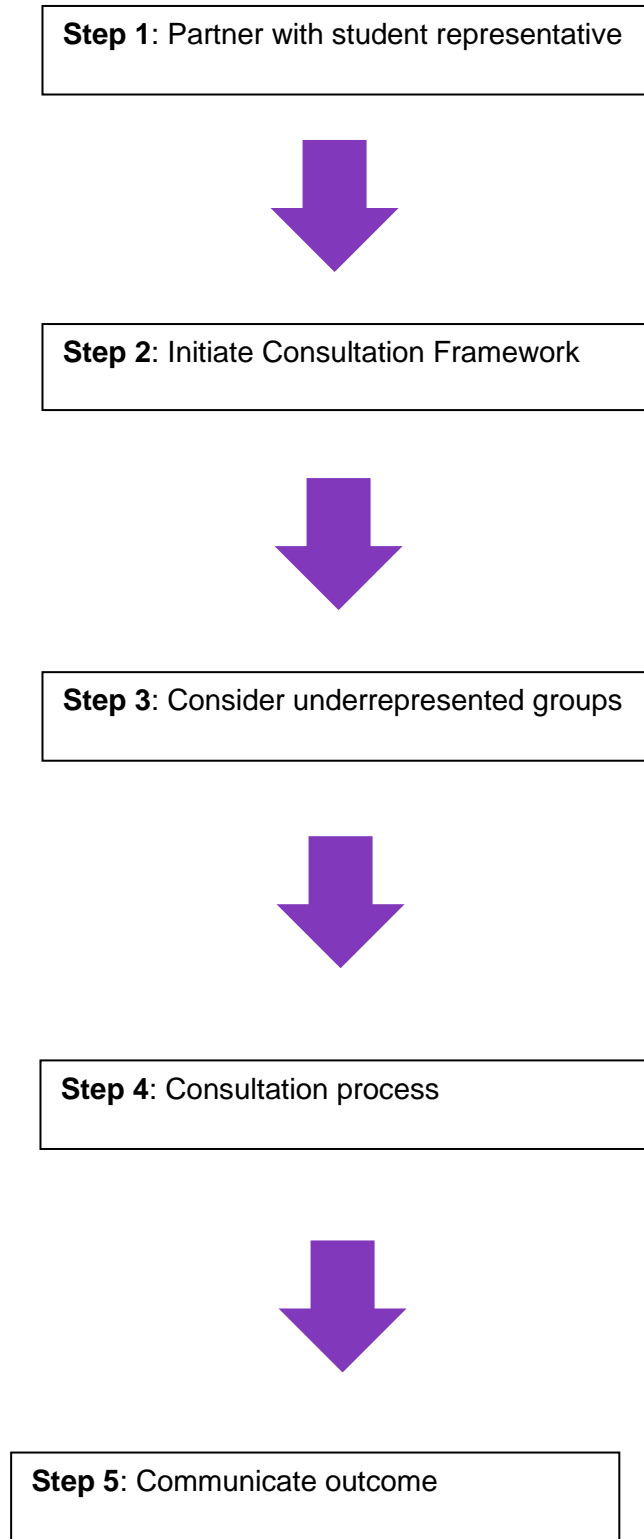


Durham University & Durham SU Student Consultation Framework

Durham Students' Union
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How it Works: Flowchart



A more detailed breakdown of the step by step process can be found in pages 5-8.

What is the Student Consultation Framework?

The Student Consultation Framework (SCF) outlines a minimum expected standard of consultation to be used by all areas of the University, including the Students' Union, when planning projects and making changes that impact students. The framework provides an opportunity for student input into decision making in a meaningful way, through partnership with student representatives. A consultation framework has been in place at Durham since 2017.

Similar frameworks have been successfully implemented at both Oxford and Imperial College London, and a number of other Students' Unions, such as Leeds Beckett SU, are currently in the process of creating something similar. With the cost of coming to university being at an all-time high, the student population are more eager than ever to have a say in their education; the Student Consultation Framework aims to enable them to do so in a standardised and consistent way. Durham University have a responsibility to consult with their students on the changes that affect them.

