

TO: Assembly
FROM: President
RE: Review of Durham SU elected student Officer structure
DATE: 23 November 2023

Proposal

Assembly is asked to approve the following text as new Standing Order F, subject to:

- The plain text being approved and sent to the Board of Trustees for approval on 8 December 2023. This will have the effect of changing the number and roles of the full-time Officers. This will mean that the roles elected in February 2024 will be as set out in the motion. If further changes are required to other standing orders, in order to align with the proposals below, these will be brought before Assembly in the Epiphany Term.
- *The italic text* being approved in principle, but only to take effect if Assembly also agrees amendments to the election regulations at its meeting in Epiphany Term 2024. This will mean that there will be a sense of the role Assembly believes are suitable part-time Officer roles, but volunteers from Assembly will be asked to consider how best to fill the roles in Epiphany term. No part-time Officers will be elected until Easter term.

Reasoning

The independent review found that:

- Durham SU, quite unusually, had few opportunities for students currently studying to have influence in the students' unions elected leadership (note that this is understood differently to being a representative on Assembly which isn't an executive body). There are almost no roles with power in between 'not-involved' and 'a full-time Officer'. Almost all other students' unions had a form of part-time student leadership on the students' union's executive. Taken with the fact that recruitment of election candidates for full-time positions, and retention when in role, is an increasingly difficult challenge, **the review found that there should be more part-time roles and there was sense in considering fewer full-time roles.**
- Students, student leaders, the Durham SU Officer team, the Durham SU Board of Trustees, and Durham University, all wanted the students' union to be an effective representative organisation for students' education, but there was no meaningful evidence that the voice of students on their programme had any way to influence the students' union. There should be a Faculty focussed frame for student leadership positions, as well as a central University frame with **part-time Faculty Officers elected by students from within each Faculty.**
- There had been changes in the make-up of the student population, and very large numbers of students with particular needs that needed to be represented. These student demographics found it difficult or unappealing to run in a cross-campus ballot for a full-time role. An experiment with postgraduate research student representation in 2022, following the resignation of the Postgraduate Academic Officer, had shown that the model was viable, and **the review recommended part-time Officers for postgraduate research students and for international students.**
- **Common Rooms should have a formal power to influence Durham SU's representation of student issues to the University** on issues that relate to Colleges and life in College. The review acknowledged that the fact that many Common Rooms were now independent charities meant that this had to be done carefully, but it was both possible and desirable. It should also be possible to cover the time the PresComm Chair is already giving to institutional representation from Durham SU resources, with agreement from the governors of that Common Room.
- There were then aspects of the wider student experience where students who volunteer or campaign in particular ways need support and leadership to do their work properly. **The review recommended that part-time roles be created to support the leadership of societies, welfare, and liberation.** The Culture Commission on 2022 engaged with this issue, and informed the recommendation. The Durham SU President has, since the review,

received feedback that a student leadership position to represent the student interest on the important issue of sustainability would be a timely and important addition to the proposal, and so **a Sustainability Officer is included in the proposal in this motion.**

Consultation

Students were asked about restructuring the Officer team in line with the Student Consultation Framework agreed by Assembly in 2023. All students have had the opportunity to see the recommendations from the independent reviewer, the first reaction from the Durham SU President, and have been invited to share their thoughts from 1 November to 14 November. All students have had the restructure drawn to their attention through:

- Two all-student emails, on 2 November and 9 November.
- A pop-up box on the Durham SU website, which will be live between 1 November and 14 November.
- A column from the Durham SU President in Palatinate on 9 November.
- The restructure appearing at least twice on all Durham SU social media channels between 1 November and 14 November.

The Student Consultation Framework also sets expectation that particular groups of students are asked for their points of view in particular. This has so far been achieved through:

- An email to all members of JCR PresComm and MCR PresComm, and a discussion at a meeting of JCR PresComm.
- An email to all Assembly members.
- An email to all College Welfare Representatives.
- An email and social media post to all Student Group Executives.
- An email to all Faculty and Course Representatives.

On 16 November, the Durham SU President will review all feedback gathered to that date and send out a proposal to all students, in an all-student email, which he intends to table at Assembly but which he stresses is not a final proposal because Assembly members still have the opportunity to table amendments after consulting with the people they represent.

Assembly members will have the proposal between 16 November and 23 November, to review and offer amendments before review and a vote on 23 November.

Standing Order F: Officers

Durham SU Officers

The Officers Committee

There will be an Officers Committee.

Membership

The full-time Officers

- The Durham SU President
- The Education Officer
- The Community Officer

The part-time Officers

- *One Faculty President, for each Faculty of Durham University.*
- *The International Students Officer.*
- *The Postgraduate Research Students Officer*
- *The Societies Officer.*
- *The Welfare Officer.*
- *The Liberation Officer.*
- *One member of JCR Presidents Committee.*
- *One member of MCR Presidents Committee.*

The Secretary to the Officers Committee is the Durham SU Chief Executive, who will ensure that the Officers Committee receives the support and advice necessary to undertake its responsibilities, and that Durham SU responds appropriately to discussions and decisions of the Officers Committee.

Responsibilities

The Officer Committee will collectively:

- Promote and defend the rights of Durham students.
- Represent the general interests of all Durham students to Durham University, and others.
- Agree and publish an annual priority plan against the Durham SU strategy.
- Report on progress against annual priorities to students, to Assembly, and to the Board of Trustees.
- Uphold high standards of behaviour, in line with the Durham SU Code of Conduct.
- Work with the Durham SU Chief Executive to ensure that service delivery responds to student interest.

