Trustees' Annual Report 2024/25

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

The Student Publication Association CIO is a charitable incorporated organisation registered in England and Wales (number 1187383). The charity also operates using the working names "The Student Publication Association" and "The SPA".

During the period of this report, it was registered at 46 St Olaves Road, London, E6 2PA

This report covers the accounting period from 01/05/2024 to 30/04/2025.

The trustees who served during the reporting period are:

- Jack Patrick Wash (Chair — trustee ex officio. Left post April 6, 2025)
- Matthew Stothard (Chair — trustee ex officio. Elected April 6, 2025)
- Joseph Stephen McFadden (Second financial officer — trustee ex officio. Left post April 6 2025)
- Isabella Ankerson (Second financial officer — trustee ex officio. Elected April 6 2025)
- Jemma Louise Collins (Elected Trustee)
- Aubrey Edward Lewis Allegretti (Elected Trustee)
- Geraldine Scott (Elected Trustee)
- Ollie Colle (Elected Trustee)
- Anttoni James Numminen (Appointed Trustee)
- Emma Penney (Appointed Trustee — Appointed 21 August 2024)
- James Mole (Appointed Trustee — Appointed 21 August 2024).
- Richard Lewis Brooks (Appointed Trustee - Left post April 6, 2025)

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The SPA is governed by a written constitution. The charity is constituted as a charitable incorporated organisation. The SPA's trustees are selected via three methods:

- Ex officio: The Chair and Second Financial Officer of the SPA serve as trustees ex officio.
- Elected: Up to four trustees are elected by the SPA's membership, serving a term of up to four years.

- Appointed: Up to four trustees are nominated by vote of the executive officers and ratified by a majority vote of the sitting trustees, serving a term of up to three years.

During this period, the charity held one AGM in April 2025, allowing members to vote on policy and direction. The minutes for this are available online. A total of five motions were voted on and passed by members:

- Constitutional Changes: A number of administrative changes to the constitution, including the adoption of gender neutral pronouns, clarification of what a poll is, that it should always be a student leader who decides in the case of a tiebreak, the appointment of ex-officio trustees, adding different press standard codes to reflect those in Ireland, clarifying the handover period, clarifying the term limits for regional and executive officers, adding that all officers at all levels can vote on SPANC, and mandating bank account access.

- Decision Making Process For SPANC (With Amendment): This motion looks to ensure the movement of SPANC across all of the SPA's region's is considered as part of the bidding and decision making process.

- Trustee Term Lengths: To clarify when trustees are due to stand down.

- Reserves Policy: To continue the organisation's commitment to holding £10,000 in reserves by 2027. It sets out that the organisation will hold £3,600 by the conclusion of #SPANC25, and aims to add a further £3,000 by the end of #SPANC26.

- Focus On Visual Journalism: To introduce speakers and awards within this area to ensure the organisation prioritises visual journalism more.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Clause 3 of the SPA's Constitution sets out that "the object of the SPA is to advance the education of student journalists in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland."

The SPA has carried out this object by:

- Hosting more than 20 informational training resources that are freely available on the SPA website. The SPA has also created further training resources and updated existing ones during this period.

- Facilitating collaboration and peer learning between student journalists from across the UK and the Republic of Ireland by providing social media platforms to host discussions. Currently, the charity works across LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter/X. Further communication between student journalists is facilitated through the work of the SPA's

team of volunteer Regional Officers and Project Officers.

- Providing individual guidance to student journalists on request, including supporting them in defending their right to practice journalism.

The SPA has further carried out this object by:

- Organising the SPA National Conference in Exeter, the first time the event has been held in Devon, providing extensive vocational training for more than 200 student journalists over the course of a weekend. In addition:
    - To ensure this conference was accessible to the widest range of people possible, we ran a Financial Assistance Scheme, covering tickets, travel and accommodation for those who would be otherwise unable to attend. In total, five students made use of the fund.
    - The SPA also worked to secure £17,350 of sponsorship for the event, which was used to subsidise the sale of all tickets, and the highest figure to date.
    - Running a series of practical one-to-one sessions at the annual conference, including copy clinics, design drop-ins, and CV advice. These were used by dozens of student journalists across the weekend, allowing them to gain more personalised advice and journalistic education.
    - The SPA also collaborated with the external publisher Journo Resources to offer paid work and training for two student journalists, who reported from the event.

- Organising a national awards scheme, with 26 categories, offering student journalists the chance to get feedback on their work from professional journalists, as well as recognition. The SPA received more than 1,300 entries in 2023/24, the highest number received to date.
    - The SPA also ran a series of regional awards, offering further feedback and recognition to student journalists across all eight regions.