Any member of staff within the Durham University community can use this framework when managing a change process. Any member of the student body can also use this framework if they become aware of a change happening and wish to ensure students are consulted. Durham Students' Union will provide training for student leaders on how to use the framework.

Why do we need a Consultation Framework?

This Student Consultation Framework should be understood in light of its desired outcome: we want students to understand decisions made by the University which impact or influence their education and wider student experience and for those decisions to be improved, in design or delivery, by student contribution. The 3 aims of consultation can be summarized as:

- **Quality of decisions:** Student input into the decision making process can help Durham University to better take advantages of opportunities, and overcome challenges in a change project
- **Community and belonging:** Students can feel more part of the University community if they feel they've had the chance to input their voice into University decision making.
- **Confidence and Understanding:** Even when student input doesn't change the outcome of a decision, we hope students will have increased confidence in University decisions, because the consultation process will give them a greater understanding of the reasons for the decisions.

Good consultation can increase engagement from students and improve responses to national surveys (e.g. NSS, PTES/PRES). It should apply to all moderate or major decisions made by Durham University, with moderate decisions

being those which are likely to somewhat influence their review of their time at Durham, and major changes ones which are likely to heavily influence students review of their time at Durham. All consultation processes start in the same way (for either moderate or major impacts), and can escalate depending on the strength of student feedback.

What does it not apply to?

It does not apply to minor decisions, which are those which will have an impact on a student's experience at Durham but are unlikely to influence a students review of their time here. Whilst student consultation on those decisions is still important, existing systems of representation from student bodies should be sufficient, with a good enough relationship between the relevant staff member and student, to ensure effective consultation and communication is carried out.

These decisions are often those taken quickly, without the need to proceed to a formal university committee.

For example, if a temporary change in mealtimes in a college is needed to be flexible around a conference, the college Principal can notify the JCR and MCR Presidents in their regular catch-up, without the framework being applied. If a change is required to first go to a committee of Senate or Council, and has a direct or indirect impact on students, then the paper must reference that the student consultation framework has been reviewed and applied appropriately.

For the purpose of classifying impact, only decisions which are made at a committee of Senate/Council and also affect students can be considered.

Existing representation structures

The SCF is aimed to enhance and support existing structures of student representation, not replace them. Democratic decisions made should be used to inform both classification of impact and may be used by the referral panel. Existing structures are:

- For departmental decisions – departmental course reps
- For faculty decisions – faculty reps
- For college decisions – The JCR/MCR of the college. This could be (in ascending order of precedence) a Common Room Exec vote, a Common Room meeting motion, a cross-college referendum.
- For liberation groups – Durham SU Associations (International Students Association, LGBT+ Association, Mature Students' Association, People of Colour Association, Students with Disabilities Association, Durham Womxns' Association, Trans Students Association, Working Class Students Association).
- For cross campus decisions – Durham SU bodies. They are (in ascending order of precedence) Durham SU Officer Committee, Durham SU Assembly, Cross Campus Ballot.

Step 1: Partner with Student Representative(s)

Choose the most relevant student representative to partner with depending on the nature of the proposed change (e.g. for academic changes either course reps or faculty reps from your department would be the most relevant). The below table contains a non-exhaustive list of the student reps in Durham. Please note that there might be instances where remits of reps overlap, and in these cases it may be useful to invite more than one representative. If in doubt about which representative would be most suitable, you can contact the SU President on su.president@durham.ac.uk.

Rep Type	No.	Description	Contact
Student Officers	5	Responsible for representing all Durham students to the University and at a national level. Relevant for all major changes affecting large numbers of students, including nationwide and legislative changes.	www.durhamsu.com
College JCR Presidents	17	Responsible for representing UG students, in each college, on all college-related affairs. Relevant for moderate to major college-specific changes relating to UG students.	https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/colleges/
College MCR Presidents	17	Responsible for representing PG students, in each college, on all college-related affairs. Relevant for moderate to major college-specific changes relating to PG students.	https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/colleges/
College SU Reps	17	Responsible for representing all students, in each college, on campus wide campaigns and SU projects. Relevant for moderate to major SU decisions.	https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/colleges/
College Exec	160 +	Responsible for representing students on specific areas of college life, including welfare, social life and sport. Relevant for any changes relating to specific areas of college life.	https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/colleges/
Association Presidents	8	Responsible for representing specific groups of students who are under-represented through other routes, e.g. mature students, students with disabilities, LGBT+, international students, people of colour, working class students, trans students and women. Relevant for changes to specific under-represented groups of students.	https://www.durhamsu.com/groups
Faculty Reps	16	Responsible for representing all students in each faculty. Relevant for moderate-major academic changes affecting a whole department or faculty.	https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/
UG Course Reps	300 +	Responsible for representing undergraduate students at a course level. Relevant for all academic and university related changes affecting specific UG course groups.	https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/

