

# FORWARDS

2018



2022

# Welcome to our new strategy



## MEGAN CROLL SU PRESIDENT

A Durham education creates people that can make a difference to the world, and as students we're really fortunate to have that opportunity. Durham SU's plan to 2022, 'Forwards', seeks to give our students the power and opportunity to make our University and community better for all of us, and inspire them to do so for the rest of their lives.



Durham SU's place in the University is unique. We bring all students together to share their interests and ambitions, and to shape and direct our collective work. I'm proud to lead the team of student volunteers, elected student leaders, and career staff, who are committed to taking Durham forward in students' interests. We're finding our place in a community with a proud past and an exciting future, and we look forward to sharing our work with all of Durham.

## ANTHONY BAKER CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Durham SU has set out a comprehensive and ambitious plan for the next four years, which is student focused, student facing and engaging. As a union we are committed to placing the student at the centre of the organisation, and to having an impact which can transform each Durham student's life here.



As a local resident I am pleased that the union will be outward facing and committed to working across the local community. Helping students to understand and play active roles as members of that community, and potentially remain here beyond graduation, is a focus of our strategy; it is such an important part of our identity in this city. Durham SU will be a catalyst for positive improvement and change in Durham.

## GARY HUGHES CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The student leaders who contributed to the development of this strategy have my sincere thanks. They're the most talented, passionate, and powerful people at this University and their collective proposal for a better future, 'Forwards', is the result of a lot of hard work and creative thinking. This strategy is, in our view, the best way for Durham students and their union to contribute to a better future for all of us. I'm incredibly excited to be part of the team that will support students to make it happen.



This is an ambitious strategy. The fantastic student volunteers and awesome professional staff team who will deliver this work are excited about the challenge, but we're clear that we can't achieve these ambitions alone. I welcome the support of all our friends as we move forwards, bringing students together to make sure every one of us is proud of Durham.



# DURHAM SU EXISTS FOR A PURPOSE

# We're the champion of every Durham student.

We care about the things that matter to them.

We stand up for their rights.

We bring them together.

## **We have a vision for our future:**

**To make sure every student has the power and opportunity to transform their time at Durham.**

**Now we'll make that vision a reality.**

## **We have a plan.**

Our eyes are set on where we're heading. Sure, there'll be new opportunities and challenges along the way. But we'll always be guided by our principles, so we make the right decisions and hold ourselves accountable.

# Our principles make us stronger.

## **We champion students.**

- As a students' rights organisation, our collectivism makes us stronger.
- We trust students to make the best decisions about things that affect them.

## **We're proud of Durham.**

- We always recognise success, while we strive to be better.
- Our collegiate University means we do things differently. We like that.

## **We make the future better.**

- We're a students' union with a purpose, relentless in pursuit of our vision.
- We make change happen for students, with students, in their interests.





# WHAT WE WANT TO DO

# Students will transform their education.

## **We have a vision for education at Durham.**

We want students to join a progressive, scholarly community. We'll invite them to think critically about their education and get involved in the collective conversation about how it can be better still.

We want students to have power and agency in their education. No more decisions will be made about what, why and how they experience education without respecting their ability to contribute. We'll work with the University so they start thinking about students differently.

# Students will transform their education.

## OUR GOALS.

We'll strengthen and help shape thriving learning communities, with students and faculties working together to develop their programme and University.

***Durham will be in the top 25% of institutions where students agree they're part of a learning community.***

We'll build a powerful collective voice for students' academic interests, supporting leaders by being the critical friend of the University and improving our education.

***Durham will be in the top 50% of institutions where students agree they have a strong student voice.***

## OUR PLANS.

### Students are partners in education.

#### » 2020

- We'll fund students to have the opportunity to spend time with academic staff and professional staff, to develop their academic interests on programme innovations.
- We'll invest in our Durham SU team, to better support student leaders on University Committees and Working Groups with policy advice and personal development.

#### » 2022

- We'll integrate student representation and departmental societies, to nurture vibrant and critically engaged communities.
- We'll propose changes to student representation to see student-led education complementing quality assurance management.

### Education will be progressive.

#### » 2020

- We'll build a critical case for a liberated curriculum, reflecting on the diversity of programmes and the best environment in which diverse students can learn.
- We'll review the curriculum so students can lead conversations about reforming assessment practice, reducing stress and supporting success.

#### » 2022

- We'll work with focus programmes to develop a more liberated, accessible and high quality curriculum.
- We'll share our work nationally to support a sector-wide dialogue on how we make education more progressive throughout the UK.

### Every student can and will succeed.

#### » 2020

- We'll critically support the University's Fair Access work and drive a focus on differential progression and success when students join Durham.

