



Governance

The United Synagogue was established for charitable purposes by the United Synagogue Act of 1870. It was formally registered as a charity on the 2nd June 1965, registration number 242552.

The Schedule to the Act was previously the major constitutional document of the Charity. This was augmented by the Statutes of the United Synagogue passed by the US Council in April 1999, which sets out the Charity's objects and the role and powers of the Charity, its Trustees and its Council. Additional Byelaws set out the system of governance of local synagogues, and the Election Regulations set out the procedure for electing the Board of Trustees.

The relationship of the United Synagogue and its Affiliates is governed by the Affiliate Scheme.

Trustees

Overall responsibility for the activities of the US is held by the Board of Trustees, which is elected by the US Council (see below). The Board of Trustees comprises nine Trustees (with an option to co-opt two more Trustees). The Trustee Board comprises a male President plus four male and four female Trustees. There is one Treasurer elected by Council who can be male or female. If the Treasurer is male then there will be three other male Trustees, excluding the President. If the Treasurer is female, then there will be three other female Trustees. The Trustees from among themselves appoint one or two Vice Presidents and may appoint a Deputy Treasurer.

Following the 2015 Strategic Review, the US Council resolved in December 2016 that in future there should be elections every two years for half of the Trustees with each Trustee serving a four-year term. In order to adjust to this new system of election it has been necessary to introduce a one-off 'stagger' whereby four of those Trustees elected in July 2017 will serve a two-year term, with the others serving a four-year term. In all subsequent elections from July 2019 onwards, all successful candidates will serve a four-year term. Trustees are eligible to serve a maximum of two terms although the President can then serve up to two additional terms.

Trustees must have prior experience of serving on the Synagogue Council (formerly Board of Management following a name-change approved by the US Council in December 2018) of one of the US' local synagogue communities for a minimum of two years. Trustees who stand for election will therefore have had experience of lay leadership in the Jewish community for which they are taking responsibility. The requirement to have previously served on a Synagogue Council does not apply to co-opted Trustees.

Induction of Trustees builds on this wide knowledge and familiarity with the Charity, which has been previously gained at a local level.

The Chief Executive, Directors and senior professionals meet new Trustees soon after their election and provide intensive briefings on the Charity. The External and Legal Services Director provides advice and guidance on the statutory responsibilities of Trustees and continues to provide guidance on such matters throughout the Trustees' term of office.

The Board of Trustees meets once a month, except in August, to take strategic and policy decisions. These meetings are attended by the Chief Executive, other members of the senior management team and the Chair of The Rabbinic Council of the United Synagogue ('RCUS').



The Board of Trustees appoints Committee Chairs and advisors to a number of sub-committees for the better working of the Charity. These sub-committees are allocated specific areas of responsibility and invited to make relevant recommendations to the Board.

Responsibility for the religious direction and guidance of the US is vested with the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din (his religious court).

US Council

The US Council represents the member and affiliate synagogues of the US, and has the following powers:

- a) to elect and remove Trustees
- b) to elect the Chair of the Audit and Risk Review Committee
- c) to approve amendments to the constitution of the US
- d) to admit/discontinue the membership of any synagogue to the US
- e) to receive and consider the budget and accounts of the US

Council is elected every three years by members of the Synagogue Council of every local synagogue. Each synagogue has a number of Council Representatives based on the size of the synagogue's own membership. All current Trustees are also members of Council, as are the immediate previous set of Trustees. In addition, there are a limited number of life members including all past Presidents. Council meets four times each year.

Member Synagogues

The member synagogues are the branches of the US. The day-to-day responsibility for running the member synagogues is delegated by the Trustees to local Honorary Officers, led by a Synagogue Chair, and Synagogue Councils who are elected, either annually or biennially, by the members of the synagogues. The US Byelaws regulate the powers of the local Honorary Officers and the conduct of local synagogue activities. Synagogue Chairs are issued with a guidance document on how to discharge their duties. Financial Representatives are bound by a Protocols Document, which they are required to sign prior to taking up their roles.

The religious affairs of the individual member synagogues are run by the local Rabbi and, where appropriate, a Rabbinical Team and/or Chazan (cantor), and the Wardens (who are part of the team of local Honorary Officers) under the overall guidance of the Chief Rabbi.

In December 2018 Council approved the new optional Honorary Officer position of Women's Officer, a post designed to ensure US communities are inclusive and welcoming. The new role, designed to meet the religious needs of female members, will enable women's greater participation in services where possible according to halachah (Jewish law), to arrange women-only services where there is demand and to advise on the timing of services to consider families' needs.

Professional administrators are employed at most synagogues to provide the local lay leadership with administrative support in the effective management of their local communities.

Local synagogues collect annual membership contributions on behalf of the US from their members. A proportion of these contributions (the 'communal contribution') is allocated to the US administrative centre (the 'Centre') for the services provided centrally and to support the further development of the Charity. Members are also invited to make voluntary donations to the US for the benefit of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, which are then granted to that charity. The remaining membership contributions and other donations received are retained and administered locally, according to US rules, in order to fund the activities of the local communities that form an integral part of the Charity's activities.



All US synagogues are conscious of their part in the Charity and recognise the mutual responsibility they share for the wider Jewish community. Synagogue activities overall are characterised by the US' values of authentic, inclusive and modern Torah Judaism.

Affiliate and Associate Synagogues

These are synagogues which are constitutionally removed from the US, and whose relationship to the Charity is governed by the Affiliate and Associate Schemes. They are independent legal entities, which do not form part of the Charity but through their affiliation benefit from certain services. The Affiliates and Associates govern their synagogues under the Byelaws of the United Synagogue, as varied by the Affiliate Scheme and Associate Scheme, and pay an annual fee to the Charity.

As at 31 December 2018, there were six Affiliate Synagogues and one Associate Synagogue.

Click the link to see the [United Synagogue Bye-laws](#) [1].

Click the link to find out about [Women's Officer: A New Leadership Role for our Communities](#) [2].

Source URL: <https://www.theus.org.uk/article/governance-0>

Links

[1] https://www.theus.org.uk/sites/default/files/_DOC_152792415%286%29_Bye-Laws%20for%20Member%20Synagogues.pdf

[2] https://www.theus.org.uk/sites/default/files/Female%20Engagement%20Role%20post%20US%20council%20JG_0.pdf