PG Course Reps	300 +	Responsible for representing postgraduate students at a course level. Relevant for all academic and university related changes affecting specific PG course groups.	https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/
Student Group Exec	800 +	Responsible for representing students in their interest groups. There are around 200 different student groups with different areas of interest. Relevant for Union and University changes affecting groups of students with specific interests.	https://www.durhamsu.com/groups
Experience Durham Exec	200 +	Responsible for representing groups of students involved in sport, music, theatre and volunteering (outside of Union societies). Relevant for changes relating to specific areas of student extra-curricular activities.	https://www.dur.ac.uk/experiencedurham/

Step 2: Initiate consultation framework

In partnership with the selected student representative(s), agree whether the proposed change is something that will have at least a 'moderate' impact on the lives of students (see table below for definitions). If you agree the proposed change does not have at least a 'moderate' impact, you do not need to use this framework and should proceed with existing forms of student representation (i.e. take proposed change to an existing committee with student representation). Proposed changes with either 'moderate' or 'major' impact factors should proceed with this framework. At this stage, you and the partner student rep should also agree expectations of each other during this process.

If you and your partner student rep disagree on the level of impact at this stage, the student rep should consult with the students they represent to provide additional evidence.

Impact Factor	Definition	Action
Minor Impact	A change with minor impact on the lives of students and unlikely to influence students' review of their time at Durham.	Use existing forms of student representation
Moderate Impact	A change with moderate impact on the lives of students in one or more of the following areas: financial, academic, wellbeing, cultural, community or equality. Decisions will usually be made at a sub-committee of Senate/Council. For example, building work at a college which will affect existing services or provide new ones; a change to the provision	Initiate Student Consultation Framework

	of tutorials in a department.	
Major Impact	A change with major impact on the lives of students in one or more of the following areas: financial, academic, wellbeing, cultural, community or equality. These decisions will usually need full Senate/Council approval. For example, the relocation of a college; changes such as the introduction of semesterisation; the building of a new departmental building; the closure of a school or faculty.	

Referral Panel

In the unlikely event that you are unable to agree a level of impact with the student representative, you may refer to a Student Consultation Referral Panel (SCRP). This will consist of three other student representatives from across campus, and two senior university staff members. It will be convened as soon as possible by the Students' Union and University in collaboration, at the DU/SU Strategic Collaboration Group, with the SU President selecting the student members and the Chair of the group selecting the staff members. At the panel, information about the proposed change will be presented, by both the staff member leading the change process and the student representative. The student representative may wish to bring evidence from existing democratic processes (e.g. a vote from a JCR meeting or a student group AGM, as in introduction). The SCRП will then review the evidence and must unanimously agree a recommendation on impact level. Further evidence and information can be provided to the panel, until a unanimous decision has been reached. The consultation process must then proceed based on the recommended level of impact.

Step 3: Consider impact on underrepresented groups

Any proposal has the potential to impact a group of students more than others, or to provoke concern from a particular group of students. It's a good principle of risk management to consider whether the final decision is likely to be strengthened or weakened because these students feel part of the process of making a decision.

A basic questioning process of 'is any person or group particularly affected?' is important. This isn't limited to demographics, and might include students who use a building, or a service, or who have expressed concerns on similar changes. For example: any consultation about activity at the Leazes Road site will be of interest to students at the College of St Hild and St Bede, as well as Education students, as well as students who use the crèche.

There may also, of course, be formal expectations within another University policy relating to impact on particular groups of students, under equality or data regulations, for example. It's also important to consider these responsibilities, which have also have within them expectations of consultation that can usefully be achieved by using this framework.

