

# DURHAM SU ASSEMBLY

There will be a meeting of Assembly at 1600 on Thursday 25 November 2021.

Please try to join the meeting from 1545, to allow for connectivity tests, for a prompt start at 1600.

## AGENDA

### **1. OPENING OF MEETING (CHAIR, 2 MINUTES)**

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

### **2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS ON 3 JUNE 2021 AND 24 JUNE 2021 (CHAIR, 2 MINUTES) UA/2122/02 / UA/2122/03**

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

#### *Routine business items*

### **3. CHAIRS ELECTION (CHAIR, 5 MINUTES)**

To receive the results of the chairs election voted for by email circulation.

### **4. OPEN PLACES ELECTION (CHAIR, 5 MINUTES)**

To receive the results of the open places election voted for by email circulation.

### **5. GOVERNANCE AND GRANTS ELECTION (CHAIR, 5 MINUTES)**

To receive the results of the open places election voted for by email circulation.

### **6. BOARD REPORT (PRESIDENT, 5 MINUTES) UA/2122/04**

To receive an update report from the Board of Trustees and to ratify Peter Robertson as Returning Officer.

### **7. OFFICER UPDATES (OFFICERS, 15 MINUTES) UA/2122/05**

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

### **8. COMMITTEE UPDATES (COMMITTEE CHAIRS, 15 MINUTES)**

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

### **9. ASSOCIATION UPDATES (ASSOCIATION CHAIRS, 15 MINUTES)**

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

*Items for discussion:*

**10. HARM REDUCTION POLICY AND PRACTICES (SOPHIE HOFELS, 30 MINUTES) UA/2122/06**

To discuss a motion on Harm and Reduction Policy and Practices.

**11. DEMOCRACY REVIEW PART 3: MEMBERSHIP AND PURPOSE (OPPORTUNITIES OFFICER, 30 MINUTES) UA/2122/07**

To discuss a motion on the Democracy Review (Membership and Purpose).

***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](mailto:dsu.governance@durham.ac.uk) at least 2 days in advance of the meeting to make arrangements.***

# DURHAM SU ASSEMBLY

## DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING 3 June 2021

Virtual Meeting, Zoom

### 1. OPENING OF MEETING

Natasja Enthoven was introduced as the new Chair of Assembly. NE opened the meeting, welcoming members and attendees, explaining zoom etiquette, outlining that no offensive or unacceptable behaviour would be accepted and would result in being removed from the meeting.

### 2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 11 MARCH 2021

There were no amendments to minutes of the last meeting.

Minutes from the last meeting were approved.

### *Routine business items*

### 3. ELECTIONS RETURNING OFFICER REPORT

A formal report was received from the Returning Officer which confirmed that the election was run in a fair and democratic manner.

### 4. HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Assembly approved the recommendations for Honorary Life Memberships from Governance and Grants committee covering both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years. HLMs will be awarded at the end of the academic year.

### 5. UPDATE QUESTIONS

No questions were received for Officers, Committee Chairs or Associations Chairs on updates shared online prior to the meeting.

### *Items for discussion:*

### 6. THE VOTING RECORDS OF INDIVIDUAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS SHOULD BE PUBLICALLY KNOWN AND READILY ACCESSIBLE

Jon Chan spoke for the motion and stated that transparency and accountability are both paramount in democracy and in line with the view of student members as outlined in the democracy review report. Elected student leaders should be held responsible for their words and actions.

It was queried if individuals would be named personally on voting records or if this would be the committee/association chair, as this may pose a safeguarding problem for some associations being named publically.

JC clarified that in these cases it would be okay to have the association chair of X instead of the name of the individual due to the nature and sensitivity of the information being posted publically.

There were no speeches against the motion.

NE moves to a vote.

**The motion passes.**

## 7. JOIN THE LIFT THE BAN COALITION

Ella Turney spoke for the motion and said that the motion had been put to assembly by Student Action for Refugees, who are hoping to join the 'Lift the Ban Coalition' to support refugees and show solidarity with the movement, as when they arrive in the UK they are currently not able to work until asylum has been approved which can often take months or even years, and the coalition seeks to lift that ban. Many other students' union have also joined across the country so it would be good to see Durham do the same.

