

SU Governance Symposium

NCVO

nus charity
national union of **students**

Tuesday 7 July
Liverpool Guild

Time	NCVO Stream	Sector stream
9.30 - 9:50	Opening plenary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Welcome from NUS · Key governance updates and reflections on the specifics of SU governance 	
10.00-10.50	Introduction to the SU Governance Code <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Summary of the Code · Review of the development process · Highlight specifics of the SU version Mo Wiltshire (NCVO) & Richard Whitmill (Counter Culture Partnership LLP)	Peer review in SU Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understand the structure and purpose of a collaborative Board Peer Review model · Explore practical approaches to fostering reflective board culture & improvement · Reflect on how this can support sector-wide learning and development. Aidan Grills and Matt Broadey (LUU)
11.00-11.50	Running a governance evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What to look for in good governance · Using the SU governance code as a model · External review options Aggie Taylor (NCVO)	Values & ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understand how values can be embedded into board decision-making · Be able to recognise when governance culture undermines values · Feel more confident making values-led decisions when under pressure, within legacy cultures or gaps in board diversity Sam Harris (Sam Harris Consulting)
12.00-12.50	Making impact work for you: Practical approaches for SUs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What is impact measurement and why does it matter for SUs, including SORP reporting obligations? · Foundations for good impact practice · Building systems that work for your context · Using impact data to influence decisions and demonstrate your value Sarah Menzies (NCVO)	Governing a group structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of trading subsidiaries • Managing conflicts of interests Mark Abbott (Bates Wells)

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13.00-14.00	Lunch & networking (sponsored by Howden)	
14.00-14.50	Panel discussion – the governance of clubs & societies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · NCVO chair (Mo Wiltshire) · Bates Wells (Mark Abbott) · Charity Commission (Holly Riley) 	
15.00-15.50	SU governance and political activity (in partnership with Bates Wells) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Allowable activity under standard objects · Reporting and addressing concerns · Practical approaches to ethical decision making Hannah Pudner (NCVO), Mark Abbott (Bates Wells)	How risk appetite can support your board to have better conversations about change You will leave: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Having a better understanding of risk appetite frameworks and how this links to decision making -Having an appreciation of how this influences your board's attitude to change -Having some tools to identify what conversations your board is not having and why Annie Wilmott (Imperial College Union) & Jacqui Clements (Jacqui Clements Consulting Ltd)
16.00-16.50	Board culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Developing a high support, high challenge culture · Practical tools for supporting your CEO Mo Wiltshire (NCVO) & Jacqui Clements (Jacqui Clements Consulting Ltd)	Delivering democracy in practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understanding trustees' legal and moral duties for democracy · What trustees can do to support and develop students. Nick Smith (Nick Smith Consulting) & Emilie Tapping (NUS Charity)
17:00	Event close - NUS Charity members meeting to follow at 5:30pm	

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Getting there

Based in the Reilly Building entrance on University square, the Guild's reception team will be able to show you to the main plenary room:
160 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool
L3 5TR

Drop in surgeries

We will be hosting governance surgeries until 4pm, where staff from NCVO, Counterculture LLP, consultants and Howden will be on hand to answer your specific governance questions/chat through issues you may have.

At 4pm Howden will be hosting a session on their services in the surgery room.

Lunch and refreshments

Big thanks to Howden for sponsoring our networking lunch. Tea, coffee and water will be provided throughout the day.

HOWDEN

Speaker bios



Mo Wiltshire, NCVO Consultancy Lead

Mo Wiltshire has extensive experience in the not-for-profit sector, working with local, national and global-facing trustee boards and senior teams. She has led on leadership and governance development from a range of perspectives: a volunteer, staff member, CEO, trustee and consultant.

Mo has worked within the education, youth and social justice charity sectors for more than twenty-five years, two decades of which were within senior leadership positions. Her staff roles have included Students' Union CEO, Director of Governance and Designated Safeguarding Lead. Mo has also been a mentor to a range of charity leaders, a turnaround board adviser, trustee and chair of a national charity's HR sub-committee and chair of a school governing body.

At NCVO, Mo is a trainer, facilitator and consultant. Past and current clients include The Rivers Trust, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, the Chartered Institute of Fundraising, Blood Cancer UK, the Education & Training Foundation, the British Deaf Association, the Law Society and Libraries Connected. Mo has an MSc in Voluntary Sector Management.



Sarah Menzies, NCVO Senior Consultant

Sarah Menzies joined NCVO in 2015 and is a highly experienced consultant, facilitator, and project manager. With over 20 years of experience, she has a strong track record of supporting charities, funders and networks in building their capacity in research and evaluation.

Her expertise includes developing theories of change, evaluation design, data collection, analysis and impact reporting, working with organisations ranging from small grassroots charities to major national funders.

Sarah has particular expertise in making impact measurement proportionate and practical, and in designing approaches that work with the realities of organisations. She has recent experience as a learning partner for a student union and has worked with various universities, including a research post at the University of Strathclyde.

