

Durham Students' Union Assembly Agenda

*****Please arrive in the waiting room ahead of the meeting 15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting**

Thursday 4 February 2021, 18:00, Virtual meeting, Zoom

Time	Subject	Who	Paper
18:00 18:02	A. Welcome	Chair	
18:02 18:05	B. Minutes of the meeting on 26 November 2020	Chair	UA/2021/18
18:05 18:10	C. Apologies for absence and conflicts of interest	Chair	

Routine Business:

18:10 18:15	D. Chairs Election	Chair	
18:15 18:25	E. Officer Updates	Officers	UA/2021/19
18:25 18:45	F. Committee Updates*	Committee Chairs	
18:45 19:05	G. Association Updates**	Association Chairs	

****Access Break****

Items for Discussion:

19:15 19:25	H. Freedom of Speech Policy <i>SU Core Policy</i>	Opportunities Officer	UA/2021/20
19:25 19:35	I. End the Advertising of Unaffordable Housing	Kathryn Ellison	UA/2021/21
19:35 19:45	J. The membership of assembly should be publically known	Kathryn Ellison	UA/2021/22

19:45	K.	Intersectionality Week	Redrei Visaya	UA/2021/23
20:00				

**Academic Affairs Committee, DUCK Committee, Governance & Grants Committee, JCR Presidents' Committee, MCR Presidents' Committee, Societies Committee and Union Rep Committee.*

*** Students with Disabilities Association, Durham Women's Association, LGBT+ Association, Durham People of Colour Association, Working Class Students' Association, Trans Association, International Students' Association, Mature Students' Association.*

Assembly is committed to making its meetings accessible to persons with disabilities. If you consider yourself to have any access or reasonable adjustment needs, please contact the SU governance account: dsu.governance@durham.ac.uk at least 2 days in advance of the meeting to make arrangements.

**Durham Students' Union
Assembly Minutes of the last Meeting**

Thursday 26 November 2020, Virtual meeting, Zoom

Item A - Welcome

ST opened the meeting, welcoming members and explained zoom etiquette, outlining that no offensive or unacceptable behavior would be accepted and members would be removed.

Item B - Minutes of the meeting on 14 May 2020

No amendments to minutes of the last meeting.

Minutes from the last meeting were approved.

Item C - Apologies for absence and conflicts of interest

There were no apologies or conflicts of interest.

Item D – Chairs Election

ST explained there had been 3 nominees for Chair of Assembly but before the meeting, two of the nominees had withdrawn their nominations and one was not eligible to be Chair of Assembly due to holding another elected position.

ST will continue to Chair the meeting until someone is elected.

Item E – Elections Update

ST provided an update on elections and stated that Durham SU will elect five Officer Trustees, and four student trustees, in Epiphany term. The Trustees intend that students elected to the position of trustee will immediately begin a term from March 2021 to July 2021, then continue into a term from August 2021 to July 2022.

The Returning Officer and the Durham SU trustees will publish guidance further to the elections before the end of Michaelmas term.

Assembly confirmed Peter Robertson as the Returning Officer.

Item F – The Future of Education under COVID-19

NH presented the item and explained that all students have seen disruption to their studies due to the Covid-19 pandemic in some way. Students had the option this year to study in person or online only. Blended learning should continue but with greater focus on student choice and flexibility. The University needs to address ongoing issues of digital poverty and should ensure that study spaces are open and safe for students to use. There should also be increased efforts to make course material more accessible to all students.

SMc added that Postgraduate researchers who teach should continue to be properly trained, supported and paid where they are involved in teaching and academic support work and an automatic one-week extension should be provided, when it is asked for by students, as well as the re-introduction of the No Detriment Policy for both Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students, similar to that of academic year 2019/2020. The University should provide appropriate equivalent mitigations for postgraduate researchers.

ST moves to a vote (zoom poll opens)

The motion passes.

Item G – Housing and Accommodation through COVID-19

SMc presented the item on behalf on Ewan Swift, who was not present at the meeting and said that Durham University should ensure that students who cannot return home over Christmas do not face additional accommodation fees for 2020/201 academic year and to terminate tenancy agreements early for students who cannot, or do not wish to, return to Durham for Epiphany Term 2021. PBSA providers should also terminate tenancy agreements early for students who cannot, or do not wish to, return to Durham for Epiphany Term 2021. Durham SU aim to renew the Student-Landlord Pledge and continue work with private landlords and agents to ensure student tenants are treated fairly and with compassion and flexibility and will continue to promote tenants' rights and the prioritisation of tenants' safety.

ST moves to a vote (zoom poll opens)

The motion passes.