There were no speeches against the motion.

NE moves to a vote.

**The motion passes.**

## 8. STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE

The president of Durham People of Colour Association spoke for the motion and stated that there had been a lot of media coverage about what is happening in Palestine and that they would like to support the people of Palestine and would like Durham SU to stand with them by passing this motion of support and hopefully this can make a difference in some way.

Jon Chan submitted an amendment to the motion to amend one of the resolves: '*To lobby the University to boycott and divest from any organisation that funds or supports the Israeli government as it commits acts of terror against the Palestinian people*' to omit Israeli government from the sentence.

DT and YR spoke against the amendment.

NE moves to vote on the amendment.

**The amendment does not pass.**

Jon Chan proposes procedural motion VIII: To vote on a question in specific parts.

**The procedural motion was not supported.**

There were no speeches against the motion.

NE moves to vote on the motion.

**The motion passes.**

## **9. SUPPORTING STUDENT SEX WORKERS: *SU CORE POSITION***

ES spoke for the motion and stated that this core position comes from the belief that student sex workers should not face any barriers to accessing support which is well informed and free from prejudice. A recent study found that there had been an increase in the number of students engaging in sex work with 4.8% reporting that they had been involved in sex work in some capacity. The position of Durham Students' Union is that the SU should develop a Student Sex Work Toolkit and lobby the University to also adopt it and the SU should design a Student Sex Work Policy and lobby the University to adopt it. The SU should provide information and support for student sex workers through its advice service.

There were no speeches against the motion.

NE moves to a vote.

**The motion passes.**

**\*\*ACCESS BREAK\*\***

## **10. POSTGRADUATE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION**

SMc spoke for the motion and stated that the current access and participation plan at Durham is only aimed at undergraduate students. Durham is not alone by not including Postgraduate Students in their Access and Participation plan as this is not a regulatory requirement set by the OfS. The Postgraduate Academic Officer has written a 'Postgraduate Access and Participation Plan', which it is hoped will form the basis for the future University work in this area.

There were no speeches against the motion.

NE moves to a vote.

**The motion passes.**

## **11. CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

AM spoke for the motion and stated Following ECO DU's motion to Assembly, Durham SU declared a climate emergency in November 2019, but Durham University is still to declare a climate emergency. The Opportunities Officer has discussed sustainability policy in many University spaces. After speaking to the Vice Chancellor, a series of discussions with UEC were organised which both the Opportunities Officer and the President were invited to, indicating UEC support for acting on the climate crisis, although no firm decisions or outcomes have been made. The University community needs to start prioritising the climate emergency. Student campaigning should be continued and broadened to encompass more student voices. The University should continue to have a clear SU contact to liaise with on the issue of environmental sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals.

NE moves to a vote.

**The motion passes.**

## 12. DEMOCRACY REVIEW PART 1: ASSEMBLY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

AM spoke for the motion and stated that Durham Students' Union has conducted a review of its democratic processes during the 2021/21 academic year. The work identified a range of areas in need of review, with the most pressing being the Union's Assembly. For the unions' policy work to be effective, we should take a more collaborative and deliberative approach to policy design and debate, along with scrutiny measures addressing its implementation. This motion will make effective changes to Assembly's policy development process.

There were no speeches against the motion.

NE moves to a vote.

**The motion passes.**

## 13. DEMOCRACY REVIEW PART 2: COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

AM spoke for the motion and stated that this part of the review looks at the frequency of Assembly and how committees are formed. There would be a minimum of 8 Assembly meetings per year, or once per month of term. Not all of these meetings would be a summative Assembly meeting, which are those which incorporate the full normal agenda of Assembly with the intention of creating policy some would be formative Assembly meetings, which can be focussed on policy development, training, updates, and scrutiny or review activities. Several new committees will provide a range of functions for Assembly, providing greater scrutiny and more student ownership. The proposal is to dissolve Governance and Grants Committee and separate the two functions.

There were no speeches against the motion.

NE moves to a vote.