Current clients include:

- **Autism in Court:** Co-creating theory of change, evaluation framework and best practice guidance with the autistic community and court professionals, in partnership with the University of Bath.
- **Co-op Foundation:** Lead consultant on cross-portfolio evaluation of youth-led and environmental programmes, including a Power BI dashboard used for internal reporting and trustee decision-making.
- **National Pro Bono Centre:** Co-developing a shared impact measurement framework for the legal pro bono sector, now rolling out across the sector.
- **Peter Harrison Foundation:** Funder Plus support, working with the foundation and their grantees on evaluation capacity and impact measurement.

Speaker bios



Aggie Taylor, NCVO Governance Consultant

Aggie has a background in social impact and movement building, focusing on using governance effectively to deliver impact and objectives. This has ranged from supporting AGMs and motions from networks of children and young people engaging in the governance systems of international youth organisations, to aiding with inclusive and interactive board facilitation for organisations looking to bring on young trustees and create member/stakeholder-led strategies. Aggie has worked across the social sector to co-create strategies, campaigns and policies with staff, trustees and volunteers. This includes engaging young trustees, implementing stakeholder feedback into governing documents, and movement building.

Aggie was previously the chair of the board of trustees of a national youth charity, as well as being an active volunteer running thematic non-formal education projects at camps and group nights. She is currently on the board of an international children's organisation focusing on children's rights and play work on the Calais border. Aggie's previous employment has included working as a social change consultant, where she led the movement-building strand of The National Lottery's Climate Action Fund, worked on setting up a community program in Brent with the Football Association and advised WWF and RSPB on audience and membership consultancy for the Save Our Wild Isles Campaign, focusing on how organisations can engage with varied communities. Within this work Aggie became interested in ensuring charity governance is accessible and inspiring, allowing for and encouraging strong social impact.



Hannah Pudner, NCVO Associate Consultant

Hannah Pudner is an organisational development and governance consultant who supports charities, membership bodies and public sector organisations across the UK. Her work includes governance reviews, board effectiveness evaluations, and governance development programmes. Clients include Greenpeace UK, The Elders and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. She also works extensively with students' unions and NUS Charity, specifically supporting the development of student governors across Welsh colleges and universities.

Before becoming a consultant, Hannah spent ten years at the National Union of Students (NUS), progressing from Education Policy Officer to Director for Wales. She later served as Deputy CEO of United Purpose, an international development charity with an annual turnover of £40 million and programmes across 19 countries in Africa and Asia.

Hannah brings experience from governance, executive leadership, and elected student representation, giving her a practical perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing student union governance.

Speaker bios



Richard Whitmill, Partner at Counterculture Partnership LLP

Richard is a Partner at Counterculture Partnership LLP specialising in all things charity governance and company secretarial. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Governance Institute UK and Ireland with over 16 years of dedicated experience within the charity and not-for-profit sector. His background spans roles as a trustee, volunteer, and employee, covering local charity support, funding, and asset-based community development. This career history has equipped him with a deep understanding of the unique governance challenges and opportunities within the Charity and not-for-profit sector.

Before joining Counterculture, Richard served as Governance Business Partner at NUS Charity where he supported the board and led major changes to the Union's democracy and governance. He acts as board secretary to a range of SUs.. Richard's work through Counterculture also includes charity and company registrations, governance reviews and advice on risk management.

Richard was awarded The John Phillips Memorial Prize for the Chartered Governance Qualifying Programme – recognising him as the top-performing finalist of the 2024/25 academic year. This prestigious accolade reflects exceptional dedication to the rigorous Chartered Governance Qualifying Programme, which equips professionals with essential expertise in corporate governance, company secretarial practice and board support. Richard is now a tutor at KCB Global, a recognised tuition partner for the Qualifying Programme, passing on his knowledge in Company Secretarial practice to future chartered governance professionals. <https://linktr.ee/richard.whitmill>



Jacqui Clements, Jacqui Clements Consulting

Jacqui Clements is both an experienced Students' Union Chief Executive and HR Director. Jacqui has worked with staff members both in her own organisations and with colleagues in Students' Union at all levels of their careers for over 25 years. She has a particular interest in building capacity with senior leaders who come from underrepresented groups.

Jacqui has carried out a number of Board Effectiveness reviews across Students' Union and other charities, coaching governance leads in setting and delivering action plans. She also provides training for senior leaders on governance and supports Board development through facilitated activities.

In addition to coaching and mentoring senior leaders, she has worked with over 140 officers during her career and has experience of bringing insight into the variety of situations in which officers and Students' Union's often find themselves. Her approach is person centred and focuses on outcomes for individuals that allow them to excel and consequently bring benefit to their organisations. Jacqui has considerable experience in developing Boards being the chair of Sunderland Students' Union, trustee of the Belgrade Theatre Coventry as well as prior experience of being chair of governors in post 16 education and chair of Coventry Students' Union board.

