

Durham Students' Union Assembly Agenda

Thursday 12th March 2020, 18:30, PCL048

Time	Subject	Who	Paper
18:30 18:30	A. Welcome	Chair	
18:31 18:33	B. Minutes of the meeting on 6 th February	Chair	UA/1920/33
18:33 18:35	C. Apologies for absence and conflicts of interest	Chair	

Assembly Updates

18:35 18:45	D. Censure Investigation Outcome	Chair	UA/1920/34
18:45 18:50	E. DRO Update	Gareth Hughes	UA/1920/35

Routine Business

18:50 19:10	F. Officer Updates	Officers	UA/1920/36
19:10 19:25	G. Committee Updates	Committee Chairs*	UA/1920/37

Items for Discussion:

19:25 19:35	H. Workers' Rights in Higher Education <i>SU Core Position</i>	Officer Team	UA/1920/38
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****Access Break****

19:45 19:55	I. Community Engagement <i>SU Core Position</i>	Tom Pymer	UA/1920/39
19:55 20:05	J. Procedure for Allocating Delegates for NUS Liberation Conference	Jess Madden	UA/1920/40

20:05 20:15	K. Open places elected by Cross Campus ballot	Caitlin Guibout	UA/1920/41
20:15 20:25	L. Getting Digitally up to date	Silas Welsh	UA/1920/42
20:25 20:35	M. Remove Officer and Committee and Association Updates from Assembly	Caitlin Guibout	UA/1920/43

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

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.

ASSEMBLY 06.02.2020

Item A: Welcome

JM opens meeting.

Reminds of procedural motions and introduces new vice chair, LC.

Motion of censure update – not suitable for discussion, motion will not be discussed at this Assembly. External consultant producing report. Accountability processes forming part of democracy review.

Item B: Minutes from 03.12.2020

No amendments. Accepted as submitted.

Item C: Apologies and conflicts and interest

Women's Assoc apologies

Item D: Board Update

KMc presents update.

Item E: Officer Updates

KMc (President)

KMc updates on UCU Strikes

Question: Signs from Uni they may try to resolve prior to action?

KMc: National dispute, likely to be resolved at national level rather than individual institutions.

KMc updates on priorities: affordable accommodation, international student survey, sexual harassment and violence. Also: respect commission, visit to the Baltics, collegiate operations review.

SJA (UG Academic)

SJA updates on priorities: decolonisation, reforming pedagogy, academic support.

DE (PG Academic)

Updates on priorities: PGT, PG access and participation, hidden academic costs.

Also: pay and conditions for PGs who teach, winter graduation.

AM (Welfare and Liberation)

Apologies received

Respect commission, Athena Swan, #FreePeriod, Student Minds, Liberation Strategy and Campaign, sexual misconduct and violence operations group.

JD (Opportunities)

Update on priorities: sustainability, Real Living Wage employer for University, Funding Gap work.

Also: eco-fest, refreshers fair

AK: for SJA, meeting with Director of Student Support and Wellbeing and Disability Support re specific learning difficulty testing

SJA: Has sent research regarding issue onwards. Will take further action elsewhere.

Student (S): for KMc, does SU have position on students not getting VfM during strikes?

KMc: Can support people who want to claim compensation, getting further training. Claiming compensation may play into consumer narrative, money from previous strikes has been spent on benefit for students. Officer team still thinking about position.

Student: Previous strike, compensation did not reach JCRs. Why was this?

KMc: SU held poll asking students where money should be spent. Same can be done this time.

Item F: Elections and Referendum Update

GH: Candidates to be announced 07.02.2020. Change in election rules. Referendum process is starting again, taking place in Easter term. Outlines proposed changes, which will be online beforehand.

Item G: Committee Updates

Academic Affairs Committee (WH)

- Work on lecture capture
- Improvements for combined honours students
- Academic support survey relating to SJA priorities

DUCK (LG)

- Developing constitution
- Working on admin charges with SU staff
- Introducing training for current and future committees
- Elections
- Upcoming events
- Working on relationships with college DUCKs

Governance and Grants (JD)

- Grant funding for student groups
- Reviewing how governance and grants works

JCR PresComm (CE)

- University compensation
- Ops catering reviews
- Open Day changes
- Updates on South College
- DSO independence framework

MCR PresComm (SM)

- Planning inter-MCR work
- Advice from current postgraduates for undergraduates
- Ops review
- Working with PG Academic, DE.

Societies Committee (J)

- Electing new chair
- Feedback from Presidents team, working with Opps team
- Working with SU on website changes
- Ratification process
- Handover document for execs

Union Rep Committee (TC)

- Working with Women's Assoc and It's Not OK on sexual misconduct and violence
- International Students forums
- Campaigning on accommodation fees
- Working on democracy with SU

Question: Governance and Grants review – why is this happening?

JD: Part of the democracy review.

Question: What are the working groups (SGC)

(J): Working groups have occurred over last 2 years. Smaller groups working on projects. Committee has decided to take whole-committee approach on prioritising issues.

