

DURHAM SU ASSEMBLY

There will be a meeting of Assembly at 1600 on Thursday 11 March 2021.

Please try to join the meeting from 1545, to allow for connectivity tests, for a prompt start at 1600.

AGENDA

1. OPENING OF MEETING (CHAIR, 2 MINUTES)

To receive apologies, conflicts of interest, notification of any other urgent business not on the agenda, and a welcome from a member of the Durham SU staff team.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 4 FEBRUARY 2021 (CHAIR, 2 MINUTES) UA/2021/25

To accept the minutes as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

Routine business items

3. CHAIR/VICE CHAIR ELECTION (CHAIR, 10 MINUTES)

To receive an update on the Assembly Chair and Vice Chair open positions.

4. GOVERNANCE AND GRANTS ELECTION (CHAIR, 5 MINUTES)

To elect a possible new member of Governance and Grants Committee.

5. ELECTION UPDATE (VERBAL UPDATE, 5 MINUTES)

To receive an update on election results.

6. OFFICER UPDATES (OFFICERS, 10 MINUTES) UA/2021/26

To receive an update on priorities from the SU Officers.

7. COMMITTEE UPDATES* (COMMITTEE CHAIRS, 20 MINUTES)

To receive updates from each Committee.

8. ASSOCIATION UPDATES** (ASSOCIATION CHAIRS, 20 MINUTES)

To receive updates from each Association.

**A comfort break of 10 minutes will be held, before returning to discussion items.*

Items for discussion:

9. REFERENDUM ON SU AFFILIATION WITH NUS (ROMER PALAD, 15 MINUTES) UA/2021/27

To discuss a motion on a potential referendum taking place to decide if the SU should remain affiliated to NUS.

10. THE FUTURE OF DU BILATERAL AGREEMENTS UPON THE DISCONTINUATION OF UK PARTICIPATION IN THE ERASMUS SCHEME (ROMER PALAD, 10 MINUTES) UA/2021/28

To discuss a motion on the SU lobbying the University Executive to have a say in the strategy to attract global students and academics in light of a change in strategy due to Brexit and gain/loss of exchange schemes.

11. POLICY ON ANTISEMITISM AT DURHAM UNIVERSITY (JSOC, 10 MINUTES) UA/2021/29

To discuss a policy to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

**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 4 February 2021, Virtual meeting, Zoom

Item A - Welcome

ST opened the meeting, welcoming members and attendees, explaining zoom etiquette, outlining that no offensive or unacceptable behavior would be accepted and would result in being removed from the meeting.

Item B - Minutes of the meeting on 26 November 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 no nomination for Chair of Assembly.

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

Item E – Governance and Grants Election

James Adamson hustled for Governance and Grants Student Group Position.

Voting ballots will be circulated to members by email and the results will be emailed to members and attendees of the meeting.

Item F – Officer Updates

ES had been working on an Accommodation stance for 2021, which 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. A letter has been drafted and 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.

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

SMc had been in discussions around Durham's adoption of safety net policies along with the Undergraduate Academic Officer, which began by drafting suggestions for the University on ahead of a meeting with Alan Houston (PVC Education) and Michael Gilmore (Academic Registrar). A draft policy from the University went to the Teaching Recovery Group where multiple amendments and changes were proposed. The conversation has continued in Provost Board, further meetings with Alan and Michael and in numerous meetings with other members of University staff. Senate has agreed the policy and this should be communicated to students soon.

AM had met with the 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 the Opportunities Officer and President. There was consensus that this needed further urgent action. 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.

ST had been working on the Culture Commission and the first phase of research for this has now been completed. 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 this work to continue as a priority. Stage 2 of the research will commence this term so there is still plenty of opportunity for more students to shape the overall report. Looking to make a more permeant place for the Culture Commission, in SU strategy so that this work continues and grows.

Item G – Committee Updates

Updates were provided from:

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

Item H – Association Updates

Updates were provided from:

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

(Apologies from International Students' Association and Mature Students' Association)

****ACCESS BREAK****

Item I – Freedom of Speech Policy

AM presented the policy and stated 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. The Policy pulls together what is already happening and will ensure that appropriate approval processes will be carried out for any external guest speakers.

Concerns were expressed that a specific reading of the policy might exclude certain groups (including Extinction Rebellion) altogether, and clarity was sought around this. Clarity was also requested around the phrase "breaking the law" in terms of how this worked regarding incitement.

ST moves to a vote.

The motion passes.

Item J – End the Advertising of Unaffordable Housing

KE presented the motion and said 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.

Charlie McKeeven, who was in attendance of the meeting spoke against the motion, stating that students should be given the option and some might choose luxury accommodation.

ST moves to a vote

The motion passes.

