

DURHAM SU ASSEMBLY

There will be a meeting of Assembly at 1600 on Thursday 10 February 2022.
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, 5 MINUTES)

To receive apologies, conflicts of interest, notification of any other urgent business not on the agenda.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS ON 9 DECEMBER 2021 (CHAIR, 5 MINUTES) UA/2122/13

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

Routine business items

3. NOMINATIONS FOR AVAILABLE POSITIONS (CHAIR, 10 MINUTES)

To receive an update on NUS Delegate and Governance and Grants Committee vacant positions.

4. OFFICER UPDATES (OFFICERS, 15 MINUTES) UA/2122/14

To receive an update on priorities from the SU officer team.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES (COMMITTEE CHAIRS, 15 MINUTES)

To receive updates from committee chairs on activities since the last meeting.

6. ASSOCIATION UPDATES (ASSOCIATION CHAIRS, 15 MINUTES)

To receive updates from association chairs on activities since the last meeting.

Items for discussion:

7. ENDING THE USE OF NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT IN CASES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, BULLYING AND OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT (JON CHAN, 20 MINUTES) UA/2122/15

To discuss a motion on Ending the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements in cases of Sexual Assault, Bullying and other forms of Harassment.

8. DEMOCRACY REVIEW: ASSEMBLY MEMBERSHIP PROPOSAL (OPPORTUNITIES OFFICER, 30 MINUTES) UA/2122/16

To discuss a motion on the Democracy Review: Assembly Membership Proposal.

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 SU ASSEMBLY

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING 09 December 2021

Virtual Meeting, Zoom

1. OPENING OF MEETING

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

The Chief Executive provided a statement regarding the recent incident at a South College formal dinner.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS ON 25 NOVEMBER 2021

There were no amendments to minutes of the last meetings.
Minutes from the last meetings were approved.

3. DEMOCRACY REVIEW UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided an update on the Democracy Review and said this had been a multi-year research project which was designed to understand what students thought about democratic engagement and how they should exercise their powers. Three separate motions were brought to Assembly as a result of the project to allow changes to be voted on in parts rather than a lot of changes in one go. Two of the motions were approved by Assembly and a separate meeting was requested to discuss the third around Assembly membership, the meeting however was not quorate so the approval of the third motion needed to be ratified at the last meeting.

There is still currently work going on about the membership of Assembly with student leaders and once this work is concluded a new proposal will be brought to Assembly. The next stage is to update the current standing orders to reflect the changes agreed by Assembly, which will be out to Assembly and the Board of Trustees for ratification.

Routine business items

4. BOARD REPORT

The Board of Trustees met on 30 November 2021. The Durham SU auditors made their report, and confirmed the financial integrity and sustainability of the students' union. The trustees also considered a first draft of their annual report. The Chief Executive's Report, which gave some wider context to the recent press reports about Durham University's support of student sex workers, and both the unfortunate and the malicious misrepresentations of Durham SU's student support work.

There were no questions from Assembly members.

5. OFFICER UPDATES

Updates were provided from the SU Officer Team on their priorities for the year. Updates were provided by:

Seun Twins, SU President
Charlie Procter, Undergraduate Academic Officer (provided by Delcan Merrington)
Declan Merrington, Postgraduate Academic Officer
Jack Ballingham, Opportunities Officer
Jonah Graham, Welfare and Liberation Officer

6. COMMITTEE UPDATES

SU Rep Committee
DUCK
Student Groups Committee
Governance and Grants Committee

(Apologies from JCR PresComm, MCR PresComm and Academic Affairs Committee)

7. ASSOCIATION UPDATES

International Students' Association
Women's Association
LGBT+ Association
Durham People of Colour Association (DPoCA)

(Apologies from Trans Association, Students with Disabilities Association (SwDA), Mature Students' Association (MATSA) and Working Class Students' Association)

****ACCESS BREAK****

8. CHAIRS ELECTION

ST announced the results of the Chair election.

Natasja Enthoven was announced as chair of Assembly and will take over at the next meeting.

9. OPEN PLACES ELECTION

ST announced the results of the Undergraduate Open Place election.

Liam Robson was announced as the Undergraduate Open Place representative.

Items for ratification:

10. REVIEW AND RATIFICATION OF EXPIRED POLICY

Governance and Grants Committee carried out a review of previously approved policies which are now expired or were due to expired, and recommended policies for re-ratification by Assembly.

Assembly re-ratified the below policies:

Policy	
UCU Anti-Casualisation	Ratified

International Tuition Fees	Ratified
Mo Mowlam	Ratified
Support for Direct Action Against Rising Accommodation Fees	Ratified
Durham University is Institutionally Disablist	Ratified
Fight the Housing Rush	Ratified
Support Access to Free, Safe and Legal Abortions	Ratified
Lobby Landlords to Accept International Guarantors	Ratified
Declaration of Climate Emergency	Ratified

11. AOB

Jon Chan said that a number of students had noted that there was a lack of microwaves and hot water facilities in academic buildings and asked if this was something that could be looked at by the SU.