Item H: Decolonising the Curriculum: SU Core Position (SJA)

SJA presents motion.

ML: Why were international students not consulted?

SJA: work is being done with ISA, this work focussed on partnership with DPOCA. International students were consulted via DPOCA. Colonialism affects people of colour.

Q: Teaching done by early career academics. How will SU taking this position going to support academics who will be asked to undertake extra work?

SJA: This is not the end of the conversation. Conversation will continue with University execs. It's important that this does not happen – that would be a mistake.

Motion passes.

Item I: Sign the SG Accord (JD)

JD presents motion.

Q: Why would University oppose signing?

JD: Don't think they will. This has to go to UEC, wanted to get Assembly's support in writing the paper for UEC.

Motion passes.

JM: Invites GH to clarify the difference between Core Positions and standard motions.

GH: Offers clarification on this difference. Actions in core positions are less clear.

Item J: Divest from Barclays (ST)

ST presents motion.

Q: Some colleges have student treasurers. Would colleges need to change banks?

ST: This motion is holistic. Yes colleges would probably need to change their banks.

Q: So colleges would have to, if this motion goes through?

ST: Yes, it's a boycott of Barclays.

CE: We can't just change banking in DSO framework – this isn't our choice. Unless University changes, we can't.

ST: Changes would be centralised from the University.

CE: So we'd be lobbying them, and we'd follow.

Q: Where would we go?

ST: Barclays is the worst offender, so demonstrating this attitude is a stance. Any substitute is better than Barclays.

Q: What about independent colleges? Would be the same issue that CE raised. Practicality of trying to change a bank is a challenge.

ST: Completely understand challenge. This motion demonstrates attitude to University. Independent colleges is a separate issue.

Q: What if people want to work for Barclays?

ST: This is a national campaign. It's about how students feel about climate change. Backlash can be negotiated.

Q: How have other Universities started to boycott Barclays?

ST: It's just about the banking relationship, taking a standard position, University already divesting from fossil fuels. It's just about banking.

JC: Concerned about the centralisation aspect of the worded motion, JCRs concerned that University will take control of finances.

ST: Keeping independence of colleges is important – happy this has been highlighted.

DE: Independent common rooms are not the subject of this motion. The SU can lobby the University. Independent bank accounts are legally distinct from University finances, regardless of the bank. Likely to involve small admin. From experience, we know University can successfully divest, as they have from fossil fuels, without causing issues for students.

Q: Should we also be limiting the advertising of these companies as possible career paths?

ST: Agrees with the point. The motion is an opportunity to express that we are not consumers – we are here to learn.

Q: How powerful could this movement be, if this is a national movement?

ST: Previous national campaigns which take a stance have been powerful and successful.

Q: Vague about the specifics on JCR impact, student impact etc. Could be reworded into moral standpoint.

ST: This is a national campaign. Understand the Durham-specific challenges due to collegiate system. This motion just asks Assembly to support the boycott of Barclays.

Many students agree in general that boycotting Barclays is great, but justifying voting position to colleges is difficult if we have to continue to use Barclays as an independent college.

JM asks that motion is displayed on screen for Assembly members to see resolutions.

ST: The specific details should not damage the overall campaign to divest from Barclays.

KMc: This would be the University's responsibility.

Q: Any reaction from Barclays on national campaign?

ST: Not that aware of

CE: Motion does not ask all Common Rooms to change their banking. It asks that SU lobbies University to move away from banking with Barclays.

SJA: Asked VC about banking with Barclays, despite divesting from fossil fuels. VC does not think it's important to divest from Barclays and students take stance on this.

ST: National campaign on attitude towards fossil fuels. Durham should take a holistic stance on our view on climate change and this is part of that stance.

S: Opportunities will open up elsewhere. It's in a bank's interest to support you in changing banks.

Moves to vote. Motion passes.

Item K: Creating an open forum (SM)

SM presents motion.

JD: Could this be a part of the democracy review?

SM: There's no harm in doing things sooner rather than later, to address tensions and offer stepping stone for future work on democracy.

Q: How will this be publicised, improve engagement with democratic forums?

SM: This is overarching view, not specific but the view would be to change Assembly format to bust existing myths about SU Assembly. Its aim is to get more students involved.

Motion passes.

ITEM L: Remove procedural motion to vote by secret ballot

LC presents motion.

S: There may be sensitive situations where people feel they can't vote truthfully.

LC: Situations have arisen where procedural motion has been voted down, as voting members should be held accountable.

JM: Clarifies that this would not extend to elections.

R: Voting members are voting on behalf of their college/Association etc. We should be held accountable for our votes and transparency is important to this.

DE: If motion stayed, members would still be involved in the decision to pass the procedural motion. Maintaining the option gives the opportunity for future use if appropriate.

LC: Voting members shouldn't have the power to make that decision.

ML: Question

GH: You can't vote on a procedural motion using a secret ballot anyway. This decision would remove the option entirely.

CG: Can't effectively represent people if secret ballot is an option.