Item K – The Membership of Assembly should be Publically Known

KE presented the motion and stated 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 membership should be visible and accessible to students and Officers should investigate the possibility of making assembly membership visible online.

There were reservations raised from members of Assembly as some students may not want certain information being known on a public platform.

ST moves to a vote

The motion passes.

Item L – Intersectionality Week

The proposer of the motion Redrei Visaya was not present in the meeting. Assembly members voted to roll the motion forward to the next meeting.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Anna Marshall

RE: Opportunities Officer Report

DATE: 4 March 2021

Update on priorities:

Sustainability – Attended my first meeting of the Sustainable Development Goals working group, and participated in the University's strategic development day with focussed on SDG 3: Health. Co-hosted another all student environment forum with Greenspace, where students expressed great interest in improving the University's biodiversity, and asked to be involved in planning this year's Green Move Out.

Bolstering community – Have asked the PVC Global Claire O'Malley about the Turing Scheme, the International Office shared our concerns.

Democracy – Joined the Student Representation Working Group to discuss between the University, the SU and the common rooms how we can distribute student representation. Consulted DPOCA and WCSA about the Democracy Review findings, and met with SU democracy expert Nick Smith to plan next steps. This work was mostly paused for February to avoid a confusing overlap with the elections period, which I wasn't involved in running. Received an excellently written feedback letter from Castle JCR, which has given me a good sense of what Castle students would like to see reflected in the next stage of the Review.

General updates:

Palatinate: Regular Palatinate Board of Directors meetings have now begun, to discuss the paper's strategy and support where appropriate

Third term: Have met with various student groups who are already keen to plan large events for June, but kept everything up in the air. Asked the University and JCRs to join the SU in adopting a consistent approach to social distancing and events restrictions for third term, so that no single organisation across our campus community feels more limited or pressured than others. Have attended one meeting so far of a University third term planning group, with no clear outcomes so far. Asked the University to extend third term, but at the time of writing no clear decisions made.

Free Speech: Associations consultation on the free speech motion is yet to happen, but then this motion should go to the Board.

Student Furlough: Met with JCR Presidents, FACSOs and Bar Managers, to work with Seun to have a clear approach to the University on why they should be paying

bar staff furlough pay. Met with the University to discuss this, between their finance team, their HR team and the colleges team, but a disappointing rejection from the University. Questions on this welcome.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Sarah McAllister

RE: Postgraduate Academic Officer Report

DATE: 4 February 2021

Update on priorities:

COVID-19 and Education

- Safety Net – Since the last assembly the Safety Net policy was announced to students. We also held our Town Hall with Alan Houston, Michael Gilmore and Tony Fawcett where you could ask your questions directly to University members of staff. If you would like to watch this you can watch the recording here:
<https://youtu.be/9Nn1ZvOSQdg>
 - o For PGTs, there is currently additional analysis being carried out by the University on what additionally can be put in place as the 5% rule that is being used for undergrads cannot apply for students only here for one year. This is a priority of mine at the moment as it is imperative that Postgraduate Taught Students get equal treatment.
- Discussions about planning for the future – I have been involved in a number of conversations about lessons learnt from the pandemic and how to move forward into next term and the next academic year. This has included provisions for dealing with a skills gap for students; for example, those who have not physically been in labs or who have not sat physical exams since their A-levels or GCSEs which will need to be accounted for in the next couple of years.

Interconnected PG Communities

- I have begun working on the Welcome Guide for new Postgraduate Students for the 2021/22 academic year which will include information about Durham City, the SU, Colleges, Departments, Student Groups, etc.
- Continued to work with Student leaders, most notably MCR Presidents and Faculty Reps.

Capturing the range of PG Experiences

- PG Mental Health – At the last meeting of the Student Support and Wellbeing Subcommittee (SSWSC) the session was dedicated to PG Mental Health. I gave a presentation on all the aspects that impact the mental health of Postgraduate students from the admission process and funding to job prospects at the end of the degree.
 - o We had a productive conversation about the need to bolster Postgraduate communities including MCRs, improving PG engagement throughout their degree and ensuring that UGs are not prioritised over PGs.

- Due to the outcomes of this meeting, I will also be going to a College Divisional Board meeting to discuss the importance of supporting MCRs in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- Updating PG Housing Guide – Ewan and I have gone through the SU's PG Housing Guide to see what needs updated. I am currently working through the actions from this meeting alongside SU staff to make sure that the guide is updated and ready for next year.