ST confirmed that the officers would look into this and flag with the University.

Alfie Whillis noted that JCR Precomm did not agree with the reasoning of Governance and Grants Committee as to why the JCR training policy has been allowed to lapse and the committee will consider resubmitting a new policy.

TO: Assembly
FROM: Jack Ballingham
RE: Opportunities Officer Report
DATE: 10 February 2022

Opportunities Officer Assembly Report

Student groups and student group activity

As of the 31st December 2021, there were 23,699 registered student group memberships. There are currently 9134 free memberships to academic societies, representing 6041 individual students who have benefited from the free membership scheme. This means that around 30% of students have so far made use of the scheme. In Michaelmas term 2021, Durham SU student groups hosted 56 events involving an external speaker; these events were attended by 2854 members.

DSU student group activity operated along the same coronavirus mitigation measures used by the University for its “soft landing” Approach to the beginning of term. This has now come to an end, and most restrictions on student group events have been removed.

Now that Governance and Grants Committee has been properly constituted, applications for student group grants have begun being processed. Student Groups Committee has also begun processing applications for new student groups.

This term’s online Refreshers’ Fair saw 5,594 visits to the site. Planning for Freshers’ Fair 2022 has also begun, and we hope to use Maiden Castle as the venue again this year, following the success of the 2021 fair.

Student Group Agreement reform

Planning has begun for the reform process to the Student Group Agreement; consultation with members will be taking place throughout this term, a timetable for which will be announced presently. We hope for the newly-drafted version of the Agreement to be available for final approval during Easter term.

Commercial activity

The food offer at Riverside Bar and Café will soon be returning, with the availability of freshly-made pizzas. This restores a major part of the bar’s pre-coronavirus revenue stream, and will hopefully make Riverside a convenient place for lunch for students (especially with lectures now taking place downstairs from the bar).

Work on the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

Campaigning work around the government's "Free Speech Bill" continues, with the focus on engaging student groups and demonstrating that student activity at Durham is already a flourishing environment for free and open debate. We've also been reaching out to other students' unions, and are hoping to be in a position to take the campaign to a more national level with them.

I'm also glad to be able to report that, thanks to Durham SU's lobbying work, the Bill has now been amended to exclude Durham's common rooms from its scope. This comes from the amended Bill as it came out of its committee at the end of September, though it took some time to confirm the status of the relevant amendment.

Building on articles published last term, I've authored two more articles to raise awareness of the Bill and its implications for students. The first will be published in the next issue of Palatinate, and focuses on the amendment for common rooms and the Bill's consequences for societies. The second will be published in the upcoming print edition of Red Pepper, and focuses on the need for the wider student movement to organise against the Bill. This article carried a £55 author's fee, which I'll be donating to Police Spies Out of Lives, a campaign and advocacy group for women victimised by undercover police surveillance agents. This is an issue linked to the Bill by the common thread of state intrusion into the student movement; the NUS was spied on at least between 1993 and 1997¹, while there is evidence that the police attempted to infiltrate student campaign groups at Cambridge as recently as 2013².

Democracy Review

An updated model for membership of Assembly has been formulated, based on the acknowledgement of deficiencies in the previously-presented model. This model of membership is on the agenda for this meeting of Assembly, and Assembly members have the chance now to critique and feedback on the proposal. If approved, new standing orders for this change, and for the previous Democracy Review changes approved by Assembly, will be laid before Assembly at a subsequent meeting, before approval by the Board of Trustees.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/ng-interactive/2018/oct/15/uk-political-groups-spied-on-undercover-police-list>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/14/police-cambridge-university-secret-footage>

TO: Assembly

FROM: SU Rep Committee

RE: Ending the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements in cases of sexual assault, bullying, and other forms of harassment

DATE: Thursday 10 February

Assembly notes:

- The Minister of State for the Higher and Further Education, The Rt. Hon. Michelle Donelan MP has urged universities to sign up to a pledge promising not to use Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in cases involving sexual misconduct, bullying, and other forms of harassment.
- is a substantive use of NDAs in the higher education sector with regard to student complaints. In 2020, the BBC reported that at least one-third of universities had used NDAs in such scenarios.
- According to a Freedom of Information request, Durham University has spent £177,300 regarding NDAs that involve student complaints.

Assembly believes:

- The safety and wellbeing of the students, especially those who are victims of abuse, shall be taken most seriously. The university must ensure sufficient and effective safeguards are in place to protect these interests.
- The university's complaints procedure should maintain the confidence of the student body. It must not in any way be perceived to silence the victims for any reason.
- Freedom of speech, especially to criticise the university's handling of complaints shall be recognised and protected.