**The motion passes.**

## 14. DEMOCRACY REVIEW PART 3 : MEMBERSHIP AND PURPOSE

AM spoke for the motion and stated that the final part of the Democracy review is all about membership and the proportions of which the membership is split into, so this is broader across academic, colleges, student experience and open positions.

AM proposed Procedural motion VII. To recess the meeting for a specified amount of time and proposed that Assembly have another special meeting on 24 June to allow for a more in depth discussion on this matter and what this means.

**The procedural motion was supported.**

Jon Chan spoke against the procedural motion saying that a decision of this nature should be taken to referendum so more students are able to be involved in the membership of Assembly, so this should not be delayed and debated now instead.

NE moves to a vote on the procedural motion.

**The procedural motion passes.**

# DURHAM SU ASSEMBLY (SPECIAL MEETING)

## DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING 24 June 2021

Virtual Meeting, Zoom

**\*The meeting was not quorate so decisions are only advisory**

### 1. OPENING OF MEETING

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

NE explained that the special meeting had been called at the previous meeting under Procedural motion VII: To recess the meeting for a specified amount of time, to further discuss the Democracy Review Part 3: Membership and Purpose motion.

Sarah McAllister declared a conflict of interest with the Honorary Life Membership motion.

### *Routine business items*

### 2. TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS

A panel of five current trustees met to interview potential trustee candidates on 8 June 2021 and two candidates were appointed to the Board of Trustees.

Since the circulation of papers, a vacancy has arisen on the Board of Trustees. As a recruitment campaign has just been conducted, the trustees are able to appoint another of the applicants and recommend another name to Assembly for ratification.

NE moves to a vote.

**Assembly members voted in favour of ratifying Graeme Osborn, Hannah Sketchley and Jonny Snowden as lay trustees to the Durham SU Board.**

### 3. HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Assembly were asked to consider a late nomination for Honorary Lifetime Membership of the SU for Sarah McAllister, Postgraduate Academic Officer on the basis of a strong case for an HLM.

NE moves to a vote.

**Assembly members voted in favour of the Honorary Life Membership nomination.**

### 4. DEMOCRACY REVIEW PART 3: MEMBERSHIP AND PURPOSE

An amendment to the motion had been submitted prior to the meeting by Sarah McAllister to include additional spaces in the proposed membership of Assembly for Postgraduate representation.

AM spoke for the motion and said this motion is how Assembly membership can be a more accurate representation of student life at Durham, also taking into consideration those areas that may not have a voice elsewhere, i.e. academic. There will also be 7 non portfolio places which will be used to increase representation in areas that may have been previously under representation, using data from previous year. This will be a trial process, which can be reviewed but the current model needs to be tried before amendments are made so it's possible to see if this works or not.

SMc presented the amendment and said this was an amendment which looks at the membership for Postgraduates, the current model allows 4 guaranteed spaces for postgraduates and the new model will decrease this, so this is a small change to allow for more guaranteed places for postgraduate students to increase the representation for postgraduates on Assembly.

AM spoke against the amendment and said that the amendment risked messing with the system before the process has been put in place and the membership model has been created based on the research carried out to ensure there was balance across the board.

JS spoke in favour of the motion and said that Durham is very unique in their model and Assembly is a good space to be able to bring issues and discuss these in alongside undergraduates, when this wouldn't happen otherwise and having more postgraduate representation would only be a good thing.

NE moves to a vote for the amendment.

**Assembly members voted in favour of the amendment.**

JC proposes procedural motion VIII: To vote on a question in specific parts.

**The procedural motion was not supported.**

HM spoke against the motion and said that it would be a negative step to increase the representation of academic reps in comparison to college representation as a lot of people do not know what these positions are or even how to apply for them and they are not accountable in the same way as a college rep or association chair would be and cannot see how this would be a positive step in making student believe in Assembly.

NE moves to a vote.

**Assembly members voted in favour of the motion.**

The Chair advised that due to the meeting not being quorate, Assembly members would vote by circulation to ratify Trustee appointments and Honorary Life Memberships and the Democracy Review motion would be ratified at the next meeting of Assembly.