Item H – Wider Student Experience through COVID-19

AM presented the item and explained that the pandemic has limited the ability for WSE to take place as normal and many activities will need to be delivered online. Many students value face-to-face WSE as beneficial to their mental health and some students will be unable to return to Durham for Epiphany term and will only experience WSE online. The University should provide both online and in-person WSE opportunities and provide high quality online options that can remain passed the pandemic. All WSE activities should take place in a controlled, risk-assessed manner. The University should ensure a balance remains between WSE opportunities and Academic Commitments. This includes a guarantee that Academic workload remains the same as with previous years and Wednesday afternoons remain free. Support services for students, both across the University and in individual colleges, should be appropriately funded and supported during this period, especially with regard to increasing their visibility to students. The Students' Union will provide resources and training to Student Group Exec members to ensure they are confident in running safe and inclusive online events.

ST moves to a vote (zoom poll opens)

The motion passes.

Item I – Cut the Rent

EJ presented the motion and stated that College accommodation fees cost well above the average maintenance loan for students and have risen above inflation for many years. Durham University has significantly cut, reduced and centralised staffing and facilities within colleges – such as portering, cleaning and catering – to the detriment of student experience.

The motion passes.

Item J – Condemn the actions of Durham Union Society

Tristan Pahl and James Adamson joined the meeting for the motion.

Yash Raju presented the motion and stated the Durham Union Society (DUS) has failed to prevent and effectively penalise incidents of racism/misogyny amongst both its membership and leadership. The assembly notes that solutions suggested to reform the DUS have been unsuccessful in transforming the institution into an organisation which protects its membership and the wider student body from discrimination. The SU should ban DUS from participating in events and strongly encourage Sabbatical Officers not to participate in DUS events. The assembly also resolves to publicly separate itself from the DUS by not advertising events held by the DUS or promoting the organisation to its members. The assembly also resolves to not host events of the DUS in Dunelm House.

James Adamson spoke in favour of the motion passing.

Tristan Pahl spoke on behalf of Durham Union Society against the motion passing.

ST moves to a vote (zoom poll opens)

The motion passes.

****ACCESS BREAK****

Item K – Officer Updates

AM confirmed that the Democracy Review survey is now live, having launched on the 18 November. This is projected to be open until the 9 December. MiraGold will be conducting at least 18 focus groups, working with a student researcher who has also now been recruited. The new lockdown guidance forced all Durham SU groups to stop group face-to-face activity and have asked the University to fund creative outdoor socially-distanced projects next year such as outdoors calisthenics equipment or outdoor light exhibitions. Invited every student group exec to meet with me over two days, which led to some insightful conversations. Planned an environment forum across the different Durham groups which should occur in the first week of December, to set annual objectives for Durham campus community.

SMc had listened to student opinion on teaching and learning during Covid-19, and developed a stance on what students should be able to expect from the University. Due to the pandemic, the number of peer-to-peer discussions and support that usually take place has been detrimentally impacted. I have raised this in a number of University spaces, including the Teaching and Research Recovery Groups, which has facilitated discussions about both how departments and student representatives can facilitate this aspect of Postgraduate life. Alongside the work on communities, I have been looking at how we can support Postgraduate Mental Health. This is something that I have been raising at University meetings and started to put some plans in place for the rest of term.

NH stated that the series of workshops which are being hosted by Tony Fawcett have begun which means that departments are getting the opportunity to talk to each other and the DSU about good practice and what steps need to be taken to move the Decolonise initiative forward. Have been in multiple conversations about academic support and how that can be improved and what information regarding wellbeing needs to be on the DU website. Also had a drop-in session alongside PG Academic Officer where students could ask us questions or tell us their concerns etc.

ES had been a part of the Covid-19 Christmas Working Group and has been pushing for better communication, more clarity, and greater focus on scenario planning the offers that may be available over Christmas and January. Have been doing research into housing and accommodation schemes and initiatives at other Universities and seeing how they could be implemented in Durham. Have gained backing to push for the implementation of Active Bystander Training for all students next year.

ST confirmed that the feedback form for the Culture Commission is being launched next Monday, one opportunity for students to shape the commission and have their experience heard whether it be positive, negative or somewhere in between on what 'Durham's Culture' is. W/C 30 the commission will be holding contribution sessions. Mass testing is now being carried out, with a Self-test model being used. Students and staff watch a short video on duo, take a quiz to check understanding and then take the test. Will receive results themselves straight away. Started the recruitment process for the new Vice-Chancellor.

Item L – Committee Updates

- JCR Presidents Committee
- MCR Presidents Committee
- Societies Committee
- Union Rep Committee
- DUCK
- Governance and Grants Committee

(Apologies from Academic Affairs Committee)

Item M – Association Updates

- Students with Disabilities Association (SwDA)
- Women's Association
- LGBT+ Association
- Durham People of Colour Association (DPoCA)
- Working Class Students' Association
- Mature Students' Association (MATSA)

(Apologies from Trans Association and International Students' Association)

TO: Assembly

FROM: Anna Marshall

RE: Opportunities Officer Report

DATE: 4 February 2021

Update on priorities:

Sustainability – Met with Vice Chancellor to ask him to declare a climate emergency, update the University's environmental sustainability leadership structure and urgently modernise how Durham approaches the climate crisis. He agreed to organise two blue skies thinking sessions with UEC, on the topic of environmental sustainability. The first of these was attended by myself and Seun, and there was consensus that this needed further urgent action. We've been working with ECO DU to organise a clear student vision for the University's environmental action, since ECO DU passed a motion with this aim through Assembly in November 2019. The Five Demands which ECO DU aims to address are

- 1) Carbon neutrality and emissions
- 2) University Structure
- 3) Student and College Consumption
- 4) Staff Behaviour
- 5) Changing University Culture

I've also joined the University's Sustainable Development Goals working group, which my predecessor Jess Dunning had lobbied the university to establish. I also worked with Greenspace to co-host a student sustainability forum, and invited student leaders from relevant societies to present their key interests and priorities. As part of *Citizens Tyne and Wear*, a regional coalition of community organisations, I attended their annual conference in December to present a motion on climate action, which was successfully passed to become a priority for the organisation's work. We've launched a reporting tool on the SU website, ['Turn It Green'](#) through which small issues can be reported by students and I can use my position on various committees and my relationship with Greenspace to investigate how to reach a solution. Before we knew what Epiphany term would bring, I joined many other sabbatical officers nationwide in supporting an initiative called Trainhugger which was trying to use train ticket profits to plant trees – but this was called off due to the restrictions.

Bolstering community – Hosted a student group forum for all societies to attend and flag concerns more informally, which allowed me to identify key priorities for the term. We need to make sure student groups are collaborating where necessary, but

also that student group execs are maintaining motivation and momentum. I've spoken to Experience Durham Leadership Academy about the potential of providing professionally facilitated support sessions for specific groups of highly pressured student leaders, should they agree to it. Experience Durham agreed for the need to recognise the contribution student leaders make across the various organisations that make up the Durham University community. Have met with common room leaders and bar staff to discuss their situation whilst bars are closed, but I have passed on their feedback to Seun who is now working with the University to support this.

Democracy – The [democracy review report](#) has now been published and there's an article on the website explaining my next steps. Overall have received positive feedback from students recognising the reports merits and there's a real appetite to engage with creating change.

General updates:

Palatinate: Continuing to discuss how we can get Palatinate feeling more supported, whilst also balancing the many other student groups which also need funding.

Third term: Loose possibility that Lateral Flow Testing will allow a more vibrant Durham in-person third term, but absolutely nothing is predictable so I remain flexible to any updates from the government on this. Local residents would prefer students to exercise at Maiden Castle whilst it is open as a park, rather than clogging up other parts of the city, so I would ask students to continue abiding by lockdown regulations in order to fulfil our obligations as part of the local community.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Sarah McAllister

RE: Postgraduate Academic Officer Report

DATE: 4 February 2021

Update on priorities:

COVID-19 and Education

- Safety Net – Discussions on Durham's adoption of safety net policies has dominated my time since the Christmas holidays. Nailah and I began by drafting our suggestions for the University on our first day back ahead of a meeting with Alan Houston (PVC Education) and Michael Gilmore (Academic Registrar) so we begin discussions as soon as possible. Since then, a draft policy from the University went to the Teaching Recovery Group where we subsequently proposed multiple amendments and changes. The conversation has continued in Provost Board, further meetings with Alan and Michael and in numerous meetings with other members of University staff. Hopefully by the time of assembly this will have gone to senate/or will be soon and communicated with students as soon as this has been agreed.
- PGRs who Teach – Another aspect of the measures we included in our safety net was 'Monitor the requirements of postgrads who teach, so we know they are not being overburdened.' This has been part of conversations at the Teaching Recovery Group and it has been agreed that departments should be doing this to ensure that PGRs are not overworked during the pandemic.

Interconnected PG Communities

- Postgraduate Networking – Last term we set up a PG buddy system to facilitate PGs meeting other PGs which worked really well and subsequently ran a speed friending event. As we are now in a new term with many students not in Durham and there are new courses which have started, we will be doing this again this term.
- Continued to work with MCR PresComm who are all doing great things for their postgraduate communities and often are not thanked enough for their commitment.

Capturing the range of PG Experiences

- PG Mental Health – The next meeting of the Student Support and Wellbeing Sub-Committee is going to be a discussion around Postgraduate Mental health which will have representatives from the Students' Union, Common Rooms, Colleges, Experience Durham, Faculties, and Specialist Support Services, and is chaired by Sam Dale, Director Student Support and wellbeing.
- Access to Technology – We have been given confirmation that PGRs are now eligible for laptop loans. If this applies to you please contact your department.

Postgraduate Access and Participation

- Creating a Postgraduate Access and Participation Policy – The current Access and Participation policy is very centric on the Undergraduate experience; therefore, I have been working on how we can create a policy which fits with the Postgraduate experience.
- To PG or not to PG Campaign – We are running a campaign called ‘To PG or not to PG’ which is aimed at Undergrads thinking about undertaking a postgraduate degree. We began this by filming a video about funding which we posted for the first time last time. Since then, we have asked current Postgraduates for their experience of applying and during the degree itself. This has been done in collaboration with other student leaders. We will then be sharing these responses for UGs and holding a number of events for students.

