

Person Specification: Head of Belonging and Support



Job Title

Job title:	Head of Belonging and Support
Working hours:	35-hours per week (to be worked flexibly)
Salary:	Grade E £52,055 - £55,225.18
Reporting to:	Chief Executive
Direct Reports	Advice Manager, Student Activities Manager

Role Purpose:

The Head of Belonging and Support is a senior strategic leader responsible for shaping how students connect, participate, and access support across the Guild. This role exists to ensure that every student- regardless of background, mode, or location of study - can find a place within the student community where they feel safe, confident, and able to engage meaningfully with their university experience.

This role leads the Guild's "**Belonging system**": the infrastructure, communities, and support structures that enable participation, connection, and personal development. This includes student-led activity, communities, volunteering, and independent advice and support services. Together, these form the foundation upon which student confidence, identity, and engagement are built.

The postholder is responsible for designing and leading **coherent, enabling systems** that reduce barriers to participation and make engagement simple, accessible, and inclusive. This includes ensuring that:

- students can easily navigate opportunities to get involved
- participation pathways are clear and progressive
- support services remove, rather than reinforce, barriers to engagement

A key expectation of the role is to create **sustainable, system-led approaches** that provide clear structures, consistent experiences, and scalable models of delivery.

As part of a dual leadership model with the Head of Student Voice and Influence, this role ensures that **participation feeds leadership**, and that students who connect and engage through belonging systems are able to progress into wider leadership and representation opportunities across the Guild.

As a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the postholder contributes to overall organisational strategy, culture, and performance, helping position the Guild as a **trusted, enabling, and student-centred organisation**, with strong institutional partnerships and a clear contribution to student wellbeing, retention, and success.

Key Accountabilities:

- Students feel a strong sense of connection, belonging and confidence
- Participation systems are simple, accessible, and inclusive, with clear routes into engagement
- Student-led activity operates within safe, proportionate, and enabling frameworks
- Independent advice and support services are trusted and high-quality.
- High-quality independent advice and support services
- There are clear pipelines from connection to participation and leadership pathways
- Barriers to engagement for underrepresented and under-connected students are actively identified and reduced

Key Responsibilities:

Designing and Leading Participation Systems (The “Belonging System”)

Provide strategic leadership for the Guild’s approach to student participation, ensuring it is intentionally designed, insight-led, and aligned to organisational outcomes.

- Shape a **coherent and navigable participation offer**, where students can easily find, understand, and access opportunities to get involved
- Ensure that participation systems are **inclusive by design**, removing structural, cultural, and practical barriers to engagement
- Develop **simple, proportionate, and scalable frameworks** that enable student activity without creating unnecessary complexity or bureaucracy
- Work in partnership with the Head of Student Voice and Influence to ensure that participation acts as a **pipeline into leadership and representation**

Societies & Student-Led Activity

Lead the strategic development of student-led activity as a core mechanism for connection, belonging, identity and leadership.

- Ensure societies and student groups operate within clear, supportive governance frameworks that balance accountability with autonomy
- Create the conditions for sustainable, inclusive, and high-quality student-led activity
- Remove unnecessary barriers to student leadership while maintaining appropriate oversight
- Ensure participation contributes meaningfully to confidence, identity formation, and personal development

Health & Safety / Risk

Act as the strategic lead for health, safety, and risk in student-led activity, ensuring frameworks enable rather than inhibit participation.

- Design and oversee proportionate, risk-based approaches to safety, safeguarding, and compliance
- Ensure student leaders are equipped, supported, and confident in managing risk responsibly
- Lead responses to serious incidents, safeguarding concerns, and complex risk scenarios
- Maintain a culture where safety is understood as enabling participation, not preventing it

Leadership Development

Develop and embed a clear approach to **informal student leadership**, ensuring strong pipelines from participation into wider engagement.

- Design and deliver accessible and inclusive leadership development frameworks
- Build clear progression routes from participation to leadership, and even into student voice
- Ensure student leaders are supported to develop confidence, capability, and resilience
- Create recognition and reward mechanisms that value and sustain student leadership
- Contribute to the broader leadership ecosystem, supporting alignment with formal representative development

Advice & Student Support

Provide strategic and operational leadership for independent advice services as a critical component of belonging.

- Safeguard the independence, confidentiality, and professional integrity of advice provision
- Ensure a clear separation between:
 - individual casework
 - organisational learning
 - democratic representation
- Lead the continuous improvement of services using data, case trends, and student feedback
- Ensure robust safeguarding, escalation, and risk management frameworks for complex cases
- Build strong partnerships with University and external services to enable joined-up student support
- Ensure advice services actively reduce barriers to participation, wellbeing, and success

Communities & Participation

Lead communities as spaces of connection, identity, and lived experience.

- Enable communities to function as inclusive, student-led spaces for belonging and expression
- Ensure community insight is used to inform engagement design and support approaches
- Work with the Head of Student Voice and Influence to ensure lived experience can inform representation and change, while maintaining clear boundaries between:
 - participation (Belonging)
 - political prioritisation (Voice)

Outreach and Under-Connected Students

Develop targeted approaches to engage students who are less connected to traditional campus-based experiences.

- Identify and address barriers affecting groups such as:
 - degree apprentices
 - transnational (TNE) students
 - online and distance learners
- Develop **accessible entry points into participation and support**

Leadership and Management

- Partner strategically with Marketing and Communications to commission and apply insight, understand student needs and barriers, shape engagement approaches, and evaluate the impact of participation and support initiatives.
- Lead and develop teams through coaching, empowerment, and inclusive leadership
- Contribute actively to Senior Leadership Team strategy, culture, and decision-making
- Ensure effective use of budgets, resources, and operational planning
- Role model values-led, collaborative leadership, contributing to a culture of openness and accountability

Measures of Success

Success in this role will be demonstrated through:

- Students reporting stronger connection, belonging, and confidence

- Increased and more diverse participation across student groups
- Clear and effective pathways into leadership and engagement
- High levels of trust in advice and support services
- Student-led activity that is safe, well-governed, and enabling
- Demonstrable contribution to student retention, and success

Stakeholders

- Student Voice and Influence team
- Marketing and Communications Team (student insight, engagement and audience development)
- Chief Executive & SLT
- Student societies and communities
- University services and partners
- External organisations

Other

- Operate within a dual-system model, working in close partnership with the Head of Student Voice and Influence
- Contribute to shared outcomes, including clear engagement pathways and strong leadership pipelines
- Prioritise system design over individual delivery, ensuring sustainability and consistency
- Make decisions based on evidence, insight, and shared organisational purpose
- Actively engage in student-facing projects and activities of all kinds as required.
- Be an enthusiastic advocate for student leadership and the organisation's values.
- Maintain own professional networks and promote the Guild on a local and national level.

	Criteria
KNOWLEDGE & EXPERIENCE	• Significant experience leading participation, engagement, or student support systems • Strong understanding of barriers to participation, inclusion, and student experience • Experience of delivering complex services involving safeguarding, risk, or case escalation • Experience working at a strategic level across multiple stakeholder environments
SKILLS & ABILITIES	• Ability to design and lead systems, not just services • Strong strategic judgement, with the ability to balance risk, inclusion, and enablement • Excellent relationship-building skills across a range of stakeholder groups • Ability to lead through complexity, ambiguity, and competing priorities • A coaching-oriented leadership style that develops people and teams
VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS	• Deep commitment to student empowerment and participation • Belief in removing barriers and creating equitable access to opportunity • Collaborative, open, and system-minded approach to leadership • Integrity, sound judgement, and professionalism, particularly in sensitive situations • Visible commitment to the Guild's values and student-centred culture