graduate Committee
- Member of the Student Advice Service specialising in supporting graduate students with academic problems.
- Working with Graduate Common Room Presidents and other officers to further the interests of graduate students and provide support and advice.
- Providing information to graduate students about issues and developments affecting them, support available to them etc – through the website, OUSU publications and maillists.
- Consulting with graduates to find out what they think of their Oxford education and campaigning to improve their experience here.

Recent projects

- Oxford Graduate Student Experience – survey of graduate students on their academic experience, college facilities and interaction of OUSU – will be used to prioritise campaigning in future and results will be taken to the University as appropriate
- Campaigning on proposals to introduce 4th year fees for DPhil students, highlighting need to improve supervision rather than raise fees.
- Introducing a graduate page on the OUSU website containing information about course progression, making complaints etc
- Lobbying to increase the availability of University graduate accommodation, particularly for 1st years, international students and parents.

You should run for this job if...

You're motivating by supporting people fighting to defend their interests, meeting new and varied challenges and working as part of a dedicated and enthusiastic team.

You should think carefully about this job if...

You find working through committee meetings frustrating. The University has a fascinating bureaucracy but it can be challenging to deal with the slow pace of progress.

Find out more:

Get in touch!

- Sarah Hutchinson (until July)/Beth Evans (from July) graduates@ousu.org
- Lisa Stokes-King (Student Advisor) welfare@ousu.org
- Graduate part-exec members www.ousu.org/about/who

Role Description: President

Primary Responsibilities

- Providing overall coordination, management and direction for OUSU.
- Representing students to the University and outside world.
- Managing the sabbatical team and the OUSU General Manager.
- Being politically responsible for finances, governance and legal issues.
- Coordinating campaigning.
- Coordinating support and training for Common Room presidents.
- Being the public face of the organisation and liaise with the media.
- Liaising with a variety of organisations, including NUS, Aldwych Group (Russell Group Student Unions), Cambridge University Student Union, and Oxford Brookes Student Union.

Recent Projects

- Urgent Challenges: the campaign to change OUSU's funding and get a block grant
- Incorporation and charitable registration: changes to governance to facilitate a new legal structure and registration with the Charity Commission
- Come Clean on Fees and Funding Our Future
- Upcoming rent support for Common Rooms
- Coordination and delivery of training for common room presidents. This year this has included day-long training sessions delivered by NUS, McKinsey, and London Citizens.

You should run for this job if...

You are interested in a challenging job that involves meeting competing demands, providing leadership and support for others, and delivering on student interests.

You should think carefully about running for this job if...

You can't cope with public criticism or with taking responsibility for challenging problems, or you don't enjoy public speaking.

Find Out More

Get in touch!

- Stefan Baskerville (until July) / David Barclay (from July) – president@ousu.org
- Lewis Iwu (President 2008-09)

Find out more, develop your ideas

- Speak to the incumbents. We won't tell other students, particularly other candidates (!), about your plans to run, or share your ideas with others.
- Speak to past officers.
- Speak to part-time Exec officers who have related roles.
- Read officers' Reports to Council (available on the OUSU website). These give a good overview of what the jobs have entailed over the past three years.
- Look up old manifesto booklets, to see how past candidates have promoted themselves. Contact the Returning Officer, on ro@ousu.org, to see them.
- Come to meetings of the equal opportunities campaigns or other campaigns of OUSU (e.g. attend LGBTQ Council if you are interested in Welfare & Equal Opportunities, or come to a RAG meeting if you are interested in Charities & Community). Email diversity@ousu.org to be added to the mailing-lists, or ask the incumbent to do so.
- Visit www.officeronline.co.uk, the NUS website for student officers. There are sections dedicated to specific roles. Be sure to check the graduates section, regardless of the position that interests you – all sabbatical officers represent both graduate and undergraduate students.
- If you are interested in a role on the Student Advice Service, train with Nightline. It's a rewarding experience in its own right, but will also offer valuable insights into students' experiences.
- Speak to Common Room Officers about what support they want – don't just speak to presidents, but also welfare officers, academic affairs officers, etc.

OUSU's Elections: Rules for Running

Running in OUSU's elections can be time-consuming but is also very rewarding. Having a chance to communicate your ideas to voters is what elections are all about and OUSU's election rules are designed to do that while ensuring a level playing field. The election rules can be found at <http://www.ousu.org/democracy/ousu-governing-documents/>. The relevant bits are Article D of the Constitution and Section C of the Standing Orders. It's essential if you do run that you've read and understand the rules - the Returning Officer will be there to answer questions which you have but ignorance of the rules won't be an excuse if you break them! Some important points when you're still deciding to run are:

