

STUDENT STAFF PROTOCOL

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INTRODUCTION

Durham SU is a political and a professional organisation. We know that it is impossible to be the champion of every Durham student without partnership between the elected students, volunteers and activists, and the employed staff team, who are charged with delivering the objectives and strategy. The Staff Protocol serves Durham SU in:

- Defining how the trustees respect the employment rights of the people employed to deliver on students' priorities.
- Clarifying how elected students, volunteers and activists can get the best of the employed staff team.
- Supporting Durham students who are also employed by the students' union to understand their rights and responsibilities.

DEFINITIONS

In this agreement, we use certain words to mean specific things:

- 'Staff' are the individuals or groups of individuals employed by Durham SU. This includes students at Durham University who also work for the students' union.
- 'Officers' are student representatives who provide political leadership. They are employed by Durham SU and hold office under the Durham SU Articles of Association and Standing Orders.
- "Representative policy" is the expression of student priorities through Durham SU's democratic procedures, often led by the elected Officers.
- "Corporate policy" is the expression of how Durham SU operates, in furtherance of the priorities set for us by the elected Officers and the Board of Trustees.

Some of the staff team are also students at the University. This is a good thing - but also may give rise to potential conflicts of interest; this Protocol addresses the issue in the 'Student Staff' section, below.

PRINCIPLES

This Protocol's foundation principle is that Durham SU exists to champion students; students create our representative policy and, through elected students, sets our corporate policy.

We respect accountability. The Chief Executive is responsible to the Board of Trustees for the overall effectiveness of Durham SU's day-to-day work. The broader staff team are accountable for performance through the line management structure to the Chief Executive. The staff team delivers support to student leaders and services to students, in line with the current Durham SU strategy. Our elected Officers are accountable to the student membership through our democratic procedures for Durham SU's political success.

We value expertise. Staff respect the real experiences, ideas, ambitions and concerns of students, and the mandates of elected student leaders. Equally, students and elected Officers recognise the professional expertise of the staff. Durham SU actively creates opportunities for students, elected Officers and staff to have open, honest conversations about how this Protocol works in practice, to keep our commitment to partnership alive.

HOW WE MANAGE CONFLICT

This Protocol recognises that it is often a false distinction to separate students from corporate policy and staff from representative policy. Elected Officers will have a valuable role in determining the opening hours of the advice service; staff expertise adds value to discussions about a fair admissions policy.

We think it is more important to train and support all partners in understanding how their behaviour appropriately upholds the principles in this protocol, and how we respect every person's role within our work. We'll help students and elected Officers understand this protocol as part of their induction, and throughout their participation in student activity. We will help staff understand this protocol as part of their staff induction and through the performance management framework, led by their line manager.

Durham SU, therefore, will avoid creating a comprehensive list that excludes students, elected Officers or staff from certain activities. We will, however, provide some examples where it is important to be clear about appropriate behaviour. Any student, elected Officer or staff member with questions can ask the President or the Chief Executive for guidance.

Democratic events

Durham SU expects its staff to be enthusiastic advocates for the democratic processes in general and will ask staff to help support events and activities, such as elections. There will be full training for any staff member asked to support student-led democracy, which will always include a refresh on the contents of this Protocol.

It is entirely appropriate for staff to help students and elected Officers in their preparation for democratic events. In specific circumstances agreed with the Chief Executive, it may also be appropriate for staff to act in support of an agenda agreed by an elected Officer, for example in answering questions about policy in a public forum.

Durham SU wants students and elected Officers to lead our work. It would therefore be inappropriate for staff to assert, or appear to assert, their own agenda within democratic spaces. This specifically includes any partisan support for any candidate in an election. Durham SU may consider any act of staff which undermines student-led democracy to be gross misconduct within the disciplinary procedures.

Staff have the right to expect that democratic procedures do not discuss their performance. Staff do not have a right to reply to any praise or criticism and it is therefore unfair to discuss their performance in an open meeting. If any student wishes to comment on Durham SU's

priorities or performance, they should do so by asking questions to the elected Officer with political responsibility for the area in question.

Line management

The Chief Executive sets staff objectives through the line management structure, informed by organisational strategy, representative policy and corporate policy. The Chief Executive works closely with the President to align staff objectives to elected Officers' priorities.

Staff have the right to expect that their performance will be managed through the line management structure. It would be inappropriate for students or elected Officers, who may have limited information or less professional expertise, to seek to intervene in managing the performance of staff.

Staff have their own mechanisms for raising questions or grievances about Durham SU. It is not appropriate for staff to criticise the democratic processes, including the conduct of the elected Officers, outside of internal channels as this could undermine students and the elected Officers, and damage confidence in the whole students' union.

Student staff

When students who are also staff are in work they should behave as staff. Durham SU makes no distinction between categories of staff, including a requirement to not comment on democratic policy or showing partisan favour for any election candidate. When staff are not on duty, they are also expected to act as good ambassadors for Durham SU.

Students who are also staff are actively encouraged to participate in Durham SU's democratic procedures but, when they do so, they should not participate in any discussions which have the potential to impact objectives or terms and conditions of their employment.

The employment status of elected Officers

Elected Officers are politically accountable for the decisions they make through the democratic processes. Elected Officers are, however, also paid for their full-time participation in Durham SU. As such, it is entirely appropriate for the Chief Executive to have management conversations with them about conduct or actions which falls within the parameters of usual staffing policies. An example of this may be periods of absence, or proper use of computer resources, or actions which harm the reputation of Durham SU such as being rude about students or damaging campus property.

The Chief Executive will normally keep the President and the Chair of the Board of Trustees well informed about the professional behaviour of Officers. Durham SU will always respect the formal mechanisms for managing performance, including the Complaints Procedure and the disciplinary procedure as it relates to elected Officers.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Students who wish to make a complaint about a staff member should do so in writing to the Durham SU Chief Executive, by email to su.admin@durham.ac.uk. A complaint about the Chief Executive should be sent to su.admin@durham.ac.uk, marked for the attention of the Chair of the Board of Trustees. A relevant manager will respond to the complaint and, if necessary, may use the Durham SU staff performance management framework to ensure an appropriate response. A complainant will be informed about the progress of a complaint but has no right to be involved in the details of staff performance management.

Staff who wish to raise a formal concern or complaint about staffing matters should use the Durham SU Grievance Procedure; it is not appropriate to use the Durham SU Complaints Procedure. This is also the correct way for students who act for Durham SU to raise a

concern, including Officers, student trustees, or volunteers in positions of responsibility such as stewards for events or students who are members of Durham SU Committees.

QUESTIONS

The Durham SU Board has delegated responsibility for the Staff Protocol to the Chief Executive, who will work closely with the President in implementation. Any questions about should be addressed to the Chief Executive in the first instance.