TO: Assembly  
FROM: Seun Twins  
RE: Durham SU Board of Trustees Report  
DATE: 25 November 2021

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## DURHAM SU BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT TO ASSEMBLY

The Board of Trustees met on 5 October 2021, and the following points were considered.

- Graeme Osborn was appointed the Chair of the Board, and Seun Twins was appointed Vice-Chair of the Board. The trustees confirmed the terms of reference for two committees, to oversee Durham SU's people and culture work, and performance and delivery.
- The Finance Report confirmed Durham SU had ended the year with a small surplus, reflecting difficult choices made to control costs after a substantial deficit in previous year.
- The trustees agreed a framework for the delegation of their authority, and the powers that committees and staff could exercise on their behalf.
- A discussion on strategic development helped the trustees to plan how they wished to develop Durham SU's work from 2022 onwards.

Since the meeting of the trustees, two students have been elected to sit on the Board: Denis Antor, and Christian Meadows.

Assembly is asked to appoint Peter Robertson, Director of the NUS Charity as the Returning Officer.

Mr Robertson has returned elections in students' unions many hundred times as a senior manager in the national union. He was previously Chief Executive of Liverpool Guild of Students and Kings College Students' Union, and has a strong background in oversight and management of democracy in students' unions. He exceeds the qualifications necessary to return Durham SU's elections. There are no conflicts of interest declared relevant to this appointment.

**Assembly is asked to ratify Peter Robertson as the Returning Officer.**

TO: Assembly  
FROM: Jack Ballingham  
RE: Opportunities Officer Report  
DATE: 25 November 2021

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## Opportunities Officer Assembly Report

### **Societies & Freshers' Fair**

Since the beginning of the academic year there have been 22,211 new SU student group memberships, for a total of 30,029 currently active memberships. The provision of grants for student groups has been disrupted by the need for Assembly to elect a new Governance & Grants Committee, but we hope to be in a position to begin issuing grants from the beginning of Epiphany term. SU coronavirus mitigation measures for society activity have been consistent with those used by the University for Wider Student Experience activities, including their test to participate programme. This has so far been very successful, and cases remain extremely low in the University community.

This year's Freshers' Fair, the first in-person fair held after coronavirus restrictions were relaxed, was held at Maiden Castle rather than the usual venue of Dunelm House. 4204 students attended the first day of the fair, and 6604 on the second day, making for a very successful event, especially given expected hesitancy to attend in-person events. We hope to continue using Maiden Castle as the venue for the fair in future years. 47,971 visits were also made to the online Freshers' Fair platform by mid-October.

Along with the other officers, I wrote to the University administration to secure the continued availability of the strike fund scheme that previously made SU academic societies free to join for everybody. This was agreed to, and academic society membership will continue to be free for all students for this academic year.

### **Student Group Governance Reform**

Initial discussions on my manifesto pledge to reform and replace the Student Group Agreement have taken place, and this process will begin at the start of Epiphany term. This reform will improve the autonomy of our student groups, and streamline the experience of running them for our society exec members.

### **Freedom of Speech**

Durham SU has done extensive work consulting on the government's Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill. This Bill exists mainly to further a broad campaign against civil dissent and the student movement in particular, and will place unnecessary power over debate at the disposal of the Office for Students. It will impose onerous new legal duties on students' unions and restrict, not liberalise, debate on campus. Moreover, it is justified by a moral panic about freedom of speech on campus that is at odds with the reality. My views on the Bill's content and context were kindly published by the higher education sector blog site WonkHE as an article on their website\*.

Durham SU made a written evidence submission to the Public Bill Committee for the Bill in the House of Commons, setting out objections, criticisms and suggestions for amendments. Some of these were taken up by opposition MPs in Committee, but were unfortunately defeated. Further to this, I met with

\* [wonkhe.com/blogs/universities-should-oppose-not-just-refine-the-free-speech-bill/](https://wonkhe.com/blogs/universities-should-oppose-not-just-refine-the-free-speech-bill/)

David Simmonds MP, Richard Holden MP, and the Shadow Universities Minister, Matt Western MP, to elaborate our concerns and provide a student voice on the Bill. We hope to carry out similar work as the Bill now moves to the House of Lords in the coming months. We'll also be working with student groups to showcase the great work they do in furthering campus debate, and to show the government that freedom of speech is alive and well at Durham.