#### » 2022

- We'll help the University to develop its peer support schemes across departments, colleges and departmental societies.



# We'll make everyday life at Durham fairer.

## **We have a vision for everyday life at Durham.**

We want our students to focus on their education and the wider student experience, while their problems are known, understood and tackled by their students' union.

We'll make sure every student lives in a good home. We'll champion value for money for students, and reduce the cost of the wider Durham experience. We'll lead the fight against the threat and fear of sexual violence.

In our close-knit community, some of the challenges for students can be amplified. We'll take a distinctly Durham approach to make sure students don't continue to live in poor conditions that we have the power to prevent.

## OUR GOAL.

We'll help students to reflect on their life at Durham and agree that their personal wellbeing is good.

***Over 50% of Durham students will agree their wellbeing is good.***

## OUR PLANS.

### Every student will live in a good home.

#### » 2020

- We'll survey private sector housing and establish student expectations of good quality homes.
- We'll build the case for more accessible college fees.

#### » 2022

- We'll develop a market platform for students to access high quality private rented sector homes, and reduce poor quality housing stock.
- We'll increase student satisfaction with housing quality.

### The wider Durham experience will be financially accessible and represent good value for money.

#### » 2020

- We'll publish the differentiated cost of the wider Durham experience and work with the University to target support where it will make the most difference to students who need help.
- We'll campaign for high quality and rationalised terms and conditions for postgraduate research students.

#### » 2022

- We'll reduce the cost to students of the wider Durham experience by 10%.
- We'll provide targeted support for access to Durham SU's student opportunities.

### We'll lead the fight against sexual violence.

#### » 2020

- We'll invite a critical review of Durham SU to find out whether we're doing all we can to change our own practice and how best we can support students affected by or concerned about sexual violence.
- We'll ensure the University demonstrates their continuing commitment to tackle sexual violence and measure student confidence in their work.

#### » 2022

- We'll work with local businesses to develop zero tolerance in Durham City venues.
- We'll demonstrate that the majority of students have confidence in Durham SU and the University to tackle sexual violence appropriately.

# We'll make Durham student communities stronger.

## **We have a vision for strong student communities at Durham.**

We want students to meet new people, share cultures and interests, and have fun, providing them with exciting opportunities so they leave Durham as active citizens.

We're invested in the success of students' collective activity and we create an environment where student-led activities thrive.

We don't run all the services that make up the fantastic student experience. We don't need to. Our collegiate University gives us a rare opportunity to celebrate the many ways our students can grow personally, academically and professionally. Our responsibility is to scrutinise the University in the interests of our students and ensure all opportunities are excellent and always improving.

We're different because we're both democratic and autonomous. The experiences our students create here are qualitatively different from those provided elsewhere. We'll help make the wider student experience at Durham outstanding by giving students power and opportunity to shape their own communities.

## OUR GOALS.

We'll ensure the social impact of our students will be understood, celebrated and developed further.

*Durham students will clearly demonstrate a social return on investment.*

We'll change Durham for the better with coordinated local student community action.

*Durham students will tackle a real problem for our community.*

## OUR PLANS.

**We'll champion autonomous, successful student organisations.**

### » 2020

- We'll invest in our student opportunities offer and provide resource to compare favourably with our comparators.
- We'll create a framework by which we judge the success of a student opportunities offer and apply it critically to our own work.

### » 2022

- We'll make progress against the student opportunities framework and place our offer in the upper quartile of our comparators.
- We'll help the University consider their student opportunities offer against our success framework and commit to improving together in partnership.

**We'll share cultures and interests.**

### » 2020

- We'll target funding and communications support to our cultural and international student groups, and support showcase events each term to have a campus-wide reach.
- We'll develop the Durham SU Give It A Go programme to access local and regional experiences, focusing on helping international students explore the UK.

### » 2022

- We'll build relationships with regional partners to support the work of our student groups and broaden student access to North East cultural assets.

**We'll contribute our best to our city.**

### » 2020

- We'll establish a micro-volunteering offer, connecting students with opportunities to make a difference with the time and talents they have.
- We'll review, benchmark and develop our volunteer support framework.
- We'll map and engage constructively with the local networks, where student contributions will have a positive impact, and advance our strategy.

### » 2022

- We'll develop our community engagement platform to bring together fundraising, volunteering and student expertise in local campaigns for change.
- We'll place the quality of our volunteer support offer in the upper half of our comparators and align it to the Durham Award Framework.



A woman with short brown hair and glasses is standing in a library, reaching up to a high shelf to touch a book. She is wearing a floral patterned dress. The library has many wooden bookshelves filled with books, and the background is slightly blurred.

