**Imperial College Union**
**Board of Trustees / 16 September 2026**

# Trustee Trios: Guidance for Effective Collaboration and Good Practice

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Purpose: To brief board members on trustee trios' purpose and guidance on good practice.

## 1. Context

The Trustee Trios* model is designed to enhance the effectiveness of the board by pairing external trustees with student and officer trustees to provide guidance, mentorship, and support. This structure facilitates a collaborative approach to reviewing board materials, discussing key actions, preparing for and reflecting on meetings of the Board and its subcommittees. The aim is to ensure all trustees are well-prepared, informed, and actively contributing to board discussions.

*Trios are the default model, but groups of four+ are in use and equally valid depending on availability and scheduling.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

External Trustees:

i. Provide guidance based on experience, helping student and officer trustees understand and interpret board materials.
ii. Mentor student and officer trustees in their role as trustees, offering insights on governance, strategic decision-making, and Union operations.
iii. Encourage and empower student and officer trustees to share their perspectives and participate fully in discussions.

Student and Officer Trustees:

i. Proactively engage with board papers, noting areas of interest or concern.
ii. Seek advice and clarification from external trustees when necessary, especially on complex or unfamiliar topics.
iii. Bring student-centered perspectives to discussions, ensuring the board remains grounded in the Union's mission and values.

## 3. Preparation and Review of Board Papers

Each trustee should review the board papers independently before meeting as a trio. External trustees may suggest specific areas to focus on, such as risk, finance, and strategic implications, to aid in understanding. Ahead of the meeting, each trustee should identify questions or points of discussion to make trio meetings efficient and purposeful.

## 3. Meeting Structure and Frequency

Pre-Board Meeting Check-ins:

- Schedule a dedicated time before each board meeting to review papers together. This can be a virtual or in-person session where the trio discusses key agenda items, clarifies doubts, and strategizes their contributions.
- Aim for these meetings to be brief but focused, ideally 30-60 minutes.

Follow-up After Meetings:

- After board meetings, consider a brief debrief to reflect on the outcomes and discuss any actions that require further attention or preparation for the next meeting.
- This helps in ensuring continuity, accountability, and an ongoing development of governance skills.

**4. Good Practice for Mentoring and Guidance**

Encourage Open Communication:

- Foster an environment where student and officer trustees feel comfortable asking questions or expressing concerns.
- Constructive feedback should be provided in a supportive way to encourage growth and confidence in new trustees.

Set Boundaries and Expectations:

- Each trustee should respect professional boundaries and focus interactions on board-related topics.

Promote Inclusive Discussion:

- All trustees should have an opportunity to share their views. External trustees can facilitate by inviting input from each trustee, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered.

**5. Tips for Effective Trio Collaboration**

Plan Ahead:

- Agree on a method for coordinating meetings, such as a shared calendar or regular check-in times.
- Members are advised to have at least one meeting per board meeting, ideally ahead of the meeting. Board papers are issued one week ahead of the meeting.

Document Key Insights:

- Keep brief notes on discussions and key insights gained from trio meetings, which can serve as valuable reflections for future sessions.

Celebrate Wins and Reflect on Challenges:

- Acknowledge positive outcomes from board meetings where trio preparation played a role and discuss any challenges to learn and improve collaboratively.

Signpost to Other Services

- Students and Officers may sometimes require support from other services, External Trustees should be aware of the services they can signpost to further support including EGs Careers, Student Hub, Union Advice, SU Staff.