A copy of a briefing on this topic presented to common room Assembly reps and JCR presidents is appended for information.

### **Democracy Review**

Following consultations during 2020-21, several changes to Durham SU's democratic structures have been proposed: these were presented to and approved by Assembly in Easter term 2021. The final part of these proposals, relating to the role of Assembly's chair and the membership of Assembly, were passed at an inquorate Assembly meeting. Assembly is now asked to ratify this decision, though to also be aware that the membership model first proposed in Easter 2021 is not final or binding. We recognise this model of membership remains contested, and we hope to go out for further consultation this year and to present alternative models to Assembly in the coming months. Standing orders to implement all of the other agreed changes, including committee structures and meeting formats, will also be presented to Assembly soon.

### **Bar & Commercial Services**

Following a difficult end to the last academic year due to staff isolations, Riverside bar and café has now resumed operations. After recruitment during summer, the bar now has a full complement of staff. While Riverside does not currently serve its previous food offer, we hope to be in a position to do so in the near future. The bar and café will also soon be opening from 11.30am.

**Appendix: Briefing on Freedom of Speech work presented to common room representatives and JCR presidents****Jack Ballingham's Briefing to the SU Reps Committee Regarding Freedom of Speech Work****What will the Bill do?**

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill is a piece of legislation brought forward by the government, which aims to “strengthen academic freedom and free speech in universities”. As well as universities, the Bill lays out new requirements for students’ unions, including:

- Creating a new duty for SUs to “secure freedom of speech within the law” for members, staff and visiting speakers
- Requiring SUs do not deny the use of premises, or give use of premises, on terms influenced by a person’s ideas, beliefs or views, for holding meetings and events
- Requiring SUs maintain a code of practice, setting out their values relating to free speech, and the procedures to be followed by members, staff and visiting speakers when holding meetings

In relation to governing these new requirements, the Bill:

- Gives the Office for Students (OfS) the function of promoting free speech and academic freedom, including at SUs
- Gives the OfS the power to monitor SUs’ compliance with their new duties, and to impose fines where they do not comply
- Creates a new role of “Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom” at the OfS, with responsibility for overseeing the OfS’ new free speech functions

**What does the issue really look like?**

The government claims, in [a white paper from February 2021](#), that there are many instances of “no platforming of speakers and protests against academics or students who have expressed lawful, if controversial opinions”. This is simply not backed up by the facts. The OfS’ own figures for the 2019-20 academic year showed that, out of a total of 43,337 events involving external speakers, only 94 were rejected: 0.21%. During the 2020-21 academic year at Durham, the SU received applications for 120 events involving guest speakers. None were rejected.

It is also claimed that there is a “chilling effect” on free speech at universities and SUs, through which people feel unable to express their views and “self-censor” themselves. The government cites a study by King’s College London to demonstrate this. The KCL study, however, does not link this to events, debates or visiting speakers, or to any specific practice in institutions. If a “chilling effect” does indeed exist, it is not clear how this Bill’s new provisions would address it.

**A new role for the Office for Students**

The new role of the OfS also raises issues with the Bill. SUs have not previously been regulated by the OfS, and have instead been regulated mostly by the Charity Commission. The Bill does not clarify how the relationship between these two regulatory bodies should be managed, especially where they may clash.

They may clash, for instance, on the meaning of “free speech within the law”. The Bill’s definition of free speech, to be governed by the OfS, suggests all speech which is not illegal should be protected. Charity Commission guidance for SUs, meanwhile, requires that SUs consider things like protecting the institution’s reputation when managing events. How these duties relate to each other is left unclear, and is likely to cause confusion and take up time for SUs and societies.

This confusion is also likely to come with a price tag, as SUs seek legal advice to clarify what their duties really are. The government itself puts the cost of implementing this Bill at £48.1 million over ten years, a cost which will fall entirely on SUs, universities and other HE providers. The government intends to provide no funds for this. We must question whether this is a good use of institutional funds in the HE sector, at a time when the government is axing financial support for teaching qualifications, and the arts, humanities and social sciences, and universities are forced to close courses.