# HOW WE WANT TO BE

# We'll be owned by students.

## **Durham SU will behave differently.**

We can only be a champion for every Durham student when we're trusted to campaign on the things that matter to them, and have unambiguous impact.

We must work differently from the University. Our democracy, governance and business processes will need to champion student activity, and not constrain it.

We'll show the power and opportunity that students have over the way their students' union makes decisions. We'll be advocates for student power and leadership across Durham.

# We'll be owned by students.

## OUR GOALS.

*We'll campaign on issues that matter to the majority of students.*

*We'll achieve all of our Officers' mandates within three years.*

## OUR PLANS.

**High democratic participation will strengthen student leaders.**

### » 2020

- We'll review our democratic framework to support student leaders making a difference.
- We'll clarify the relationship between student organisations at Durham, and present our vision for a community of student organisations.

### » 2022

- We'll support student organisations across Durham to increase their democratic participation.
- We'll invest in digital campaigning to support decision-making and impactful change.

**Durham SU's leaders will be effective.**

### » 2020

- We'll invest in Officer campaigning funds and devote resource to delivering on their mandate.

### » 2022

- The majority of students will be able to identify change made through democratic decisions.

**We'll invest in creating student leaders.**

### » 2020

- We'll create a development programme for Durham SU's student leaders, which focuses on preparing the next generation to make change.
- We'll deliver an annual Student Leadership event, helping students understand and decide response to emergent priorities at Durham SU and the University.

### » 2022

- We'll deliver meaningful development opportunities for all student leaders at Durham with the support of University colleagues.

# We'll be resourceful and intelligent.

**Durham SU will be a responsible, well-run, organisation.**

We have a responsibility to take care of our money, people and our knowledge

We have to face some difficult truths here. Only a third of students are satisfied with our students' union. We can't underestimate the challenge ahead of us but we're confident in our ability to rise to it.

We'll be accredited as a 'good' students' union in the NUS Quality SU framework at the end of this strategy, as we become a very different organisation, better serving Durham students.



## OUR GOAL.

*We'll be nationally recognised, and accredited as a quality students' union.*

## OUR PLANS.

### Our finances will support our strategy.

#### » 2020

- We'll profile our budget against our strategic priorities and closer to sector averages in staff, project and infrastructure costs.
- We'll manage risk to support successful student-led fundraising through our DUCK group.

#### » 2022

- Five low-risk income streams will support a 2:1 block grant to commercial income ratio.
- We'll develop a collaborative business model, supporting Common Rooms to maximise the value from collective purchasing.
- We'll raise £500,000 in charitable funds.

### Data and digital assets will make Durham SU the experts on Durham students.

#### » 2020

- We'll embed a 'digital first' approach in the delivery of the Durham SU strategy and standard operations.
- We'll rationalise the use and security of Durham SU's data and information assets.

#### » 2022

- We'll develop a student CRM system that allows smart use of data for policy development and communications support.

### Our people will be successful.

#### » 2020

- We'll invest in the Durham SU staff team's development and their ability to support student leaders.
- We'll work to understand the motivations and barriers to volunteer participation and success, and plan action to make volunteer experiences outstanding.

#### » 2022

- We'll achieve accreditation in a national volunteer excellence framework.
- 90% of our people will be successfully engaged in Durham SU's work.

# We'll be trusted and respected.

## **Durham SU's partners will value our work.**

Our success relies on student leaders, and advocates, colleagues and partners who can all reach into areas that influence student life. We'll help them understand and act in support of student priorities. This way, we can be trusted and respected as their students' union.

Durham's complex context means that effective relationship management is essential to our work. We need to help our partners understand who we are, how we add value to their work and what we can achieve together. We need a different understanding of Durham SU.

## OUR GOALS.

*Our partners will understand and support Durham SU, and join us in our work.*

## OUR PLANS.

**We'll build relationships with the academic community.**

### » 2020

- We'll understand the extent of Durham SU's support in the academic community.

### » 2022

- We'll develop an effective engagement strategy that identifies the value Durham SU adds to the academic community.

**Community leaders will support Durham SU's priorities.**

### » 2020

- We'll introduce student priorities to identified community leaders, including our elected local and national politicians, local businesses, and cultural and civic development agencies.

### » 2022

- Elected officials will incorporate student priorities into their manifestos and work plans.
- Productive partnership agreements will establish opportunities for Durham students and Durham SU across the city and region.

**We'll contribute positively to the national student movement.**

### » 2020

- We'll establish priority plans of work with our partner students' unions and NUS, to support organisational development with our neighbours and peers.

### » 2022

- Durham SU Officers and staff will play leadership roles in national networks.
- Shared activity will reduce cost and add value to Durham SU and our partners.



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