Postgraduate Access and Participation

- Creating a Postgraduate Access and Participation Policy – The current Access and Participation policy is very centric on the Undergraduate experience. I have been working alongside the SU's Higher Education Policy Coordinator to write this policy. We are currently in the drafting stage and will be discussing it with University staff soon.
- To PG or not to PG Campaign – At the time of the last assembly we were in the middle of the To PG or not to PG campaign which went well. We had good engagement with the undergrads from across Durham through our advice from current pgs and top pieces of advice. Myself and Ewan also ran a drop in so students could ask us questions. Finally, I did an interview with Purple Radio to answer questions about what it is like to be a Postgrad.
 - On the back of this campaign, we will be putting together a PG Funding Guide so we have resources for the following years.

General updates:

TO: Assembly

FROM: Ewan Swift

RE: Welfare and Liberation Officer Report

DATE: 11th March 2021

Update on priorities:

Housing and Accommodation

- **Letter to the UK Government** – Sent off our letter to Michelle Donelan (Universities Minister) addressing the need for comprehensive financial support for students with housing, which was backed by a supporting letter from the VC
 - You can view the letters and a template letter you can send to your local MP via my update [here](#)
- **Accommodation Charging Review** – The group has established 5 workstreams moving forward: financial impact, benchmarking, differential pricing, stakeholder views and marketing
 - **Benchmarking Workstream** – I am part of this workstream looking at how Durham’s accommodation prices compare to the private sector and other Universities, as well as how this affects access and participation
 - Alongside other student reps, we are holding focus groups to get student insight on value for money, affordability and differentiated fees
- **Student Housing Accreditation Scheme** – Invited a member of the accommodations team at Sheffield University to give a presentation on their accreditation scheme “Snug”. We are looking at ways we can best emulate this scheme through a County Council, Durham University and SU partnership

Safety and Culture

- **Active Bystander Training** – Applications are open to hiring more peer facilitators, and we are organising training sessions for the weeks commencing 12th and 19th of April. Please get in touch if you would like your exec/group to receive this training!
- **Drug Harm Reduction and Testing Kits** – More discussions around drug harm reduction training and the provision of drug testing kits. A group shall be forming in the near future to ensure that actions are taken moving forward
- **LGBT+ Allyship and Consent Matters** – Discussing issues around the lack of LGBT+ specific content in the Consent Matters course and the problem of “passive allyship”
- Currently involved in recruitment of two EDI Learning and Development Officers and a Respect Project Manager

Student Support

- **Student Advisory Group** – Discussed the strengths and weaknesses of student support at Durham in a non-Covid context and how we can move forward to keep students informed of the progress of the review.
- **PG Mental Health** – Discussed the importance of bolstering PG communities, supporting MCRs, and improving how PGs are engaged with academics amongst other things as important factors in improving PG mental health.
- **Welfare “Residential”** – Discussed what training should be provided for next year’s Welfare Officers at the online “residential” with topics around drug harm reduction and disability support being of upmost importance. Next steps will be to solidify our plans and organise session facilitators.
- **Counselling Service** – In recognition of University Mental Health Day and concerns students have expressed to me regarding the Counselling Service, I asked them to provide answers to some FAQs to increase understanding and transparency around the service.
- **Hardship Funding** - Discussed with the University about how it will ensure all the money given by the Government can be spent up before the end of March deadline
- Involved in the recruitment of a new Mental Health Advisor

General updates:

- **Covid-19 Community Group** – Meeting between the SU, University and local residents to discuss Covid-19 concerns in the local community
- **Census 2021** - Working with the University on communications around the 2021 Census
- **International Women’s Day** - Panel member for the discussion around the “Picture a Scientist” documentary where I spoke to the importance of allyship and the SU’s work on Active Bystander training
- **Induction Planning Group** – Planning has begun for next year’s Induction Week. I sadly couldn’t attend the first meeting but if you have any thoughts going forward please let me know!
- **Health@Durham Strategy** – I sit on two project groups allied to this strategy looking at how we can understand how Durham University promotes positive health and wellbeing both through its research outputs and its internal practices
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals Conversation Days** – Involved in a conversation day around reducing inequalities at Durham University and the planning of a second conversation day on good health and wellbeing

TO: Assembly

FROM: Romer Palad

RE: Referendum on DSU Affiliation with the National Union of Students (NUS)

DATE: 11 March 2021

Assembly Notes

- That the past year has allowed us to examine our internal democratic structures; our campus culture, and what causes and underpins these.
- That DU SU is one of the affiliated members of the National Union of Students (NUS), where we elect five delegates to represent us in conference.
- That the number of candidates standing to be elected one of DU's delegates this year has fallen from sixteen in 2020 to four in 2021, and that the motion sent to national conference was already determined before they were elected, which is unprecedented.
- That a number of universities in recent years have held affiliation referendums over the past decade. Several have left (eight in the last five years, including Newcastle) while others voted to stay (Keele).
- That a proportion of our SU's annual budget goes to the NUS as part of affiliation (£22,000 to affiliate for 20/21, which is around 2.5% of the SU's expected annual income)