The creation of the new “Free Speech Director” comes with enormous risks. This “Director” will have responsibility for overseeing the OfS’ new free speech roles, and is to be appointed directly by the Secretary of State for Education. There is no provision for the accountability of the Director, and no requirements stated for their qualification. The OfS already has an unfortunate track record with appointments like this. Toby Young, after being appointed to the OfS’ board in 2018, resigned after a week when his views were brought to public attention. The current chair of the OfS, meanwhile, is James Wharton, a Conservative member of the House of Lords. Wharton is also a former Conservative MP, and formerly the manager of Boris Johnson’s party leadership campaign. When he took up the role at the OfS, he refused to resign the government whip in the House of Lords. There is every reason to believe the appointment of this new Director will be just as, if not more, politically motivated, carrying the very real danger that whoever holds the role will function as the government’s own political officer within the higher education sector.

### **The Bill in context**

Besides these details, it is crucial to consider this Bill in the wider context of the government’s legislative agenda. It comes at the same time as several other pieces of legislation, all of which extend the government’s powers over civil society and dissent. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will give the police sweeping powers, including over protest. It has changed trespass from a civil to a criminal offence, punishable by the confiscation of property, including vehicles. This move will effectively criminalise the way of life of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The Covert Human Intelligence Sources Act 2021 has given the security services the ability to commit crimes in the course of undercover surveillance of groups. State spying operations have been carried out in the past against trade unions, peace groups, and, pertinently, the National Union of Students. Where these two laws seek to expand the power of the government against sources of dissent and opposition, the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill we are now faced with attempts to do the same, advancing the power of the government in higher education. Universities and students do not often agree with the government’s view; this balance is now to be redressed by an Act of Parliament. Perhaps this is the real “chilling effect”.

### **What Durham SU is doing?**

For these reasons, Durham SU has made a submission to the Public Bill Committee for the Bill, setting out our criticisms of it. Our submission explains the flawed justifications for the Bill, the situation at Durham, and lays out the questions we have about how the Bill’s provisions will operate. It suggests several changes to the Bill, including clarifying that SUs and universities will not face penalties where events have been cancelled due to circumstances outside of their control, and a proposal for proper accountability for the Free Speech Director. You can read our submission [here](#). We also wish to express support for the National Union of Students’ proposed amendments, which are laid out in a briefing you can find [here](#).

TO: Assembly  
FROM: Jonah Graham  
RE: Welfare and Liberation Officer Report  
DATE: 25 November 2021

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## Update on priorities:

### **Mental Health**

Met with the college welfare reps as well as the counselling, mental health advisor, and student wellbeing teams. Going forward this will provide the basis for in-depth research regarding student support. I am aiming to start research by the 29<sup>th</sup> of November.

Continued my predecessor's and DPOCA's lobbying of the university over counsellor diversity. The university has partnered with an external agency, Nilaari, to allow all students to request a BAME counsellor.

I am working with the SU's welfare policy coordinator to update the SU's signposting guide. This guide details resources staff and students can provide students when met with safety, housing, mental health, and other problems. We are adding specific resources for liberation groups. We aim to finish the content by the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Sexual Violence and Misconduct**

Led the SU's response to spiking. Gathered information from multiple agencies, including County Durham police and hospitals. This information has been shared with students through university dialogue as well as our advice hub, website, and social media. We included messages of perpetration (why students should not spike), how to stay safe (without victim-blaming), what to do if students suspect they have been spiked and reporting and support options.

Supported the work of the JCR presidents who have reached out to 14 bars and clubs to learn what safety measures are in place. We will collate a list of best practise and demand this from clubs. Our own bar will be given this practise. The campaign group has worked with the university to provide the SU and the college with drinks covers, training, sign-in policies, and increased CCTV. We will be looking into spiking-testing kits in the coming weeks.