The Officer Committee will have two Committees:

- *The Education Committee, which will be chaired by the Education Officer.*
- *The Community Committee, which will be chaired by the Community Officer.*

The Education Committee

Membership

The membership of the Education Committee is the Education Officer, the four Faculty Officers, the International Students Officer, and the Postgraduate Research Students Officer.

Responsibilities

The Education Committee will collectively:

- *Lead Durham SU's policy and campaigns in respect of the academic student experience.*
- *Coordinate Durham SU's response in urgent or unexpected matters which impact the academic student experience, for report to Assembly and the Board of Trustees.*
- *Champion the support, development and success of academic student representatives.*
- *Nominate student representatives to academic committees and working groups.*

The Community Committee

Membership

The membership of the Community Committee is the Community Officer, the Societies Officer, the Welfare Officer, the Liberation Officer, the Chair of JCR Presidents Committee, the Sustainability Officer and the Chair of MCR Presidents Committee.

Responsibilities

The Community Committee will collectively:

- *Lead Durham SU's policy and campaigns in respect of the wider student experience.*
- *Coordinate Durham SU's response in urgent or unexpected matters which impact the wider student experience, for report to Assembly and the Board of Trustees.*
- *Champion the support, development and success of student representatives in the wider student experience.*
- *Nominate student representatives to academic committees and working groups.*

Particular responsibilities of Durham SU Officers

The full-time Officers

The Durham SU President will:

- *Chair Officer Committee.*
- *Be chief spokesperson for the Officer team, representing Durham students to the media.*
- *Be lead student representative to Durham University, regional and national organisations.*
- *Lead the student interest in the effective governance and management of Durham SU, working closely with the Durham SU Chief Executive.*

The Education Officer will:

- *Chair Education Committee*
- *Be lead student representative to Durham University on the academic student experience.*
- *Coordinate and champion the work of academic student experience volunteers across Durham.*

The Community Officer will:

- *Chair Community Committee*
- *Be lead student representative to Durham University on the wider student experience.*
- *Coordinate and champion the work of wider student experience volunteers across Durham.*

**Wider student experience is defined for the purposes of this document as encompassing Student Enrichment, Student Support, DEI, and any other non-academic matter.*

The part-time Officers

The Faculty Officers will:

- *Be lead student representative within their Faculty and be Durham SU nominees to be members of the Durham University Senate.*
- *Coordinate and champion the student representatives within their Faculty.*
- *Coordinate and champion student academic interests across Faculties, as members of the Durham SU Education Committee.*

The International Students Officer will:

- *Be lead student representative for international students and be Durham SU nominee to be a member of Durham University committees and working groups for international students.*
- *Coordinate and champion international student representatives across Durham.*
- *Coordinate and champion international student interests across Durham, as a member of the Durham SU Education Committee and Community Committee.*

The Postgraduate Research Students Officer will:

- *Be lead student representative for postgraduate research students and be Durham SU nominee to be a member of Durham University committees and working groups for postgraduate research students.*
- *Coordinate and champion the postgraduate student representatives across Durham.*
- *Coordinate and champion postgraduate student academic interests across Durham, as a member of the Durham SU Education Committee.*

The Societies Officer will:

- *Be lead student representative for the interests of student social, cultural and developmental services and experiences.*
- *Coordinate and champion the work of student groups across Durham, representing their interests to Durham SU, Durham University and others, as a member of the Durham SU Community Committee.*
- *Chair the Societies Committee of Assembly.*

The Sustainability Officer will:

- *Be lead student representative for the interests of student sustainability and to be a member of Durham University committees and working groups related to sustainability.*
- *Coordinate and champion the work of student groups, representatives and volunteers working to improve sustainability within Durham University and the community, as a member of the Durham SU Community Committee.*
- *Chair of the Sustainability Committee of Assembly.*

The Welfare Officer will:

- *Be lead student representative for the interests of student welfare and support services and experiences.*
- *Coordinate and champion the work of student welfare groups and volunteers across Durham, representing their interests to Durham SU, Durham University and others, as a member of the Durham SU Community Committee.*
- *Chair the Welfare Committee of Assembly.*

The Liberation Officer will:

- *Be lead student representative for the interests of student equity, inclusion, diversity, and liberation services and experiences.*
- *Coordinate and champion the work of student equity, inclusion, diversity, and liberation groups and volunteers across Durham, representing their interests to Durham SU, as a member of the Durham SU Community Committee.*
- *Chair the Liberation Committee of Assembly.*

The Chairs of the JCR Presidents Committee and the MCR Presidents Committee will:

- *Be lead representatives for the interests of students' residential and collegiate experience to Durham SU, and through Durham SU to Durham University.*
- *Coordinate and champion the shared interests of Common Rooms and Durham SU.*
- *Coordinate and champion the work of groups and volunteers in Common Rooms within Durham SU.*

Additional provisions

The full-time Officers will be:

- *Elected in a cross-campus ballot of all members.*
- *Employed under a full-time contract of employment with Durham SU.*
- *Serve for one year in total, with additional paid transition time for training and development.*
- *Major office holders and trustees of Durham SU.*

The part-time Officers will be:

- *Elected in ways detailed in the Elections Standing Order.*
- *Employed under a part-time contract of employment with Durham SU.*
- *Serve for one year in total, with additional paid transition time for training and development.*

Both full-time Officers and part-time Officers are paid Durham SU office holders so, by law, no student member may serve in any combination of any office for more than two years in total.

The Officers will be members of Assembly.