Q: If Assembly members shouldn't have the power to choose to vote using a secret ballot, but you are asking assembly members to use this exact power to pass the motion to remove the option.

LC: The rationale behind this is different. The motion is grounded in accountability.

Q: The motion restricts future Assembly members.

S: What scenarios in the past have required voting by a secret ballot?

GH: Don't think Assembly has ever held a secret ballot. Procedural motions have only existed for 18 months – 2 years.

TC: Representative accountability is a good argument, but there's no evidence to suggest that Assembly votes actually reflect student opinion.

CG: People would care if we consulted students more.

R: Always gives student body the opportunity to give their views and have these heard. Transparency as core of democracy. Secret ballot challenges that.

TC: It would be valuable to keep this as an option.

DE: Removing the option removes future opportunities for this to be used, which in the future may be appropriate for whatever reason. Effective representation can still be achieved if this remains as an option.

LC: Representatives should represent who they are elected to represent. A secret ballot threatens this representation.

Motion tied. Does not pass.

JM: Ends meeting.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Chair of Assembly

RE: Outcome of an investigation into allegations of misconduct by the President

DATE: 12 March 2020

A motion was submitted for discussion at the February meeting of the Durham SU Assembly which contained 19 allegations of misconduct by the President. These allegations offered no supporting evidence but were serious in nature and implication.

The Chair of Assembly and the Durham SU Chief Executive agreed that publication of allegations without evidence would be fundamentally unfair to any person accused of misconduct; in particular, the numbers and complexity of these allegations meant that it would be impossible for Assembly to have a reasoned discussion on the motion within the rules of debate and, therefore, impossible for the President to defend herself. It would be inconsistent with principles of natural justice to allow such a motion to proceed to Assembly, as well as contrary to Durham SU's responsibilities as a democratic organisation and an employer.

The Chair of Assembly was clear that Assembly was entitled to know that the allegations had been thoroughly considered and asked the Durham SU Chief Executive to source an independent party to undertake an investigation into the allegations. The Chair approved a recommendation to appoint Jane Whalen, an experienced HR professional, SU Chief Executive and consultant, and asked for a report to be produced in time for the next meeting of Assembly.

The investigation has concluded, and the full report has been received by the Chair of Assembly and the Durham SU Chief Executive, and made available to the original complainant, the President, and the Chair of the Durham SU People and Culture Committee.

The report made four recommendations:

1. There is no case to answer as the motion is a series of allegations with insufficient, and often no evidence supporting the allegation
2. A code of conduct is created for all student leaders that outlines roles, responsibilities, accountability and the disciplinary process - steps within, evidence required and likely outcomes - perhaps along similar lines as the ACAS code and accessible to all (<https://www.acas.org.uk/acas-code-of-practice-on-disciplinary-and-grievance-procedures>). This may form part of Durham SU's democracy review and should help all parties understand what accountability is and that there is more than one way to do it.
3. Assembly is given a full breakdown of why the Trustee Board decided neutrality policy was unable to be enforced.
4. A review of how student trustees are supported in their role to understand what a Trustee is, who they represent at Trustee Board, their responsibilities and how to speak out.

Given that the independent investigation found that none of the 19 allegations presented any case for the President to answer, Durham SU will not further publish the allegations.

The recommendations have been accepted by the Chair of Assembly and the Durham SU Chief Executive and will be processed in the coming weeks. The June meeting of Assembly is expected to receive a report confirming that all recommendations have been actioned.

Durham SU now considers the matter closed.

TO: Assembly
FROM: Kate McIntosh
RE: President Report
DATE: 12 March 2020

Update on priorities:

Affordable accommodation for all

- The Vice-Chancellor, Chief Financial Officer, PVC Colleges and Wider Student Experience, and Chair of University Finance Committee have received the Terms of References we wrote for the Accommodation Fee Review Group
- Members of University Council have encouraged the Executive to complete the fee review in time for the fee setting for the 2021/22 Academic year
- A paper on financial analysis of college costs has come to Finance Committee and Council as a response to the Ripped Off campaign and I've asked for the full break down of costings
- I'm currently planning how we can best support Ripped Off groups to campaign effectively and continue to improve the expectations we set for the review
- There continues to be support for the Fee Review Group but I'm conscious that we need to start the process as soon as possible; other external pressures (Coronavirus for example) are taking up decision-makers time

International student representation

- The International Student Survey is closing soon and we will collate results and hold focus groups after that.

Harassment and violence in Durham City

- Research into training types continues, specifically how we can integrate our own work, expertise from NUS, and previous training into a new training and accreditation scheme for local venues.
- We met with John Oliver, who designed the Active Bystander training we run, to discuss this new training module for venue staff, and I have contacted NUS Liberation Officers to gauge what kinds of training on inclusivity and tackling discrimination we could include.
- I'm planning to present the idea to the City Safety Group and Area Action Partnership to seek support (and maybe funding).