Assisted promotion of Active Bystander training. Since my term started the SU has trained 850 students. Given extensive feedback to the university on their own respect training and accompanying workshop

Reached out to sexual violence experts within the university regarding a survivor peer support group.

### **Supporting the Associations and Other Liberation Work**

Assisted the Associations on a variety of issues. Helped DPOCA handle a response to their anti-racism training, the LGBT+ association's efforts to ensure club safety, and refunding flights for international students over university administration errors.

Hosted the first Association forum and provided Association presidents with advice from previous presidents, as well as guidance on assembly and SU processes. Begun to discuss how to ensure better representation and platforming with SU colleagues.

Led the SU's media response to clarify the nature of the training on supporting student sex workers.

TO: Assembly  
FROM: Sophie Hofels  
RE: Harm Reduction Policy and Practices  
DATE: 25 November 2021

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**Assembly notes:**

- Two in five university students in the UK are regular drug users, with 56% having admitted to trying them at least once during their studies (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-43892950>).
- Hard drugs are used regularly and commonly. Students buy drugs for nights out, events, and major music activities.
- Last year, four students in the north east died. Their deaths were most likely caused by drug misuse (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-54413820>).
- Students have reported several incidents of drug sniffer dogs being sent around colleges to SSDP Durham. We see this as hugely counterproductive and potentially life threatening for students when they choose to take illegal drugs. If students are in their room whilst the dogs are going around, there is a high chance they will take their whole supply all at once in order to avoid being caught. This can be really dangerous and depending on what the students are taking, lethal.
- Students are also far less likely to seek emergency medical attention in the case of overdoses, due to fear of reprisals from colleges and universities. Several students have reported to SSDP Durham that in times of severe illness due to the effects of illegal drugs, they have chosen not to seek emergency help due to being scared of being expelled or sanctioned. The university must see this is an incredibly dangerous and extreme threat to make to students, and one which risks lives. (Neurosight Survey, 2020)

**Assembly believes:**

- Durham University must change their policies towards illegal drugs immediately in order to prevent more harm being caused to its students. SSDP Durham believes that the only practical policy in place should be one geared towards education and harm reduction, as opposed to threats and punishment
- The current 'no tolerance' drug policy at this university has tremendous negative effects on students. Students don't have easy access to information on how to sensibly consume drugs and on what to do in an emergency, they don't have drug testing kits accessible and are reluctant to seek help in emergency situations because of the fear of punishment. This has to change. The university can no longer ignore the reality of widespread, prolific drug use amongst its students, and every year the likelihood of a student overdosing remains high.



- It is proven that education people about sensible drug use, e.g., how to take them safely, which drugs are safe/ or dangerous to mix, etc. minimises the risk drugs carry with them (Ritter, A., & Cameron, J. (2006). A review of the efficacy and effectiveness of harm reduction strategies for alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs. Drug and alcohol review, 25(6), 611-624).
- Our key aim is to be able to supply students with drug testing kits. This is in place at several other Russell Group universities which has been a huge success. (University of Bristol, University of Newcastle, University of Birmingham, University of Manchester; <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/mar/29/testing-kit-or-ban-how-universities-are-tackling-student-drug-use>)

**Assembly resolves:**

To mandate the Welfare Officer to lobby the University for a reduce harm policy and practices such as but not limited to:

- Educating students from the start of their university education on sensible drug use, and how to recognise the dangers. Having harm reduction workshops in fresher's week just like the anti-racism and consent ones that are currently running would be a good start.
- Having a good support system in place, e.g., having nightline volunteers, welfare officers and others who are in contact with students being harm reduction trained, or having good counselling services for students with problematic drug use would be a good way to assure students' wellbeing.
- Providing drug testing kits.
- Having physical harm reduction leaflets supplied to students can also help raise the issue and educate more people.
- Publish a harm reduction statement instead of having a drug policy.
- Lobby for free advice from the university and the Students' Union.

TO: Assembly

FROM: Opportunities Officer

RE: Democracy Review Part 3 – Membership and Purpose

DATE: 25 November 2021

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### **Assembly Notes:**

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

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

Key findings from the report were:

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

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

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

Not all the changes that are proposed during student consultation require Standing Order reviews and are actions to be carried out by the organisation that address comments in the initial research. These include, for example, making financial information easier to access online. Many of these changes are straight forward, and a process of implementation will begin over summer.