General updates:

TO: Assembly
FROM: Seun Twins
RE: President Update
DATE: 4 February 2021

Priorities Update:

- **Culture Commission**

We have officially completed the first phase of our research for the Culture Commission, which has been a labour of love since the beginning of my presidency. It is very encouraging to see continue student engagement in this work. Student engagement has been overwhelmingly positive and thorough. As anticipated, the appetite for this Commission still grows and students will want me to continue to prioritise his work on Durham's student culture, even with everything else going on. This is because Durham's culture exists as a structural phenomenon rather than a series of isolated, unrelated unfortunate events; and students have recognised this. Stage 2 of the research will commence this term so there is still plenty of opportunity for more students to shape the overall report.

We have also begun to envision a more permeant place for the Culture Commission, in SU strategy around Culture, so that this work does not live and die with me. It is obvious that although it took a very tumultuous 2020 to kickstart institution-wide acceptance of a Culture Commission but it is also very important that this work outlasts the pandemic and is point of contact for further work around the student experience.

As always, if you have any ideas about the long-term strategy for the Culture Commission, or want to contribute to the report, you can always email me at su.president@durham.ac.uk

Covid Updates:

- Testing
- Infections
- Online learning

Lateral Flot Tests (LFT) are still free and available to use for any student currently residing in Durham. There is a concern that since the start of, epiphany term, the student uptake of the LFTs is dwindling. It is important that we use the resources available to us to keep ourselves, our peers, neighbours and communities safe. I implore all Durham students to continue to be regularly tested and observe Covid rules.

The infection rate at Durham University is low, which is a good sign. However, this is not the same picture for the city or county in general. There continues to be no evidence of cross community transmission or transmission in the classroom.

Online learning has proven to be a lot more challenging than anticipated, especially with the background of a third national lockdown. The SU have been assured by the University that the online learning capabilities and digital resources are improving and expanding every day. The library continues to send books and resources to students throughout the country and additional study spaces have been made available.

TO: Assembly
FROM: Nailah Haque
RE: UG Academic officer Report
DATE: 4 February 2021

Update on priorities:

- Working with Sarah, Alan Houston and Michael Gilmore to secure a safety-net policy that will protect students.
- Still working on the Durham Decolonise network – there is another series of workshops taking place this term that I am part of.
- Beginning to start advertising the decol faculty/ department internship in the next couple of weeks so that we can recruit, interview and train those who are selected for the role.

General updates:

With the expected concerns regarding what the university were planning in order to protect the academic interests of students and need for a suitable safety-net policy, myself and Sarah have been in and out of conversations with the VPE around what this policy should look like.

At the start of the term we met with Alan and Michael in order to express the necessity of the university to act quickly to assure students and allieviate some of the stresses they were feeling around exam/ summative deadlines. We met again the following week for Provost Board where we made some positive steps forward and pressed for a better protective measure.

The drop-in hosted by Sarah and myself was also a great success as students were able to come by and express their concerns alongside suggestions for policy that we were able to take forward to Alan and Michael. The comms around safety-net should be released soon by the university once it has passed through senate.

I've also continued my involvement with faculty/ department leads on decolonising the curriculum. I've been able to attend some really exciting workshops that are being hosted by faculties.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Ewan Swift

RE: Welfare and Liberation Officer Report

DATE: 4 February 2021

Update on priorities:

Housing and Accommodation

- **Accommodation Stance for 2021** – outlines the need for the government to step in and support students, compassionate understanding to be shown by landlords and PBSA providers towards students, and for the university to give clarity over term 3 especially around accommodation charges (see [here](#))
- **Letter to the UK Government** – we have drafted a letter addressed to the UK government asking them to support NUS's demands to refund students for private accommodation, or provide support to landlords so that they can be flexible in offering rebates etc...
 - We are hoping this letter will be co-signed by the university, local council, and estate agents as a community wide response that Mary Foy will deliver to the government
 - We will also be creating a template letter for students to send to their MP to push more of parliament to act on holding the government accountable
- **Accommodation Charging Review** – the university is (finally!) writing up a Terms of Reference for an "Accommodation Charging Review Group" to discuss fees and access to WSE (Wider Student Experience), and the group should start in February!
- **Student Housing Accreditation Scheme** – I'm in communication with the parish and county council about a student specific housing accreditation scheme, and presented my research on what exists across the country and work out what can be established here in Durham
- Attended a consultation meeting on an Article 4 declaration (change to planning permissions) for the creation of HMOs in the Mount Oswald, Carrville and Belmont areas

Safety and Culture

- **"Safe Nights Out"** – accreditation scheme for licensed premises (college bars and externally owned) solidifying a zero-tolerance policy towards hate crime, discrimination and sexual misconduct and violence and providing a training package for staff