General updates:

College Operations review (part 2)

Consultation has started on the proposed changes to College portering and housekeeping. The student consultation framework commits UEC to a process of consultation that students design and agree to. You can and should fill out the survey [here](#). JCR and MCR Presidents have attended two open consultation meetings. The results of consultation will be compiled into a report that will go to UEC when the final decision is made, and we'll also draw up our own report expressing your opinions and concerns on the proposed changes.

Crucially, filling out the survey and talking to your student reps is just one way of expressing your opinion on this issue (and it is important!). We've also been able to support a campaign to save college staff through a new grant for Common Room led projects and I'd encourage you to get involved. It's not yet clear exactly what effect the changes will have but it isn't hard to see that cutting the numbers of staff in college is going to have an adverse effect on the college networks which aid student support and wellbeing. Moreover, the University has a responsibility to be a good employer, offering secure employment with fair pay and contracts. The way the significance of college staff to our communities, and how strongly we feel about that, has been delegitimised is deeply concerning and frustrating.

Policy to NUS

We have submitted policy to be debated at NUS National Conference. Delegates and Officers worked together to create a policy on [parity in healthcare](#). NUS conference policy has changed this year. Each Union submits one policy and then all affiliated SUs' delegates get to vote on which should be debated – with the top eight discussed at Conference!

University Council

Council met and discussed a packed agenda which included the Respect Commission, health and wellbeing strategy, Coronavirus, USS pensions scheme, non-residential maintenance, the University's shocking gender pay gap, and cost of college accommodation. I reported to Council on Sam's and the People of Colour Association's work on decolonising the curriculum this year, as well as Common Room support, our work supporting students through the UCU strikes, and Durham's Got Talent. You can now find my reports to University Council on the website – [they're a thrilling read](#).

TO: Assembly
FROM: Sam Johnson-Audini
RE: UG Academic Officer Report
DATE: 12th March 2020

Update on priorities:

Decolonisation

- I have had a core position recognising the need for Durham University to decolonise and committing the SU to work on decolonisation passed at Assembly.
- I have been promoting the 'Liberate my library' campaign with the library to get more books by and about the LGBT+ community and people of colour.
- Working with DPOCA on the relaunch of the campaign, what that will look like and when.

Academic support

- My survey on academic support has now closed, and I am working through the results in order to find out how to present those to the University to have the best impact.
- I am currently working on a core position for Assembly with regards to academic support and what we should expect from the university.

Reforming pedagogy

- We have held further meetings with key departments to discuss how they integrate innovative teaching methods into their curricula, and we've been pleasantly surprised by some of the answers! This has helped us focus our thinking around reviewing pedagogy in the University, as we are now more aware of what is currently going on in departments.

General updates:

- I have been active in the SU's efforts to support the UCU strike, including doing a video with Sarah Elton, Durham UCU President, to explain this wave of strikes and what it means for students and speaking at the UCU regional rally emphasising the importance of good working conditions for staff and their impact on students learning.
- I have been developing a 'stories from the picket line' series for Durham Students Supporting the Strikes with stories from staff and why they are striking, and testimonies from students supporting strikes.

- I worked with UCU to organise a Teachout on the 4th March surrounding liberating education with speakers on a range of topics from French student politics to the impacts of the hostile environment in higher education.
- I have been working with and supporting the Women's association and UCU with the NUS to organise and support a 'feminist picket' on the 9th March.

TO: Assembly

FROM: David Evans, Postgraduate Academic Officer

RE: Postgraduate Academic Officer Report

DATE: 12 March 2020

In the period since last Assembly, most of my time has been spent on a variety of projects outside my main priorities, so this report will consist solely of general updates:

General updates:

Strikes

Firstly, the student effect – my principal concern is the effect the strikes are having on PGT students specifically, whose courses (usually) last only 1 year. I am unconvinced there is any feasible, meaningful mitigation the University can put in place for students taking courses in heavily-striking departments that ensures they receive the education they have come here for. If you are a PGT student that has had a significant amount of academic contact cancelled, I would be interested in hearing what you believe you have missed out on due to strikes, so that I can advocate for more concrete redress to be provided by the University. If you are a PGR student that has had key events such as your viva rearranged due to the strikes, I would similarly be understanding the impacts this has had on you.

Secondly, the effect this has had on my work. A great many University meetings have been cancelled due to academic staff being unavailable due to the strike. This has meant our usual routes in to University policymaking have ground to a halt. Thus, much of our work has switched to preparatory drafting for when meetings are back on – hence this slightly unusual report with little action from meetings to report back on. But we're doing what we can!

National Work

Excitingly, I'm working with my counterpart at Northumbria and NUS to create a one-day conference for postgraduate representatives across the country! I envisage this as being a replacement for the national representation NUS slashed this year, where postgraduates will determine what common problems exist for them in the HE system and how they should set about changing them in the coming years, with or without NUS' support.

A couple of other national pieces include a meeting with the Office for Students that will have taken place by the time of Assembly on the topic of PG admissions systems, and on drafting changes to NUS' policy on lobbying for a National Education Service. I will ensure these initially undergraduate-focussed projects serve the needs of postgraduates too.