## **Assembly Believes:**

Many of Durham SU's democratic processes are complex and interdependent with one another, existing in a landscape of multiple democratic systems through the variable Collegiate model and other university structures. Any reform process starts a ripple effect which may continue for some time.

Democratic change in any organisation, and in particular a students' union, should be seen as cyclical and continuous evolution, not once-in-a-lifetime revolution. To effectively develop and embed democratic changes, we must commit to an evolutionary and experimental approach to change, because this won't be perfect in the first cycle. It is clear that in summer 2022, a thorough review of the new model for Assembly will be required, and recommendations for refinement will be necessary.

The purpose of Assembly is to inform the policy direction of Durham Students' Union work between the annual election cycle and hold the elected officers to account on their work and the implementation of the union's policy positions. For the unions' policy work to be effective, we should take a more collaborative and deliberative approach to policy design and debate, along with scrutiny measures addressing its implementation.

The below points are reflective of the Standing Order changes to be made, including some descriptive next. They are not the proposed Standing Order text. By voting on Assembly Resolves DSU will commission new Standing Orders to be written that are reflective of the proposals. The new Standing Orders will be brought before this current Assembly Group for ratification over summer 2021.

## **Assembly Resolves:**

To make effective changes to Assembly's policy development process, the union proposed the following changes, which will require changes to Standing Orders D (Assembly), E (Committees and Forums), H (Academic Representatives)

### 1. Chair

1.1 The Chair is responsible for the running of Assembly meetings, ensuring members stick to the agenda and that discussion and debate is open and balanced. The chair is a non-voting member of Assembly. In the absence of a Chair, the responsibility falls to either the President or another SU sabbatical officer.

1.2 The Chair should be elected in Easter term by a cross campus ballot and will need to be a student at the institution for the duration of their time in role.

1.3 The Chair, along with the Assembly Procedures Committee, arranges the agenda in line with the Standing Orders.

## 2. Assembly Transparency

2.1 All voting members of Assembly should be made public annually. If a student representative has a compelling case as to why they shouldn't have their name displayed publicly, the SU will display alternative contact details.

2.2 Proposed motions will be shared with the student body ahead of Assembly meetings and passed policy will be shared within three working days of Assembly happening.

2.3 Reports from each of the Assembly committees will also be shared with the student body.

## 3. Voting Rights

3.1 All Assembly members have equal voting rights on Assembly. The Chair of Assembly cannot vote.

3.2 If a vote is tied, the motion falls and can be resubmitted with amendments at the following Assembly.

## 4. Membership

### 4.1

Chair	Non-voting Member
The Sabbatical Officers (x5)	Voting Members
Department Reps (x 27)	Voting Members
College Reps (x 17)	Voting Members
JCR PresComm Chair (x1)	Voting Member
MCR PresComm Chair (x1)	Voting Member
Presidents of recognised Associations (x8)	Voting members
DUCK Committee Chair (x1)	Voting Member
Student Group Reps (x8)	Voting Members
Experience Durham Sabbatical Officer (x1) Team Durham	Voting Member
Non-portfolio Places (x7)	Voting Member

4.2 Within the new Standing Orders, the assigned number of roles where there are multiple postholders (e.g. Association Presidents) will be omitted, allowing Assembly to accommodate any changes to these groups without Standing Order changes.

4.3 How individual Assembly members are voted into their positions will be defined in the Standing Orders relating to their roles/areas.

4.4 By creating 7 non-portfolio places for Assembly, we are able to give more access to students who don't have preexisting representative roles but who want to get involved more in Durham SU's democracy. We will elect this group during a summer term election period and will use university demographics data determine who may fill those places, for example we may weight them to ensure some of the positions are reserved for people of colour. We understand that this process will require some experimentation in its design and implementation.

4.5 We have increased the number of people on Assembly representing academic interests of students. This is because academic representation is a fundamental part of Durham SU's purpose and a space un-replicated by other student communities.