# Nominations for SLSA Chair of the Board – AGM 2025

## Dave Cowan

The SLSA is a cherished representative organisation operating in a space which facilitates our inter- and multi-disciplinary engagement with social and legal phenomena. It has been imaginatively led, moving from being othered (as when I started out) to the mainstream. The SLSA has intellectually and progressively led that development by focusing on ECRs, methods training, research support, and the expanding annual conference as the mainstay.

It was my privilege to have been engaged earlier in the SLSA’s academic leadership and governance. Today’s central challenge is to maintain its position at a time when HE is in freefall from the decline in research budgets, systemic redundancies, and precarity, which threaten our existence in some institutions.

The SLSA needs to be able to maintain its voice on behalf of the discipline and the academic community, and develop its range of activities. It needs to continue to grow and respond to members’ needs in this environment, opening up spaces for all to discuss their socio-legal teaching and research. We must re-think conference fees, open out our activities using the free-at-the-point-of-delivery PGR conference as a model, celebrate our successes, and be rigorously reflexive about our research questions, methodologies, and ethical responsibilities.

## Smita Kheria

I have a **strong and sustained commitment to the field of socio-legal studies** in research, practice and representation, as evidenced by my involvement in varied roles as an SLSA trustee. In the past two years, I have acted as SLSA Vice-Chair bringing my **deep operational knowledge to strategic decision making.** This role has involved sustained input on optimising organisational processes, augmenting financial resources, managing costs and risks, and prioritising support for members. This builds on my earlier work as SLSA International Liaison Officer, **spearheading impactful initiatives** including a new funded member-led collaboration scheme, with a focus on the Global South, and a bilateral exchange initiative to support postgraduate researchers.

Bringing this breadth and depth of experience, **I offer my candidacy for the SLSA Chair**, focusing on two key complementary priorities. First, I will **advance inclusivity and collaboration**—key pillars of the SLSA’s ethos, strengthening on-going initiatives to ensure it extends organisational, policy, and academic links within and beyond law and nurtures diversity and dynamism of its scholarly community. Second, I will **enhance resilience and sustainability**, in the face of higher education funding crisis through exercising strategic and financial prudence, as well as enhancing support for showcasing, and celebrating socio-legal work.