- **Durham Police “Unity” Group** – in talks with Durham Constabulary about setting up a “Unity” group looking at how the police can better tackle hate crime and discrimination and support students to feel safe
- **Active Bystander Training** – still hoping to do a big push around the Easter holidays and will be looking to hire more peer facilitators so please get in touch if you’re interested in delivering or receiving this training
- **Supporting Student Sex Workers** – attended a webinar on supporting student sex workers via policy and toolkits, and discussed this in SMVOG (Sexual Misconduct and Violence Operations Group)
- **Respect Working Group** – this group started meeting this term and will do so monthly, looks at how we prioritise and operationalise the recommendations of the Respect Commission
- Involved in recruitment of second senior investigator for the conduct office

Student Support

- **Student Advisory Group** – I now chair an advisory group of student reps to sit alongside the Student Support Review, we started with a workshop this term to discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly of student support at Durham
 - Group will meet monthly and consists of Welfare Officers, JCR and MCR Presidents, Association Reps and Faculty Reps
 - Group will also be used to inform the “Faculty and Department Process Review” which looks at self-certs, SAC forms and extension request processes
- **PG Mental Health** – Sarah and I planned the agenda for a meeting of the Student Support and Wellbeing Sub-Committee focussed entirely on PG Mental Health and their experiences

General updates:

Covid-19

- Last term’s group haven’t started back up, so mostly working on accommodation and housing whilst your awesome Academic officers fight for a Safety Net policy!
- Reviewing updates to Covid-19 breach disciplinary procedures

Other

- Meeting with other SU Officers across the country to discuss their campaigns to fight for rent refunds, rebates and contract cancellations
- Discussing which policy we wish to take to NUS and consulting with student leaders on their thoughts
- Reviewing the outcomes of the Democracy Review, Anna is just amazing!

DURHAM SU FREEDOM OF SPEECH POLICY PAPER

PURPOSE OF PAPER

Assembly asked to **DICUSS**: the new Durham SU Freedom of Speech Policy.

Date	02/02/2021
Author	Jamie Caress
Contact	jamie.caress@durham.ac.uk
Publication	[Select appropriate publication standard] Open (full paper is published on Durham SU website) (should be default position)
Relevance to strategy	[Which strategy or strategic project does this paper relate to?] [None]
Relevance to business delivery	[Which business unit or corporate process does this paper relate to?] [Student Group Support and Representation]

Relevant further reading/appendices

- Durham University Freedom of Expression [Code of Practice](#)

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Durham University have recently revised their Freedom of Expression Code of Practice and Durham SU as a separate entity needs its own Freedom of Speech Policy.
- 1.1.2 The Trustee Board will have approval of the new Freedom of Speech Policy.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 2.1 The policy will support the core business unit Student Group Support ensuring that all student groups follow the appropriate approval processes for any external guest speakers. The policy will also support the work of the core business unit Representation ensuring that all external guest speakers for our representation or campaigning activity will also follow the appropriate approval processes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Durham University have recently revised their Freedom of Expression Code of Practice and Durham SU has a responsibility to support Durham University in meeting the expectations of its own freedom of speech policies and procedures, where these activities take place on campus or using the University's name under licence granted to Durham SU.
- 3.2 Durham SU's trustees have full legal and moral responsibility for ensuring that all of the students' union's activities support the organisation's objectives, its good reputation, and its legal responsibilities. This includes the provision of external guest speakers in all parts of the organisation including student group activities.
- 3.3 Durham SU currently receives approximately 150 external guest speaker requests per annum from student groups using the External Guest Speaker Request form. Knowledge of this requirement amongst student group leaders and Durham SU (aside from the Opportunities team who facilitate this process) varies widely. Approving a policy that will apply to all areas of Durham SU will help reduce this knowledge gap and ensure that external guest speakers

follow the same, robust approval processes regardless of whether it relates to our student groups or our campaigns work.

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Assembly is asked to discuss the new Freedom of Speech policy and is invited to vote to support the policy being implemented at Durham SU.

5. IMPACT ANALYSES

- 5.1 This section should set out information in respect of the following impact analyses. Where there is believed to be no impact please state this:

- 5.1.1 **Risk:** The proposal will result in the creation of a Freedom of Speech policy that will support the risk management process, safeguard our members and ensure our compliance with our legal responsibilities. The policy will also reduce the risk of reputational damage being caused by accepting or rejecting a speaker and this making its way into media at a localised or national level.

- 5.1.2 **People:** The proposal will result in the creation of a Freedom of Speech policy that will safeguard our members but also ensure that Durham SU upholds freedom of expression.

- 5.1.3 **Finance:** Failure to uphold Freedom of Speech may have adverse financial implications for the organisation.

- 5.1.4 **Social Responsibility:** The proposal will result in the creation of a Freedom of Speech policy that will safeguard our members but also ensure that Durham SU upholds freedom of expression in line with the organisations values.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 Assembly is invited to support the policy being implemented at Durham SU.

7. NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The Freedom of Speech Policy will be passed onto the Trustee Board for approval.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 8.1 Further information regarding this paper and the timeline can be obtained by contacting the Opportunities Manager via email to jamie.caress@durham.ac.uk.

Durham Students' Union Freedom of Speech Policy

Introduction

Durham SU is committed to upholding freedom of speech. Our members and staff work and, in many cases, live within the University community. Universities, including Durham, encourage free expression and debate amongst the community for the educational and social benefit of all in the community. Durham SU acknowledges its continuing responsibility towards freedom of speech and respecting individuals' rights to freedom of expression, whilst fulfilling our safeguarding responsibilities to our members.

Durham Students' Union hosts events from over 250 diverse student groups, many of which involve the participation of external speakers. We are also a students' rights organisation, and as such may invite people in to share their views or contribute to our campaigning and lobbying efforts, for instance. Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights that are protected by law. The Union is committed to providing the forum that facilitates this whilst also ensuring a safe space for our students as student safety and wellbeing is a fundamental principle of the Union's policies and procedures.

Legal basis

Durham SU's trustees have full legal and moral responsibility for ensuring that all of the students' union's activities support the organisation's objectives, its good reputation, and its legal responsibilities. On a day-to-day basis, the trustees have delegated responsibility for the implementation of this freedom of speech policy to the Durham SU Chief Executive.

Durham SU has a responsibility to support Durham University in meeting the expectations of its own freedom of speech policies and procedures, where these activities take place on campus or using the University's name under licence granted to Durham SU.

Not all of Durham SU's activities or commitment to freedom of speech should be read in light of the Durham University framework, however. The trustees are responsible to Durham SU's members, other regulators, and the public, for their commitment to freedom of speech and this policy sets out why and how the trustees balance their responsibilities.

The trustees are clear that all of Durham SU's student groups are included within Durham SU's governance framework; there is no legal or moral difference between the students' union supporting freedom of speech and student groups' engagement with this work. When a student group invites a guest speaker, Durham SU is legally the body that has issued the invitation. The majority of Durham SU's activities which are relevant to this policy are organised by student groups. The Opportunities Manager has therefore been appointed as the operational lead for this policy and will provide an annual assurance report to the Durham SU Board of Trustees on the good delivery of the students' union's expectations.

The responsibility to safeguard freedom of speech

The freedom to express views must be balanced with the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities. We want to ensure that all activities hosted by Durham SU and its student groups are:

- Safe.

- Do not cause risks to the reputation of Durham SU or Durham University.
- Are lawful.
- A positive experience for our members.
- Inclusive regardless of background.

Durham SU recognises that the 'neutral' spaces and platforms at Durham University and wider society in which the right to freedom of speech is exercised, physically or digitally, are in reality shaped by the unfair power structures of the world we live in. Durham SU therefore understands its responsibility to safeguard freedom of speech as not merely allowing the loudest people to continue to shout loudly, over other people who also have a right to freedom of speech but lack the power and opportunity to be heard without help. The students' union will take active steps to ensure that any space in which its activities happen supports the right to freedom of speech for all participants, and not only the person invited to be at the front of the room or the start of a session.

External Speakers

An external speaker refers to a person or organisation that is not part of Durham SU or Durham University who is invited to speak at or contribute to any Durham SU or student group event regardless of whether this takes place on or off campus or remotely by digital means including the playing of pre-recorded speeches.

Any student group event with external speakers, regardless of the location is still the responsibility of Durham SU.

The Chief Executive is responsible for any speakers or materials published at or by a corporate Durham SU event, including events organised by the elected Officers and democratic events. The Committee of a student group organising any event are responsible for the activities that take place within the group, and must cooperate with the Chief Executive or an appointed staff member in delivery of this policy. The Committee must make all speakers aware of their responsibility to abide by the law as well as Durham SU's and University's various policies, including that they:

- Must not incite hatred or violence or call for law breaking to occur.
- Are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support these acts.
- Must not spread hatred and intolerance.
- Must avoid insulting other groups, but rather work within a framework of promoting positive debate and challenge.
- Are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisations without permission from Durham SU.

Procedure

Initial Measures

No event involving guest speakers should be publicised or confirmed until a request has been given due consideration and approved by Durham SU, to avoid disappointing participants and causing unnecessary disruption to the guest speaker themselves.

Student groups must inform Durham SU of any events that involve external speakers at least 2 weeks prior to the event using the External Speaker Request Form available at www.durhamsu.com <insert link>. Any request made outside of this time frame will not be guaranteed to be accepted. In addition to this, students are advised to submit any request for a speaker that may be considered controversial or higher risk with a minimum of 4 weeks' notice to allow control measures to be put in place and reduce the likelihood of the request being rejected.

Durham SU reserves the right to cancel, prohibit or postpone any event involving an external speaker if the policy is not adhered to, or if concerns cannot be met and risks mitigated successfully.