- Hosting a total of four regional conferences, free one day events hosted in Nottingham, Glasgow, London, and Cardiff to offer vocational training to students in a more accessible format.
    - In total almost 200 students registered for tickets, benefiting from the insights of some 30 expert speakers.

- Hosting a series of virtual workshops online and provided free of charge by external journalism experts and focused on skills relevant to student journalists, including a breaking news workshop, a media law masterclass, and a session on ethics and editorial decision making.

- The launch of the Student Publication Association Podcast 'SPA Spotlight', providing additional learning and on-demand insights for members in a new, audio format, across some six episodes.

Of the five projects listed directly above, all have been completed. In addition, work continued on the development of a membership hub for the charity's website, to create a more dynamic learning experience for members.

The Trustees are satisfied that, due to the freely accessible nature of resources produced and shared by the SPA this year, the SPA meets the statutory requirement to act for the public benefit. The Trustees have, through the course of the reporting period, referred to guidance published by the Charity Commission for England and Wales relating to the public benefit requirement when making decisions.

During the reporting period, the SPA ran a Financial Assistance grant-issuing scheme. These grants were intended to cover the cost of attendance at the SPA's 2025 Annual Conference and were to be funded by a combination of restricted fund donations and through the SPA's general funds. The Trustees are satisfied that the grants would be issued in keeping with the SPA's object and public benefit, as they were specifically targeted at student journalists who would either be financially prohibited from attending the event or who face other barriers to journalistic education. The Trustees are also satisfied that grant money would be spent solely in support of these aims, as applications were reviewed by a sub-committee of the Trustees, and spending of the grant money is carried out directly by the SPA, or reimbursed on production of a receipt detailing approved expenses.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In keeping with the SPA's objectives, the Trustees identified four major goals relating to the organisation of events:

- To host a vocational conference focused on journalistic education, at a cost lower than comparable conferences.
- To run a bursary scheme to widen access to the conference, covering the costs of attendance.
- To host smaller-scale vocational conferences at locations across the country, at a free or nominal cost, to increase participation in training and education.
- To disseminate and promote the use of free-to-access resources hosted on our website.

All of these goals were completed within the reporting period.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

At the end of this reporting period, the SPA held a total of £5,761.87 in accounts managed by it. No funds of the SPA are materially in deficit.

Overall, the trustees were pleased with the significant progress made towards financial stability within the past 12 months, leaving the charity on track for its target of £10,000 in reserves by

2027. This can largely be attributed to the following changes, commissioned as part of a review into cash flow and procedures last year:

- A new digital expense reporting system and cashflow reporting was introduced, virtually eliminating missing receipts and payments on personal cards. The system also included expense codes, allowing the charity to compare spending against projections in real time, virtually eliminating unagreed overspend.
- A new speaker booking policy, including a points-based system, travel booking roles, and a booking procedure, allowed us to cut spend on this budget line by a third.
- A ticket levy was added to #SPANC25 tickets, as well as the option to add a suggested donation. This has raised some £428 for the charity in the reporting period.
- The organisation also registered for an employer charitable giving scheme, which significantly increased donations to the charity, from £364.76 in the previous reporting period to £1,456.60 in this period.
- The organisation also set up a second bank account for savings, to ensure reserved funds were held separately and have the opportunity to earn interest.

While the trustees are satisfied that the above measures constitute significant progress, they view financial resilience as an ongoing process, commissioning the following further measures for the next financial year, to further strengthen systems and stability:

- The creation of a long-term (10 year) strategy for the organisation, including exploring additional funding opportunities, such as grant funding, donor events, and alumni networks, as well as additional marketing and reputational enhancement activities.
- To explore further banking opportunities outside of the current Co-Operative account, to find a higher rate of interest for reserves.
- A new payment tracker column to the #SPANC26 budget to account for and track part-payments and deposits. In addition, a weekly role has been created to report back on all payments and finances to the wider team each week.
- The creation of a new budget tracker for regional conferences.
- To continue the investigations into GiftAid and VAT relief.

On the basis of the measures set out above, the trustees are satisfied that the SPA can continue to operate as a going concern, with a review of the above measures in the next reporting period.

EXEMPTIONS FROM DISCLOSURE

The SPA has not sought any exemptions from disclosure in accordance with applicable law.

FUNDS HELD AS CUSTODIAN TRUSTEE ON BEHALF OF OTHERS

The SPA has not acted as a custodian trustee on behalf of others during the reporting period.