- * Slates. Slates are 'teams' of candidates who run together and are allowed to campaign for each other. If you're a candidate but are not on a slate with someone then you're not allowed to support their candidacy in any way other than voting for them. Up until 2008 candidates for sabbatical positions weren't allowed to run on slates with one another. In the last couple of years that's been different but it's still very possible to win if you're not on a slate - 2009 saw a candidate running by themselves beat a candidate who was on a very large slate. Slates can include up to 3 sabbatical candidates, 6 candidates for the part-time Executive (of which one must be a graduate candidate) and 6 NUS delegates.
- * Activists. Anyone who is campaigning for you or your slate in any way must be registered as an activist. Activism is 'support in word or deed' for a candidate - this includes anything from putting up posters to standing around all day talking to possible voters. Registering activists is necessary to ensure that candidates who aren't on the same slate are not colluding with each other - if this rule didn't exist then it would be impossible for voters to know which candidates were running together and which weren't.
- * Expenditure. To prevent the OUSU elections become a spending battle there are strict expenditure limits on publicity which must be followed. All publicity is produced at a specified print shop which the Returning Officer monitors. All printed publicity is stamped with an OUSU logo held in the print shop so that the Returning Officer can easily monitor what is 'official' publicity. There are spending limits for individual candidates (£130 per sabbatical or £50 per candidate for any other role) although these change for slates - each additional sabbatical candidate per slate brings a further £10 to that slate and each Exec or NUS delegate brings £5. This is to prevent large slates accruing a huge financial advantage. Rule-breaking can be penalised either by the Returning Officer fining candidates proportions of their publicity budget or fining candidates part of their deposits.
- * Emails. Although OUSU has recently liberalised its rules around the use of Facebook and other electronic media in election campaigns there are still rules around emails and Facebook messages to prevent voters receiving large numbers of unsolicited emails. Any email or Facebook message about the election must be sent to a maximum of 5 people at a time unless they are activists (this is a reason to sign up everyone who might be doing anything - however minimal - in support of your candidacy).
- * Media. A frequent way of breaking the rules is to appear in the media (either Oxford or national) after nominations open without the prior permission of the Returning Officer. This rule is well policed and very visible - it's there to prevent candidates with friends in the media getting an artificial advantage and to ensure that everyone can be interviewed by the student press on equal terms. If you need to appear in the media for another reason then the Returning Officer can give permission.

Common Questions

Do I need to run on a slate?

Only if you want to, and think it would be helpful. Slates with more than one sabbatical officer have only existed for two years, so it's hard to know how important they are. Independent candidates have won against candidates on slates, and vice-versa. Being on a slate is helpful for some aspects of organisation but can also be stressful, and is more demanding in many ways. If you are uncertain, speak to current sabbatical officers about their experiences of being on a slate or running independently.

Hustings in my college are really intimidating. Are OUSU hustings the same?

This depends on what aspect of husting intimidates you. You will probably hust in front of many people you have never met. However, it is strictly forbidden to introduce alcohol, humiliating challenges or questions, or to clap, cheer or boo during OUSU hustings. Although it may be daunting, every effort is made to ensure it is a fair process for all candidates.

Do I need to have been a Common Room president?

No! Many types of experience and background are valuable for roles at OUSU. Although JCR Presidents often run for roles, non-Common Room Presidents have also been very successful in all the positions, including President. If you're worried about having enough relevant experience, check the 'Find Out More' section, or speak to a current sabbatical officer in confidence.

What if I'm not the best candidate for the job?

The most important thing to think about when considering becoming a sabbatical officer is if you think you would enjoy doing the job. Many students have this concern especially those who haven't had an elected position before. But the best way to ensure you are a good candidate is to speak to the incumbent.

I'm confused by the rules around running. Where can I get impartial advice?

Contact the Returning Officer, on ro@ousu.org, for confidential and impartial advice and information about the elections.

Beyond Sabbatical Roles

Sabbatical officers are only a small part of the work that OUSU does. You can run for part-time positions on the OUSU Executive. These are unpaid positions, similar to being on one's CR Committee, and the term is for a year. The positions and incumbents are:

Health and Welfare Officer - Eleanor Hafner (St Catherine's)
Access and Admissions Officer - Nathan Jones (St Catz)
Academic Affairs Campaign Officer - Hannah Cusworth (Brasenose)
Women's Officer - Yuan Yang (Balliol)
Rent and Accommodation Officer - Charlotte Carnegie (Wadham)
International Students Officer: Xiaowei Xu (University)
Common Room Liaison Officer - Jack Matthews (St. Peter's)
Environment and Ethics Officer - Ben West (St Anne's)
Community Outreach and Charities Officer - Claire Handel (Hertford)
Students with Disabilities Officer - Danielle Fraser Solomon (The Queen's)
Black and Minority Ethnic Students and Anti-Racism Officer - Matthew Tye (Exeter)
LGBTQ Officer - Jasper Minton-Taylor (St John's)
Mature Students Officer - Rainbow Chang (Wycliffe Hall)
Graduate Academic Affairs Officer - Ian Lyons (St Edmund Hall)
Graduate International Students Officer - Deeksha Sharma (Exeter)
Graduate Welfare Officer - David Bowe (Somerville)
Graduate Women's Officer - Nishma Deol (Linacre)

There are many other elected positions, which are elected in OUSU Council (the decision-making body of OUSU) – check the OUSU Council agenda to see which ones are available. Contact your CR President or chair@ousu.org if you have questions about OUSU Council.

OUSU also has many committees and campaigns. Details of these can be found on the OUSU website. Email enquiries@ousu.org to be added to the mailing list for a campaign, and find out when meetings and events are taking place. The permanent campaigns are:

Women's Campaign
Campaign for Cultural and Racial Awareness and Equality
Campaign for Students with Disabilities
LGBTQ Campaign
Mature Students' Campaign
International Students' Campaign
RAG (Raise and Give – fundraising for charitable causes)
Environment and Ethics
Target Schools (increasing access to Oxford)