Any failure to disclose the full details of an external speaker may cause delay in the consideration of a request and may result in requests being rejected or in the case of false information being provided could result in disciplinary action.

Replacement external speakers at late notice will not usually be accepted but will ultimately be considered on a case by case basis.

Academic Department Events

Durham SU welcomes and encourages its academic groups to work collaboratively with their respective departments for the collective benefit of their members and recognises that some External Speakers may be obtained by recommendation or direct organising of academic staff. However, all student group events must be organised in accordance with Durham SU policy as well as University procedures. This is to ensure that all events and external speakers are recorded, considered and approved by Durham SU.

A department may support a student group with an event but any external speaker requests must be submitted using the Durham SU External Speaker Request Form first, if the student group intends to host or promote the event in the name of the student group.

If an academic department organises an event which the student group are promoting it must not be advertised as a Durham SU or student group event. The department should follow the correct University process when organising guest speakers rather than the student group Committee in these instances.

We appreciate that this is a fine distinction, but in summary:

- If the student group is taking responsibility for the event, and the department is helping but takes no responsibility at all for the event, then only the Durham SU policy is relevant.

- If the student group and the department are organising an event together and advertising as a joint event or an event in partnership, then the Durham SU policy must be used first in good time, as this has the effect of meeting University expectations but also allows the Durham SU student group to meet their responsibilities.
- If the department is organising the event, and the student group is invited to attend but its name isn't used to advertise the event and the student group takes no responsibility for advertising, promoting, managing or staffing the event, then the department should use the usual University policies and procedures.

The Durham SU Opportunities team can help departmental and academic student groups with understanding this distinction and managing the approval process properly.

Approving Speakers and Publications

Speakers and publications at events taking place on University premises and from groups who use the University name under license (such as the Durham University XXX Society) regardless of location or mode of delivery will require approval for their external speakers or publications first by Durham SU and then by Durham University.

External Speaker events not taking place on University premises by groups not using the University name under license can be approved by Durham SU only.

Durham SU corporate or democratic events almost always take place on University premises and will require approval first from Durham SU and then by Durham University.

All external speaker requests must be submitted to Durham SU in the first instance using the External Speaker Request form. This is the first step in gaining University approval, and saves time and effort for all concerned. The University will not accept a request directly from a Durham SU student group, and will not process such a request, unless it has been authorised by the Durham SU Opportunities team.

An Opportunities Coordinator will review a request from a student group by carrying out online research of the speaker and their organisation as well as checking the speaker's social media pages. Any publications will be read and an initial online search for content and context will be made. and make a recommendation to the Opportunities Manager for any lower risk speakers. Any higher risk speakers will be referred to the Opportunities Manager and the Director of Services for approval. Any requests which are recommended to not be accepted will be referred to the Chief Executive for a decision on how best to balance the expectations of the freedom of speech policy. The Chief Executive may refer complex or controversial decisions to the supervising trustee.

A request may be considered high risk for one or more of the following reasons:

- A speaker is widely regarded as controversial.
- A speaker is known to or is likely to cause harm to specific groups.
- A speaker has links to any person or groups connected with controversy.
- A speaker has a significant profile and attracts a substantial following that may cause issues regarding crowd control and health and safety issues.

- The speaker is known to have spoken at another institution on a topic that has resulted in fear or intimidation of students, staff or other attendees.
- The person or group is included or linked to the UK Government list of proscribed terrorist organisations.
- The speaker's presence at the event may result in a platform for the expression or promotion of extremism or radicalisation.
- The speaker is part of an organisation generally considered to be extremist by Durham SU or Durham University.
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In making recommendations as to whether the speaker or publication should be approved the Opportunities Manager will assess risk based on the potential for:

- Any decision to limit freedom of speech as per the Durham University code of practice.
- The event proceeding causing Durham SU to be in breach of its policies.
- The event proceeding causing Durham SU to fail its wider legal duties.
- Reputational risk to Durham SU.
- The external speaker's presence causing fear or alarm to the student body.
- The external speaker's presence causing unrest and overcrowding leading to health and safety concerns.
- Any other factor deemed appropriate.

Following this a recommendation will be made. The recommendation will either be:

- Fully approve the event (and pass onto the University for approval wherever necessary).
- Approve the external guest speaker or publications with conditions to reduce the level of risk.
- Reject the event, in which the Chief Executive will be asked to confirm the recommendation.

Any conditions required to reduce the level of risk may be, but are not limited to:

- A copy of the speech and format for the event to be approved in advance.
- The event to be observed by Durham SU staff.
- The event to be subject to stewarding and/or security at the expense of the student group.
- Additional speakers being required to provide a balance of perspectives to encourage positive debate and challenge.
- The appointment of an independent chair to the satisfaction of Durham SU.
- An event's attendees being restricted or opened out more widely or the requirement to ticket the event.

Durham SU will communicate the decision to the student group Committee. Durham University may place additional control measures in place for events happening on University premises or groups using the University name as and where necessary or choose to reject an external speaker request previously approved by Durham SU.