Step 4: Consultation Phase

The below is a guide for consultation steps to be taken depending on the level of impact your change will have on the lives of students. All consultation processes should start out the same, with additional steps being taken for higher impact level changes. Please note that the steps below are to be used as a guide only, and the consultation plan should be agreed with the partner student representative.

Any student consultation should be completed within an appropriate timeframe so that feedback can be meaningfully considered in decision making. Timescale should be agreed with the student representative.

Impact level	Initial Consultation Steps
	1. Agree appropriate timeframe and consultation steps with student representative
	2. Contact all affected students (via email, social media or other similar method) with information about the proposed change including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • background reasons for change to occur • consultation timeline • a clear route for students to feedback
	3. Contact any relevant student reps to disseminate information on proposed change and allow them an appropriate amount of time to gather any feedback from student cohorts
	4. Contact relevant under-represented groups of students to disseminate information and gather feedback (i.e. students with disabilities, international students, LGBT+ students, mature students, students of colour, working class students, trans students and women) if the proposed change is likely to have a specific impact on one of these groups
	5. Formal call for ideas from affected students (i.e. in the form of a social media poll, survey, adding a dedicated section to department website, enquiry form on department website, providing dedicated email address for ideas to be sent to, forming a target question for raise your voice activity)
	6. Hold at least three small face-to-face meetings with interested students (i.e. students who provide ideas in previous consultation steps) at varying times and locations, allowing student feedback to shape decision making process.

Continuation phase

If, after carrying out adequate consultation, it is clear that there is still a lot of feedback from the student body, further steps should be taken. The below table outlines some suggestions for further consultation steps. If either the staff member leading the change process, or the partner student representative, feel more consultation is needed, they are able to initiate an continuation phase.

Should the staff member and the student representative disagree on whether further consultation is required, the Student Consultation Appeals Panel can review the evidence.

Continuation Consultation Steps
1. Student rep to take proposed change to appropriate student representative democratic body for further feedback (i.e. Assembly, JCR/MCR PresComm, Academic Affairs Committee, SSCC meeting, Association AGM, Student Group)

AGM)

2. Hold at least one large meeting (i.e. town-hall style meeting), in conjunction with relevant student reps, advertised to all students, to deliver information on change and allow for input from students.

Step 5: Communicate outcome of consultation and decision made

A student representative should be involved in the final decision making, where appropriate, and not restricted due to legal or financial reasons. This should be the partner student representative where possible, or one of the SU Officers where that is not appropriate.

The staff member leading the change process should report the outcome of the decision, and the stage of consultation that was reached, back to the students who were consulted (i.e. if all students were consulted then the outcome should be reported back to all students, if only course reps were consulted, report back to only course reps). The DU standard committee paper template now also includes a section on student consultation which is where this process of consultation should be publicly documented for any proposed change.

In order to fulfil the requirement for a meaningful consultation process, any follow up communication to students should include the following:

- Considerations taken during decision making process
- Explanation of rationale for the final decision made
- Overview of consultation process that has been carried out

Referrals

Should the student representative be dissatisfied with any part of the consultation process, they may wish to appeal to the Student Consultation Referral Panel (SCRIP).

This will consist of two other student representatives from across campus, and one senior university staff member. It will be convened as soon as possible by the Students' Union once they have been informed. At the panel, information about the consultation process will be presented, by both the staff member leading the change process and the student representative. The student representative may wish to bring evidence from existing democratic processes (e.g. a vote from a JCR meeting or a student group AGM). The SCRIP will then review the evidence and make a recommendation on whether further consultation steps need be taken.

The SCRIP cannot make a recommendation to change the outcome of a decision.

Exceptions to Framework

There are a couple of regular decisions that are made annually within the University, for instance accommodation fee setting and tuition fee setting, and for these decisions a more specific and detailed consultation process is required. This framework is designed to put in place a process for dealing with one-off changes that will impact on the lives of students; for recurring decisions that require student consultation, the Students' Union and University will jointly agree a standardised

process, separate to this framework, to be carried out annually.

Contact

If you have any queries about the Student Consultation Framework please contact the SU via:

SU President: su.president@durham.ac.uk

Director of Campaigns: rebecca.henderson@durham.ac.uk