Colleges

A slightly off-piste topic for the Postgraduate Academic portfolio, but an important one. College common rooms are rightly demanding that they need additional financial support from the University; having negotiated an increase to this myself back in 2017 as an MCR President I am happy to support this renewed push for more, and am in contact with the

college student leaders driving this. Strong common rooms and a strong SU that mutually support each other are in every student's interest.

The student consultation on BPR2 is live; I have little more to say other than that I applaud the efforts of those students who made their voice heard on this matter at University Council last week, and that every student should make their opinion known on this proposal through the survey. Also at University Council, the CFO presented financial data on college accommodation. Whilst an improvement on previous presentations, I am pleased to report that my questioning resulted in Council declining to resolve that college accommodation is value for money, pending further investigation into comparators and the issue of quality.

Postgraduate Study Space

The library recently signalled they would be opening up their PGR room to PGT students, and a petition has been circulating opposing this. I take umbrage at that petition. The library has monitored usage of the room whilst PGR-only extensively, and it has never been more than 50% utilised, usually being much emptier than this. PGTs have next-to-no dedicated study space across the University (there is only some in the Business School; even there the space is less than that available for PGRs), and I see no reason to exclude them from this space when there is available room going spare. Do contact me if you have any concerns.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

I mentioned work on this strategy back in December, but since then I've seen a second iteration of it at no fewer than three committees. Working with Lia and our staff team, we have written a comprehensive critique of several aspects of the strategy as it relates to its perceptions of students, particularly regarding its recognition of financial stressors. It remains to be seen whether this constructive feedback will be taken on board.

Best of the Rest:

- I haven't had a University meeting regarding PGR teaching pay recently, but have gathered further information on how current conditions affect students to inform lobbying
- I welcome the joint statement between the University and UCU on casualization, but must express disappointment at the lack of recognition of the SU's work on this to date.
- We've had fruitful meetings with the Quality Assurance Agency and Student Loans Company on how they can improve systems to better serve students – can you believe there'd been no thought given to how early thesis submission affects loan payments?
- I've met with Catherine Paine of the Strategy Delivery Unit regarding a review including Serious Adverse Circumstances and Academic Progress Notices – watch this space!
- We're drafting a paper asking for the creation of an ombudsman role in the University to support resolution of issues between staff and students, particularly in PGR supervision
- I've taken part in internal reviews on how the SU's governance does (and doesn't) work, and on how we can improve the effectiveness of our commercial activity
- We've begun planning our ReviseWise campaign – acknowledging criticisms of some of the counter-productive messaging from last year's campaign and adapting accordingly. But importantly, we're still planning on providing lots of study material freebies!

TO: Assembly
FROM: Amelia McLoughlan
RE: Welfare & Liberation Officer Report
DATE: 12 March 2020

Update on priorities:

1. AN INCLUSIVE DURHAM: **Breaking down institutional barriers**

- **University Health and Well-being Strategy**

I have been keenly contributing to the strategy, through its various iterations and we are now at the stage of giving comprehensive feedback. It is hoped that this will help re-frame it towards key causation and situate it to address student concerns.

- **Athena SWAN**

The SAT group have been discussing how to achieve a culture shift, bringing more people into the fold and how to ensure this is valued and supported work. Key factors are ensuring intersectionality with the Race Equality Charter and Stonewall Partners, effective communication and the creation of grassroots initiatives. There is a call for open consultation, and consultation with students which I will be facilitating.

2. POSTGRADUATE WELFARE: **Identifying key issues and developing welfare and support through policy**

- **Students with Children Task & Finish Group**

I will be convening the task and finish group this term with student representatives. I am also hoping to work with EDI on a mapping exercise for existing facilities.

- **Postgraduate Focus Groups**

This term I will be holding focus groups and feedback sessions for postgraduates to feed in to a plan proposal, and this will go to both JCR and MCR PresComm for consultation.

3. LIBERATION: **Initiate a framework and environment that supports marginalised groups of students to campaign for changes that will improve life and wider society for them.**

- **Liberation Strategy**

Due to issues that have been raised, this student-facing part of this project has sadly been shelved.

- **Declaring Durham University Institutional Disablist**

I am continuing to work on an action plan internally, considering other work being done nationally such as at UCL and Hull. I am also consulting with other Sabs nationally to see how we can feed into the national conversation.

- **Response to Sexual Violence and Misconduct**

I have met with the Chair of the Sexual Misconduct Operations Group to discuss the future direction of the group. In addition, I contributed to the OfS Consultation, have met with student press to discuss the climate of sexual violence on campus and have also met with student leaders to co-produce potential ways forward.

General updates:

- **Welfare Retreat**

I have been planning the next Welfare Retreat set for next term. The content is still to be decided but we are slightly improving the format due to student feedback.

- **Rent Guarantor**

I have met with International Students Association to discuss concerns around and updates on the rent guarantor policy, previously passed by assembly. We are collectively working with the Advice Service to signpost students for support and to gather further data on the issue.