Where a student group disagrees with the decision undertaken by Durham SU it shall have the right to submit a complaint under the Durham SU Complaints Procedure. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not reverse the decision until such time as the complaint is resolved.

Complaints regarding any Durham University decision should be directed to the University under the relevant procedure.

TO: Assembly
FROM: Kathryn Ellison
RE: End the Advertising of Unaffordable Housing
DATE: 4 February 2021

Assembly notes:

That two adverts have been placed in Epiphany term (12/01/21 and 19/01/21) for purpose built student accommodation, both relating to “Fresh” Student Accommodation’s “Dun holm House”, located in Durham City Centre. The Dun Holm development consists of en-suite rooms and studio apartments. Renting a room at Dun Holm house costs around £163 to £239 a week, or between £8313 - £12,189 a year.

The proposer of this motion got in contact with a representative for Fresh Student Living in Durham and was told that they had not yet decided whether or not to charge rent to international students who were not able to return due to Covid-19.

The proposer also phoned the main providers of private purpose built student accommodation in Durham to enquire whether or not rent had been forgiven for international students who had been unable to return to university this academic year.

This assembly notes that out of the six largest private purpose built accommodation providers in Durham, Fresh Student Living is the most expensive provider, with annual rent far exceeding the maximum student maintenance loan.

That in a letter addressed to Private Landlords, co-signed by Durham SU President Seun Twins and local MP Mary Foy, they were asked to consider refunds for those not able to return to Durham.

Finally, assembly also notes that last academic year, a motion was passed which requested that the SU attempt to advertise less unaffordable private accommodation. This motion will therefore serve as an extension to this policy.

Assembly believes:

That it is inappropriate for Durham SU to be advertising private accommodation during the Covid-19 crisis. Private landlords have refused to rebate rent to Durham students and it is confusing and hypocritical to be criticising them with one hand and advertising them with the other.

That advertising being done directly on the SU's social media can be interpreted as a SU endorsement of an organisation and will be interpreted as such by a significant number of students.

That by doing so, the SU significantly undermines its ability to effectively campaign for Durham students and damages the SU's credibility in the area of housing and accommodation.

That adverts for “luxury accommodation” (accommodation for which rent is significantly higher than the average student loan) can serve to distort student expectations of how much they should be willing to give landlords.

That if the SU is financially dependent on advertising from external organisations, such advertising should be limited to ethical providers which do not clash with the SU’s charitable aims, such as local businesses, careers development platforms and training services.

Assembly resolves:

To encourage an end to the advertisement of luxury accommodation in all circumstances

To encourage an end to advertising accommodation providers whose policy in terms of allowing students who cannot return to Durham to exit contracts or have rent forgiven for the duration of the pandemic as this directly contradicts the Union’s campaign policy

TO: Assembly

FROM: Kathryn Ellison

RE: The membership of Assembly should be publicly known and easily accessible

DATE: 4 February 2021

Assembly notes:

That the membership of assembly is confusing and not widely known amongst the student body. Assembly notes that the majority of students would not be able to name their college representative and even fewer would be able to name their faculty rep.

Assembly believes:

That one of the core elements of being a representative is to be accountable to the group you are representing, this is significantly challenged by anonymity or obscurity. While it can be recognised that members of any association should not be pressured to “come out” as disabled or LGBTQ+, etc. Anyone who wants to be in a position of representation to those groups should be someone who feels comfortable being publicly known as identifying with those characteristics. Assembly believes that by making assembly membership more transparent and visible, understanding of the SU's decision making processes will be improved as the student body will have greater knowledge of who is responsible for making decisions and who serves to represent them in the Assembly.

Assembly resolves:

To support the principle that assembly membership should be visible and accessible to students

That the officers investigate the possibility of making assembly membership visible online and will give an update as to the progress of such an investigation at the beginning of each assembly

TO: Assembly
FROM: Redrei Visaya
RE: Intersectionality week
DATE: 4 February 2021

Assembly notes:

Education is imperative to diversity and inclusion. Durham seems to have a culture of discriminating minorities evident by numerous incidents on social media and reports. If the University had a culture of educating others on matters concerning people with different backgrounds and upbringing, this discrimination might be mitigated. I propose a regular intersectionality week every x week of the term (e.g. every 5th week is intersectionality week). From Monday to Friday of the week, there will be a short talk held by different groups; each day will be dedicated to a certain issue (e.g. Monday is for POC issues, Tuesday for sexuality issues etc.). By having a regular intersectionality week, we will embed in the university culture an environment which welcomes and understands people from all walks of life.

Assembly believes:

This assembly believes that Durham is a place open and welcome to all. We not only support but celebrate people from different backgrounds and beliefs. The intersectionality week acts out this belief.

Assembly resolves:

Plan and establish a university-wide intersectionality week.

Involve DPOCA, LGBTQIA+, Feminist, Inter-faith, Cultural society leaders and compile a list of things that need to be mentioned.