

Dear ISA Board,

My name is Graça Debonnaire Fernandes, and I am a fourth-semester medical student at Rīga Stradiņš University. I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant to the Head of Integration and Sports for the ISA Board 2026.

I recently heard this comparison of “being a student” to “playing an open-world game”. Now, what do I mean by that. Let’s say the beginning point of this game is the matriculation: you’ve enrolled and are ready to start the new adventure that is university, with the main storyline being clear, graduating.

Some players choose to take the straightforward route: completing every level, passing colloquiums, and finishing the “game”. Others, however, choose to explore the side quests, by joining sports clubs, academic societies, trying new things, meeting people, researching and building communities. Now, the ending might be the same, but, in my opinion, the experience feels totally different.

Over the past year, I have become increasingly involved in RSU’s students’ communities. I have consistently joined the RSU Riga Road Runners for the past year, tried cheerleading for a semester, attended some practices of beach volleyball, and this semester, joined a few academic societies as a passive member.

Each of these experiences have helped me connect with students from diverse backgrounds and cultures, shaping not only my university life, but also my perspective on community and growth.

I also volunteered to help organize this year’s Worldwide Event, which really opened my eyes to the work that happens behind closed doors. It made me appreciate all the teamwork and effort that goes into creating these valuable and inclusive experiences for students.

Ever since I can remember, I’ve been a community lover at heart. I enjoy joining clubs, discovering new passions, and that exciting and anxious feeling before stepping into a new space, not knowing what awaits me, but ready to grow through it.

In group settings, I naturally enjoy organizing and connecting people. I like making sure that everyone feels included, supported, and that things run smoothly. While I don’t seek the spotlight, I find purpose in helping teams work efficiently and ensuring that events unfold successfully. I believe my approachable and adaptable nature, combined with my reliability and enthusiasm for sports, makes me a strong candidate for this role.

Becoming part of ISA feels like the right next step for me, simultaneously, a chance to contribute actively to student life, to gain valuable experience in leadership and teamwork, and to help build bridges between students through shared activities and sports.

I am excited to learn from the current board, assist in event coordination, and help strengthen the sense of community among RSU's international students, so that everyone gets to enjoy this "game" to the maximum of their ability, not to just finish it.

Thank you for considering my application.

Best regards,

Graça Debonnaire Fernandes, 066331