Speaker bios



Nick Smith, Nick Smith Consulting

Nick has twenty years' experience of supporting leaders, volunteers and staff in charities and higher education institutions with a particular expertise in democratic processes.

His work developing the original model governing documents used by over 100 HE Students' Unions was used as an example of good practice in the House of Lords. He was Company Secretary of the National Union of Students in the year it won a "Third Sector" award for trustee board of the year. He oversaw all aspects of NUS' democracy and governance from the National Executive Council to the NUS National Conference.

He has been a board member of several charities including City St George students' union where he was deputy chair. He is company secretary of six students' unions across the UK giving him a pragmatic experience to live issues faced by student representative groups.

In 2021 he was awarded a distinction in the Governance Institute's certificate in Charity Law & Governance. He has an MRes from Reading University, regularly writes a column on democracy and governance for Wonkhe SUs and is an Advance HE Associate.



Mark Abbott, Partner and Parliamentary Agent at Bates Wells

Mark Abbott is a Partner at Bates Wells and works with charities, membership bodies and other purpose-driven organisations, with particular experience in students' unions, governance and charity issues. He is known for helping organisations navigate tricky regulatory environments and change with clear, practical advice and a strong understanding of the sectors he works with.

Mark has worked with students' unions across the UK on governance, constitutions, democratic processes, campaigning, freedom of speech issues and trustee responsibilities. Bates Wells wrote the model constitutions used by many higher education students' unions. Mark has also been closely involved in supporting the sector through major changes, including the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and the wider sector response.

Mark has also been closely involved in work on the Charity Governance Code and works with a wide range of membership organisations, professional bodies and Royal Colleges on governance, elections, disputes and how they engage with their members and communities.

He regularly comments on developments shaping the sector, including the Charities Act 2022 and revised Charity Commission guidance. Mark also advises on Parliamentary affairs and is a "Roll A" Parliamentary Agent - one of only a small number practising in the UK, and the only one with a dedicated charity sector focus.

Speaker bios



Annie Wilmott

Annie Willmot is a senior leader with over a decade of experience in the not-for-profit and students' union sector. Most recently she has worked as Interim Director of Membership Services at Imperial College Union and Deputy CEO and Director of Membership Engagement at Reading Students' Union. Throughout her career, Annie has worked closely with boards as both a staff member and trustee, with experience including governance, organisational change, digital transformation, and strategic decision-making. Annie is now available for project work and consultancy through [Honest Conversation Consultancy](#), working with purpose-driven organisations on leadership, culture, and change.



Aidan Grills - CEO Leeds University Union

Aidan has worked at Leeds University Union for 25 years, firstly as the Director of Membership Services & Development and 19 years as Chief Executive. During this period Leeds University Union has regularly gained awards in the sector related to impact for students and quality of their work. Prior to Leeds Aidan held roles in Further Education and the students' union at York St. John University. Aidan is a regular speaker at conferences in the UK and USA on the role of campus services and students' unions. Aidan has served on the National Union of Students Board during a period of turnaround and restructure where he chaired the Finance & Audit Committee. Outside Education, Aidan has held a number of charity non-executive roles including Trustee and Chair of HR Committee for Foundation Housing, Chair of Trustees for the Huddersfield Town AFC Foundation and Governor of Leeds Trinity University. Aidan is currently Non-Exec Director and Trustee of The Salvation Army UK & Ireland, one of the largest charities in the UK with a programme of work addressing social justice and community needs. Amongst his other voluntary commitments, Aidan coaches' junior football and plays in a brass band.



Libby Brown, ACII – Howden Insurance Brokers Ltd

Libby is a client director and team leader at Howden Insurance, specialising in students' union insurance. She has been working with SUs since 2017, and in the wider insurance sector since 2011. She works with unions ranging from small and specialist, through to large commercial operations with hundreds of student groups.

Libby is involved in a number of student union focused projects, including co-delivering risk management training for co-ordinators, delivering a variety of SLT-focused risk and product sessions at conferences, and most recently on the steering group for Safe Adventures, which is a project bringing together a variety of unions to look at current practices, and engaging with NGB and other institutions such as RNLI, to build a guidance framework aimed at making student led adventure activities safer. Howden are committed to supporting this project, and are currently exploring how we are best placed to provide that support.

Speaker bios



Sam Harris, Organisational Development Consultant and Interim CEO

Sam has spent over 15 years working to make the student movement a more equitable and purposeful movement. Following over 10 years at NUS Charity, Sam is now working as an Interim CEO and Organisational Development Consultant in the charity sector and has recently launched a [SU CEO Development Programme](#). Sam is also a member of the board for Pregnant Then Screwed and Chair of Suffolk Students' Union.



Matt Broadey, Leadership & Governance Support Manager at Leeds University Union

Matt has worked at Leeds University Union for over 9 years, 3 of those years as Governance Manager. Matt's role encompasses support, recruitment and induction of the Board of Trustees and Subcommittees; oversight of compliance and central policy; oversight of induction and support of the sabbatical officers; and strategic and organisational performance reporting.