Assembly Believes

- That we should take a similar examination of our external structures, influences and who we affiliate ourselves with from a national perspective.
- That we should complement the democracy review with consulting students' opinion on such a large organisation, and give the students a say in determining whether we should remain affiliated and send a portion of our annual budget to the NUS.
- That we should fully inform the student body of not only how our SU functions, but the external influences and organisations that we have allowed to represent us, especially with the dismal number of candidates this year and the low student engagement in elections.
- That in light of this year's national conference policy submission, DU students should have the opportunity to respond to recent reforms.

Assembly Resolves

- To call a referendum on Durham SU's affiliation to NUSUK scheduled within this academic year - post-exam Easter term.
- That Assembly members are informed of the rules and regulations of the said referendum a fortnight before the first Easter Assembly meeting, and a briefing of the rules is included in the agenda of the next Assembly meeting with the opportunity for questions.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Romer Palad

RE: The Future of DU Bilateral Agreements upon the Discontinuation of UK Participation in the Erasmus Scheme.

DATE: 11 March 2021

Assembly Notes

- That the government announced that the UK will not be participating in the Erasmus scheme after the 2021/22 academic year. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/world/europe/brexit-erasmus-uk-eu.html>
- That a new replacement program 'The Turing Scheme' is intended to replace Erasmus+ and possibly replicate its benefits. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-turing-scheme-to-support-thousands-of-students-to-study-and-work-abroad>
- That individual departments at DU have had long-term bilateral agreements since the inception of Erasmus in 1987. The Chemistry department for example has had 12 EU partners with at least 22 guaranteed UG/PG exchanges annually.
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/international/studyabroad/erasmus/outgoing/degree/where/science/chemistry/>
- That the bilateral agreements go beyond simply nullifying fees, they are bespoke and have certain agreements regarding other factors such as specific Student Union assistance, accommodation, utilities discounts, guarantorships etc.
- That there is a lot of uncertainty regarding replicating such agreements as we transition into the Turing Scheme, but what is certain is that current bilaterals are untenable and may not be replaced at all.

Assembly Believes

- That the SU has a role to play in mitigating the effects of losing these long-term agreements.
- That we as a university should endeavour to piece together what we can from current agreements as we transition into the new scheme.
- That our student body and academic community benefits from having an international presence, and this transition period should not make the DU look less attractive as a destination for potential non-domestic students.
- That the university executive, students, the SU, and departments will all have different perceptions of our unique selling points. It is important that the student body and the SU has a say in the strategy to attract international students and academics going forward.

Assembly Resolves

- To advise our UG and PG Academic officers to communicate with departments to assist in maintaining links with partner universities, building a new framework/strategy that facilitates UK-EU exchanges.
- To mandate the SU to lobby the University to clearly designate a contact for prospective international students for support and advice, which should be listed on widely available webpages across the University community (e.g. DUO, SU & University websites).
- To mandate the DSU to lobby the university executive to have a say in the strategy to attract global students and academics in light of a change in strategy due to Brexit and gain/loss of exchange schemes.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Jewish Society

RE: Antisemitism at Durham University

DATE: 11 March 2021

Policy on Antisemitism at Durham University

Assembly Notes:

1. There is currently no definition for antisemitism within the Union
2. Antisemitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).
3. Criminal acts are antisemitic when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.
4. Antisemitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.
5. The definition has already been adopted by the UK government to “ensure that culprits will not be able to get away with being antisemitic because the term is ill-defined, or because different organisations or bodies have different interpretations of it”.
6. The NUS and the European Commission have also adopted the definition.

Assembly Believes:

1. There are many contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere, with examples such as
 - a. Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion
 - b. Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions
 - c. Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews
 - d. Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust)
 - e. Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
 - f. Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
 - g. Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour
 - h. Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation
 - i. Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g. claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis
 - j. Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis

- k. Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel
2. Antisemitism today is more complex than the antisemitism of decades past, but the hatred it incites is equally dangerous.
3. Durham's student union should follow the above examples and endeavour to combat antisemitism in its contemporary form to prevent and combat an escalation of antisemitism in rhetoric or in action
4. The passing of the motion will also make Jewish students safe, welcome and valued members of the student community

Assembly Resolves:

1. To adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."
2. To aim to uphold a definition made by Jews to protect Jews, in order to adequately address contemporary concerns and manifestations of antisemitism on campus
3. To announce the definition has been adopted and the reasons for doing so
4. To refer to the definition in order to settle reported cases of antisemitism in the students' complaints procedure