Assembly resolves:

- To urge Durham University to sign the pledge promising not to use Non-Disclosure Agreements in cases involving sexual misconduct, bullying, and other forms of harassment.
- Officers of the Student Union shall bring this matter to the attention of the University executive.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Opportunities Officer

RE: Democracy Review – Assembly Membership Proposal

DATE: 28/01/2022

Assembly Notes:

Durham Students' Union has conducted a review of its democratic processes during the 2021/21 academic year. The work identified a range of areas in need of review, with the most pressing being the Union's Assembly.

In November 2020 Durham SU launched the Democracy Review Survey, which ran until January 2021, collecting over 1000 responses from the student body. In-depth focus groups were carried out with groups of students including key student representatives. The results were collated by development consultants Miragold, and the Democracy Review findings were published to the student body in January 2021.

Key findings from the report were:

- low trust in Durham SU's democratic processes
- communication was a barrier for people finding out about or participating in democracy
- the democratic structures themselves were clunky and difficult to navigate

During February and March 2021 students were asked to consolidate the Democracy Review findings and provide suggestions for the changes they would like to happen. The Opportunities Officer carried out listening exercises with Common Room executives for specific feedback from that constituency, Assembly voting members were contacted to provide their feedback and democracy 'drop-ins' were organised for the wider student body. During April and May, students were invited to workshops to trial new models for Assembly. The focus of the workshops was on motion discussion, membership and meeting structure.

From the various student engagement activities, taking on board student feedback and best practice from other students' unions, a remodeled Assembly has been designed.

In summer 2021 and Autumn 2022, reforms were passed to change different aspects of Assembly. The last round of changes proposed a new membership model for Assembly. Although the model passed as part of a larger suite of reforms, members wanted us to revise the proposal and bring it back to Assembly.

Assembly Believes:

The purpose of Assembly is to inform the policy direction of Durham Students' Union work between the annual election cycle and to scrutinise the work of the Officer Team.

There is a strong student leadership culture at Durham with many students engaged in representative roles across the university both academically and from the wider student experience. For Assembly to be reflective of Durham and open up the policy setting process, Assembly membership should comprise of a students directly elected from the student body and those representing core constituencies of students.

Assembly Resolves:

To organise student constituents into 6 key groups:

- Academic
- Associations
- Colleges
- Open Place
- DSU Sabbatical Officers
- Wider Student Experience

Where an Assembly place is held by a student elected by a core constituency, that constituency can decide who takes the place. For example, the committee of an Association may decide that their space will be taken by their Chair, or by another member of their elected committee.

Durham SU will hold a cross campus election at the start of Michaelmas term to elect students on to Assembly.

Substantial changes to Assembly's membership include:

- Students directly elected on to Assembly from each of the university's academic faculties
- Students directly elected on to Assembly from each of the 17 colleges as opposed to each of the 17 Common room Committees
- Students directly elected on to Assembly into reserved places for undergraduates and postgraduates
- Students directly elected on to Assembly from engagement in each of the student group areas
- Student leaders from the University Enrichment Department (Experience Durham) will have a place on Assembly for the first time.

The new model will increase the number of representatives on Assembly and allow more students to directly influence decision making.

If students hold roles in other elected groups or committees within the institution, they are permitted to run for any of the directly elected places they define into.

In the below proposal any Assembly seat titled 'Rep' will be decided by the committee of constituents they represent, and any Assembly seat titled 'Place' and the DSU Sabbatical officer will be elected by a cross campus ballot.

To qualify for a Departmental or College place for example, a student would need to be a member of the Department or College they were running for.

Academic

- Academic Affairs Committee Rep (x1)
- Faculty of Arts and Humanities Place (UG x 2, PG x 2)
- Faculty of Sciences Place (UG x 2, PG x 2)
- Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Place (UG x 2, PG x 2)
- Durham University Business School Place (UG x 2, PG x 2)

Associations

- LGBTQ+ Association Rep (x 1)
- People of Colour Association Rep (x 1)
- Students with Disabilities Association Rep (x 1)
- International Students Association Rep (x 1)
- Mature Students Association Rep (x 1)
- Trans Student Association Rep (x 1)
- Durham Womxn's Association Rep (x 1)
- Working Class Students Association Rep (x 1)

Colleges

- College Place (x 17)
- JCR PresComm Rep (x 1)
- MCR PresComm Rep (x 1)

Open Place

- Open Place (x 7)

DSU Sabbatical Officers

- President
- Welfare & Liberation Officer
- Opportunities Officer
- Postgraduate Academic Officer
- Undergraduate Academic Officer

Wider Student Experience

- Student Groups Place – Academic (x 1)
- Student Groups Place – Active (x 1)
- Student Groups Place – Interests (x 1)
- Student Groups Place – Political & Causes (x 1)
- Student Groups Place – Culture & Faith (x 1)
- Student Groups Place – Professional Development (x 1)
- Student Groups Place – Student Media (x 1)
- University Enrichment Department Reps (x 3)
- Student Group Committee Rep (x 1)
- DUCK Committee Rep (x 1)

Assembly Chair will also be voted for by a cross campus ballot and will be a non-voting member of Assembly