



OUR STRATEGY 2023-2027

In 1899, Durham students formed the first collective organisation to represent all of us. Today, that's Durham SU. Student life and the work of the students' union have changed. Yet a lot of what we value and work on would look familiar to our 1899 founders. We're still students from across Durham who want the same things - to spend time together, and stand up for ourselves because we care about each other. We believe that if we do that work well, we'll achieve our vision: **Durham will be a better, fairer, university because students make it happen.**

We're a membership of thousands, run by hundreds of student volunteers and elected student leaders, supported by a professional organisation. We have varied - and sometimes competing - ambitions. This strategy celebrates our variety, and focuses on what we have in common, to further our vision.

We'd like to introduce who we are, and our priorities for the next five years.

WE ARE THE CHAMPION OF DURHAM STUDENTS



WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

It's important that our values are front and centre in our strategy. They describe our character and shape our actions, they help us make sense of the world when we encounter things we don't expect and can't plan for. We'll stick to our values, even when it's difficult, or inconvenient, or costly.

We value

- **Care** and **responsibility**, because our students matter more to us than anything.
- **Imagination** and **collectivism**, because we're grounded in our distinctive collegiate community.
- **Ambition** and **optimism**, because we believe Durham students can – and do – change the world.

WE ARE STUDENTS CHAMPIONING STUDENTS

- We're a student rights organisation, and our collectivism makes us stronger.
- We're trusted to make the best decisions about things that affect us.

WE ARE STUDENTS MAKING THE FUTURE BETTER

- We're a students' union with a purpose, relentless in pursuit of our vision.
- We make change happen as students, with students, and in the student interests.

WE ARE PROUD TO BE DURHAM STUDENTS

- We always recognise our successes while we strive to be better.
- Our collegiate University means we do things differently. We like that.

WE'LL BRING STUDENTS ACROSS DURHAM TOGETHER

Time at Durham is life changing.

If we make it easier for students to forge connections with each other we know they'll build their social capital, challenge and learn from each other and achieve things they will be proud of for the rest of their lives.

By 2027

- 80% of students will come together in a community, society or event supported by Durham SU.
- 80% of these students will say that student led activities supported by Durham SU helped them feel they belong here.
- 50% of these students will discover or learn something new through a student-led activity supported by Durham SU.



“*Showcase who you are – start new societies and share the exotic world of that we grew up in, I hear food is always a great way to attract new friends! And while you're at it, stop and ask the fellow majority about what they could share with us about their own cultures and experiences growing up, you'll be pleasantly surprised about how much you could learn and have fun with.*”

Caitlyn Clement

Student blog - Advice to freshers

WE'LL BUILD CONFIDENCE IN THE PURPOSE AND VALUE OF THE STUDENTS' UNION

We're not like other students' unions.

We don't expect to be, because we're grounded in our unique collegiate home.
We know we have to build a different relationship with students.

By 2027

- 80% of students will agree that Durham University needs a collective organisation for all students.
- 40% of students will agree that Durham SU represents student interests on relevant and important things.
- 40% of students will agree Durham SU represents their academic interests.



“ I believe Durham students clearly benefit from having Durham SU in their corner, and this means we have to continually work to ensure the SU is unapologetically student-led. ”

Charles Lawrence

Stephenson College JCR President

WE'LL TACKLE THE BIG ISSUES THAT HOLD STUDENTS BACK



Poor student housing. Induction that doesn't set us up to succeed. Barriers to access and participation in all the stuff that makes Durham special. These issues aren't new, but they are sticky.

We're trying to break the cycle, and we need sustained focus over several years to make a difference. Our elected Officers will focus us on these priorities.

By 2027

- 80% of students will agree their induction was good.
- 80% of student rooms in Durham will be affordable and high quality.
- Students will lead the conversation about access and participation at Durham.
(measure to be updated in 2024, informed by the initial work)

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Proposals to raise the Maintenance Fee from £71 10s. 0d. to £85 a term, an increase of just over £20% on last year were confirmed...Ros Collins, the Senior Woman in St Mary's College, commented that "If this is true, then it is a phenomenal increase and I think that it might force a lot of people to live out of college."

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Extract from Palatinate, 1971

OUR STRATEGY APPROACH

Students' unions exist to advance the educational interests of students. Strategy, for Durham SU, is a statement of why and how we think education can best be advanced at Durham for the next five years. We've assessed the context that students operate in, using our experience, drawing on research, informed by opportunities, and have made conclusions about our organisation and our situation. Like most students' unions, we focus on priority work in students' education, everyday life, and communities. Our strategy, however, also draws on student concern about the culture and behaviors on our campus.

We work in two different, often complimentary ways:

- We use our influence to improve the academic education delivered by Durham University.
- We use our infrastructure to support social education delivered by students to each other.

The professional organisation underpinning this work needs to be excellent, of course, to make this good work happen. You can read more about our organisational model.



OUR DEMOCRATIC APPROACH

“ We were designed to start every academic year like it was as new for us as for a fresher; new student leadership elected every spring, and year-round democratic meetings, made it easy to add things to our to-do list. But it’s really difficult to ever tick anything off.

Being ‘democratic’ doesn’t actually mean ‘performing processes’. It means ‘run by the people’. This strategy seeks to reconcile the bureaucratic architecture we’ve inherited, which we know is inaccessible and doesn’t achieve much for students, with our appetite to do good things, with and for students.

Our democratic character is important to us, but we now understand it as being about listening to and working with our entire membership. We’ll seek regular insight directly from our members, and start a regular programme of research. We’ll help our members to directly decide important issues, and our democracy will refocus, but not reset, our strategic priorities.

Joe McGarry

President 2022/23

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