- **Counselling Service**

I have met with students that have raised ideas to improve counselling services across campus and will be presenting that at the next available meeting.

TO: Assembly
FROM: Jess Dunning, Opportunities Officer
RE: Opportunities Officer Report
DATE: 12th March 2020

Update on priorities:

1. Improving Sustainability within the university

- a. UEC report to get the university to sign the UN Accord is being Written
- b. My 17 week campaign is still running and getting good engagement!
- c. Eco-Fest was a great hit and we are looking at doing another one in June
- d. Had a stall outside the library that encouraged people to come over and chat about the UN Sustainability Goals and win sustainable prizes

2. Lobbying the university to become an accredited Real Living Wage Employer

- a. The UEC paper is ready to go to UEC.
- b. I have been looking over the survey results and have commented on what the university can do better in a Palatinate Article

3. Funding Gap for students

- a. We have started the Focus Groups on this and will be preparing a report over the Easter break.

Other things that have happened:

- Went on a 3 day Leadership Training Course with Citizens UK
- Held an All Exec forum and social which was fantastic
- Interviewed people for a new website
- Interviewed people to join our reception team
- Been helping to write a motion for NUS Conference
- Had a great training session around the Fundraising Code and will be working on making our fundraising policy better
- Durham's Got Talent happened!

TO: Assembly

FROM: Kate McIntosh, Sam Johnson-Audini, David Evans, Amelia McLoughlan and Jess Dunning

RE: Workers' Rights in Higher Education: SU Core Position

DATE: 12 March 2020

The belief and its justification

- Everyone should have the right to secure employment on fair contracts
- All workers have the right to take appropriate industrial action to protect their rights and interests
- Cooperation and collaboration between staff and students in the Higher Education environment is inherently positive in fostering academic community and encouraging development of curricula in partnership.
- It is imperative that students both in and out of work understand workers' rights, not only for their own safety and protection, but also so that exploitation of people in work can be collectively tackled now and in the future.
- A working environment which is, as far as possible, free from exploitation and stress, is beneficial for both staff and students
- This Union has previously agreed a Core Position on Student Workers in Teaching and Assessment¹.

Definition of a better future

- The goodwill existing between staff and students should not be exploited; there exists a genuine sense of community between students and staff which should not be abused by universities
- Universities should pay staff fairly for their work of any and all kinds
- Volunteers and volunteerism should not be exploited by the University, and in particular should not be used to undercut paid labour
- All workers should receive the Real Living Wage, pension security, secure contracts and appropriate, safe and respectful working conditions

The barriers

- Engagement with trade unions amongst young people is generally low
- There is a clear and growing financial incentive for the University to exploit and abuse volunteers' goodwill and loyalty to their college and university community, rather than paying these individuals appropriately for their work.
- The intense and growing pressure on students' finances, meaning more students struggle to fund their studies, and more are forced into precarious part-time work receiving low wages

¹ SU Assembly paper UA/1819/47 - "[Student Workers in Teaching and Assessment](#)", June 2019

- Artificial competition between universities created by regulation and marketization has focussed universities on income and expenditure, often to the detriment of people and pedagogy
- The drive of the Higher Education sector as a whole towards “efficiency” often places finances above staff and students, which has created a culture of short-term and insecure contracts hindering the ability of staff to take the risk of industrial action, as well as impacting students’ experience by impacting staff mental health.
- Selective autonomy across the University, of colleges and departments which pitches them as competing for resource, furthers the artificial competition within the University between staff and benefits some students at the expense of others.
- Classism and overly hierarchical structures are a problem within the University, both within the colleges and academic departments. This particularly manifests between academic and professional services staff.
- The University captures a considerable portion of the job market as a major employer in the local economy, meaning there is reduced incentive for the University to offer competitive wages and benefits.
- Durham exists as the largest single landlord in Durham city, with influence over the private lives of many people in addition to being a major workplace, with limited checks and balances on this position of power.
- Gendering of certain roles, such as housekeeping or student support roles, sustains the undervaluation of labour and justifies poorer pay and conditions. Durham lags far behind the Russell Group in terms of gender pay equality.
- The racialisation of roles also makes it more likely that people of colour work in lower paid roles. Staff of colour are also more likely to be involved in unpaid labour within the University which is not directly related to their roles or responsibilities. Durham in particular has a low percentage of BAME staff and students, relative to the Russell Group².
- As the University continues to internationalise, a growing number of individuals may be negatively impacted by restrictions placed on them by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), as well as impacting their ability to undertake industrial action for fear of repercussions.

Belief about the change and the responsibilities

- This Union should lobby for universal standards for volunteers to be adopted and normalised across the University
- Students stand in solidarity with staff seeking fair pay, pensions, contracts and conditions
- Students and staff understand the importance of trade unionism, respect staff trade unions and not co-opting them for their own purposes
- This Union should work with trade unions in pursuit of a better future
- This Union and recognised trade unions should, as far as practicable, maintain lines of communication in the interests of constructive relations and to continue working with the University towards a better future
- This Union should continue to work to better understand and support student workers
- This Union should continue to work towards high standards for it’s own workers

² “Durham employs half as many BAME staff as Russell Group average” Palatiniate 31/10/19
<https://www.palatiniate.org.uk/durham-employs-half-as-many-bame-staff-as-russell-group-average/>

TO: Assembly

FROM: Tom Pymer

RE: Community Engagement: Core SU Position

DATE: 12 March 2020

The belief and its justifications

The city of Durham and the University of Durham are two amazing communities, but they are often separated and even antagonistic towards one another. The belief of this position is that this division is harmful both to the student experience and to the local community, and that the two would do far better to work closer and for students to be better incorporated into the local community. This would combat feelings of isolation for students and give benefit to the local community through service by students.

The definition of a better future

A better future shall be defined as one in which the local community and the student population are able to live and work together in harmony. It shall include the consideration and involvement of the Durham community in whatever decisions the SU might make. It shall also involve a massive increase in student volunteering, until it is commonplace that students give some of their time to volunteering in the local community. Ideally, we will reach a point where there is no longer antagonism between the City and the University, and students do not feel like they are living in a bubble.

The barriers

The “student bubble” remains strong. The involvement of the majority of students in the local community is limited, despite the highly commendable actions of Student Community Action, Just Love, and other such organisations which seek to go out into the community for volunteering. It is necessary that the bubble be burst.

There is a large amount of perception involved. It will take an enormous amount of public image and hard work to overcome the perceived differences between the City and the University.

Finally, there is the fact that not enough students know about the amazing history that this city has. For most, it is a passing phase: another step on the road of life which barely exists outside the colleges, Elvet Riverside and the roads to and from Market Square.

Belief about the change and the responsibilities

The belief of the Durham Students’ Union is:

That the student community and the local community must seek ever-greater integration and co-operation.

That student volunteering in the local area is a vital part of the work in community engagement, and that the Students’ Union must encourage this wherever it is found. This will include linking student groups, societies and associations with local groups, societies and associations which share their aims and may collaborate with them, although it is recognised that this collaboration will need to remain within the confines of charity law.

That the impact on the local community must be considered whenever the Students' Union makes a decision. The University should be lobbied to do the same.

That the Students' Union should lobby the University to offer more education and engagement in the city of Durham to enlighten students about the amazingness of the City and County.

That the Students' Union shall endeavour to offer its support to local projects, plans and ideas, including the publicising of local celebrations and local historical commemorations.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Jess Madden (President, Students with Disabilities Association) and Amelia McLoughlan (Welfare and Liberation Officer)

RE: Procedure for Allocating Delegates to NUS Liberation Conference

DATE: 12th March

Assembly Notes

1. At the National Union of Students' (NUS') 2019 National Conference, a series of reform measures were passed that merged various conferences for 'liberation groups' into one 'Liberation Conference'
2. The liberation groups to be represented at this conference are students with disabilities, black¹ students, LGBT+ students, trans students (as a group in addition to representation within the LGBT+ group), and women students
3. Durham SU is permitted to send maximum of 6 delegates to this Conference. The places have been reserved by NUS delegation entitlement to one black student, one black woman student, one trans student, one LGBT+ student, one disabled student, and one woman student.
4. Durham SU contains Associations that directly correlate to the NUS liberation groups, namely the Students with Disabilities Association, People of Colour Association, LGBT+ Association, Trans Association, and Women's Association
5. Associations are defined within the Durham SU Standing Orders as being 'responsible for providing representation... for students identifying with those Associations'
6. NUS have stated that 'there is no requirement for a cross-campus ballot for these delegates, however if you choose to select your delegates we would advise you do this in conjunction with Liberation Societies within your Students' Union'
7. The next meeting of Assembly will take place on 18 June, which will be after Liberation Conference has taken place on 27-29 May

Assembly Believes

1. As NUS' Liberation Conference is a student democratic event, Assembly as Durham SU's highest student democratic body should decide the process by which delegates to Liberation Conference are selected
2. Association Presidents are elected by cross-campus ballot, and so have a democratic mandate to be the spokesperson for Durham students who identify into their association
3. To hold a cross-campus ballot to elect delegates to Liberation Conference would be costly, time-consuming, unnecessary, and undermine the mandates held by Association Presidents

¹ NUS use the term 'Black' to refer to African, Asian, Arab and Caribbean people and those who self-define as Black

4. As the Associations are given a clear representative function in the Standing Orders, they should be afforded the autonomy to decide how students of their Association are represented within Durham SU's delegation to NUS Liberation Conference

Assembly Resolves

1. That each 'Relevant Association' shall appoint, in a fair manner, one person from amongst their members who will act as a delegate from Durham SU to NUS Liberation Conference
2. For the purposes of this section the 'Relevant Associations' are the Students with Disabilities Association, the People of Colour Association, the LGBT+ Association, the Trans Association, and the Women's Association
3. The People of Colour Association and the Women's Association shall additionally collaborate to appoint one additional delegate who identifies as a Black Woman

TO: Assembly

FROM: Caitlin Guibout

RE: Motion to amend standing order D3.6 to elect open place assembly members by cross campus ballot

DATE: 12th March

Assembly notes:

- That currently the 4 open place assembly members are elected by other assembly members (SO D3.6 reads; 'Four open places to be elected by Assembly members, of which one must be a first year undergraduate student, one must be a postgraduate, and one person who identifies as either a woman or a carer.')

Assembly believes:

- Assembly shouldn't chose who is on assembly
- Open place members are still elected to represent the students, and should therefore be elected by the students.
- Electing open place assembly members by a cross campus ballot would be more democratic.
- It would be also more efficient because these open place holders would be elected before the first assembly of the year, and could also boost engagement with SU elections as you could promote the election to freshers during freshers week or in the early part of michaelmas.

Assembly resolves:

- To change SO D3.6 from; 'Four open places to be elected by Assembly members, of which one must be a first year undergraduate student, one must be a postgraduate, and one person who identifies as either a woman or a carer.'
- To; ' Four open places to be elected by a cross campus ballot in early michaelmas term, prior to the first assembly of the year, of which one must be a first year undergraduate student, one must be a postgraduate, and one person who identifies as either a woman or a carer.'

TO: Assembly

FROM: Silas Welsh

RE: Getting Digitally Up to Date: Revamping Duo, the Durham University website and the universities digital timetabling system

DATE: 12th March

Assembly believes:

- That updating the DU website, library website, digital timetabling system and duo would benefit both the students and staff of the university by creating continuity across the sites and making them easier and clearer to use.
- Updated digital platforms would be a positive selling point for Durham University and it would bring the university into line with a large majority of other British universities.
- An updated digital system would allow students to make full use of the potential Durham University has to offer, as a new website with consistent design would increase the ease of access to information & resources.
- Due to it being clearer and easier to use an updated more efficient digital system would save time for both students and staff.
- An updated digital timetable system would lead to less student confusion (particularly for freshers) and potentially lead to fewer lectures, seminars, tutorials and pieces of essential educational information missed by accident.

Assembly resolves:

- To initiate conversations with Durham University about updating their digital platforms, including, but not limited to, the Durham University Website, the library website, Duo, encore and the digital timetabling system.
- To push for this modernisation to happen within the next 2 years.
- To encourage the university to combine and streamline its digital platforms, web pages and resources so that students and staff (and the public where applicable) can easily find information and resources in clear logical places.
- That the SU should ask and require of Durham University that they include and consult the SU and wider student body on the creation and design of the new websites and digital platforms. This will make sure that they are developed in a truly collaborative process that creates digital platforms that work to their full potential for the students of Durham University.

TO: Assembly
FROM: Caitlin Guibout
RE: Remove Officer and Committee and Association Updates from Assembly Meetings
DATE: 12th March

Assembly notes:

- Assembly has shockingly low turnout.
- People often report that they find SU assembly goes on too long and is boring.
- The SU has lots of likes on Facebook and the resources to put updates online in videos or posts.

Assembly believes:

- An important function of assembly is to ensure accountability and transparency from student representatives, however the current system facilitates this poorly
- Assembly would be shorter if updates of officers, associations, and committees were removed from the assembly procedure.
- These updates would have more engagement if they were posted online on social media.
- Assembly would have more engagement if we made Assembly shorter by removing the updates.
- Boosting turnout at assembly and engagement with SU governance should be a priority of the SU.

Assembly resolves:

- Remove spoken updates from officers and committee chairs as a regular agenda item for SU assembly, and replace it with allotted time for officers and committee chairs to answer questions from the floor (or pre-submitted questions asked by the chair)
- Officer updates can instead be given in written form as attached to the assembly papers as usual, in video form on SU social media, and in spoken form at SU Open Forum

TO: Assembly
FROM: Kate McIntosh (SU President)
RE: Board Report – Written Only
DATE: 12 March 2019

The Board of Trustees have not met since the last meeting of Assembly, but there have been Committees of the Board.

The People and Culture Committee met on 4 March 2020. The trustees considered:

- The Management Report, which drew the trustees' attention to progress made on Durham SU's People Plan, a note that work was ongoing to write a Liberation, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The trustees also noted that Durham SU had been unable to put proposals to amend the Articles of Association to referendum in Epiphany term, and the Board would consider next steps at its meeting on 9 April 2020.
- A Safeguarding Report, which discussed Durham SU's current activity and planned response to its duty to safeguard individuals who take part in activity with and through the students' union.
- An independent reflection into the experience of student trustees. This report was tabled, so resolutions will also be considered by the Board on 9 April 2020.
- An update on the Durham SU elections.
- Final approval of a Student Staff Protocol, a staff Discipline Procedure, an Eye Test Policy, and a Flexible Working Policy.

The Fundraising Committee will meet on 11 March 2020. The Performance and Delivery Committee will meet on 18 March 2020.