



DURHAM \$U

TRUSTEE

RECRUITMENT

PACK

Welcome from the Chair of the Board of Trustees and Durham SU President

Durham students created Durham SU in 1899 as the Student Representative Council, the first and only thing owned by every single student at our university, no matter what their course or College.

Over one hundred years later, student life is very different, but much of what we think is important and the way we work would be recognisable to our founders. We're the champion of every Durham student. We're interested in the things that matter to them. We stand up for their rights. We bring them together. We celebrate their success. And we're still unique at Durham, because we belong to every student, and we're where every student belongs.

We're a leading students' union, working with a world-class university, in a wonderful city, and our foundations are strong. We're privileged to be able to build on an exceptional heritage, and we're ambitious about our future.

Our Board of Trustees is now looking for two new members, and we're so pleased you may be interested in helping students make Durham University fairer and better. We're keen to consider applications from individuals with a range of experiences to compliment the current strengths of the Board. We want to have an inclusive Board with diverse perspectives and backgrounds. We welcome applications from first-time trustees.

We want every person involved with Durham SU to feel welcome and to be supported to be brilliant. Please read this pack, review our online materials, and get in contact with our recruitment partners at Atkinson HR Consulting at matilda@atkinsonhrconsulting.co.uk who are helping us to support you in this recruitment process.

Yours sincerely



Graeme Osborn, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Abi Taylor, Durham SU President

Headline recruitment information

You can apply for the role using [Atkinson HR's application portal](#). You'll be asked to submit a CV and complete an application form, in which you'll be asked to answer three questions:

- Why do you want to join Durham SU as a trustee and how do your personal values align with the students' union's values?
- What knowledge, abilities, and experience can you contribute to our Board's collective strength?
- How would you add value to the Board and our work to support students?

Applications will close at midday on 29 May 2026.

Shortlisting will take place on w/c 1 June 2026.

Interviews will take place on 8 June 2026, in person at Durham Students' Union.

As part of induction, we'll want to listen to your experience and development needs, but:

- We'll invite successful candidates to attend initial training with the new student trustees on 23 June 2026.
- We'll invite all new trustees to observe a meeting on 24 June 2026.

The rest of this pack sets out who we are, what we're about, and the expectations we should have of each other.

We know that Durham SU is special

Durham SU's values endure between trustees, strategies, staff and students, because they make us who we are. Even when living out our values would make things tough, or controversial, or expensive, we prioritise long-term commitment over short-term discomfort. If we did otherwise, we wouldn't be Durham SU. We value:

- **care** and **responsibility**, because our students matter to us more than anything.
- **imagination** and **collectivism**, because we're grounded in our distinctive collegiate community.
- **ambition** and **optimism**, because we believe Durham students can – and do – change the world.

Our purpose

We're interested in the things that matter to students, and we stand up for their rights. We bring students together, and we celebrate their success. So, our mission, simply, is: **we're the champion of every Durham student.**

Our mission follows from our charitable purpose to advance the education of Durham students, which we do in two different but complimentary ways:

- We use our influence to improve the academic education delivered by Durham University.
- We use our infrastructure to support social education delivered by students to each other.

In your first answer, we'd find it helpful to understand what's important to you and know that you understand what's important to us.

We want to make sure we'll work well together because we believe in the same things. We're really into hearing new takes on our values: we know some people will get excited by an organisation that values 'care' and someone else would be motivated by 'collectivism'. Just let us know what these mean to you!

We want to know how you could help make our Board stronger

We think the most important thing about being a Durham SU trustee is an enthusiasm for our work and for Durham students. We aren't looking for a particular professional background or experience, but we would like to know more about you as a rounded professional and the achievements which make you proud of yourself.

In your second answer, we'd find it helpful to understand your strengths.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations has a framework which suggests skills or experiences or values that trustees can add to Boards, which we've reflected on and added to, set out in the table below. We'd like to know which three you think are areas of strength for you, and what in your background or experience gives you that confidence.

Previous service on a Board of Trustees	A senior management role in another organisation	Campaigning and influencing
Charity, company, or education, law	Information governance or management	Enterprise, entrepreneurial work, or commercialisation
Equity, diversity, liberation or inclusion work	Events management	Audit
Accounting	Fundraising and income generation	Health and safety, perhaps including wellbeing
People management and human resources	Marketing, insight and research	Communications
Monitoring and evaluating performance	Good governance, particularly in the voluntary sector	Policy development
Public affairs	Public relations and media management	Risk management
Strategic planning	Volunteer management	The higher education sector
Project management	Coaching, mentoring, or leadership development	Stakeholder and relationship management
Management in the arts and cultural sector	Experience of Durham University, as alumni or staff	Leadership in the voluntary sector
Leadership in students' unions	Youth engagement and advocacy	Democratic services or engagement

Every person will offer something valuable, and we don't have any combination in mind – we just want to understand you a bit better so we can think about how we'd work best with you.

We're doing important work

Our strategy is based on extensive research, and conversation with our members, and guides our work to 2027. We're looking for people to join our Board of Trustees who can help us achieve the vision of our strategy **to make Durham a better, fairer University.**

Our strategy prioritises three goals. We're going to:

- Bring students across Durham together.
- Build confidence in the purpose and value of the students' union.
- Tackle the big issues that hold students back.

You can read our strategy [here](#).

We're also excited about the development of our strategy, which will guide our work from 2027, and our new trustees will play a leading role in collective decisions about our future.

In your third answer, we'd find it helpful to understand what you think you'd add in particular to our work now, and in the future.

If you're enthusiastic but unsure about some of the delivery of our work, that's fine and normal. You could, for example, offer something brilliant to our work considering the strengths you've outlined in the first part of your application, or you could have great relationships that might help us, or have been part of an organisation doing similar work.

What makes students' unions different?

Durham SU, like many students' unions, is regulated as a charity. But while 'charity' is an accurate legal description, and we're a professional organisation, we come from a proud heritage of democratic and membership organisations. Durham students want to do things *with* each other, *for* each other, and aren't into having things done *to* them. So, Durham SU being 'led by the trustees' has to sit comfortably alongside Durham SU being 'led by the students'. There's tension here, but we manage this well, because we pay constant attention to both our character and our legal responsibilities.

Our Board of Trustees includes executive student Officers, elected every year to represent students to Durham University, for a twelve-month term of office. Our lay trustees need to be enthusiastic about having collective responsibility and sharing power with young people who are learning about governance while doing a job in partnership with our Chief Executive. We're also very clear that everyone learns from everyone else, and our lay trustees will explore new ways of being a trustee in our context. We've found that a shared commitment to patience and respect are fundamental to our trustees' success.

Our Board of Trustees is made up of:

- Three student Officers, remunerated by the students' union to represent student interests to the University. In trustee meetings, they have the same responsibilities as other trustees, but they usually have more insight into how the organisation is working day-to-day because they're part of the executive team.
- Five students who serve as trustees during their studies. These trustees have deep and wide insight into student life, but often learn about corporate governance in role.
- Five lay trustees who join the student members, to add the quality of their personal and professional experience to the decisions made by the Board.

Durham SU's governing documents are our [Articles of Association](#). Our [Annual Report](#) provides insight into the work we do each year.

We're regulated on some issues by Durham University, who are also our principal funder and the focus of our representative and campaigning work. We have a well-established and successful relationship with the university, based on confident constructive challenge.

Nobody wants Durham University to succeed more than its students, and Durham SU is the organisation students created to help make that happen. We work with our institution in partnership, to make Durham University better and fairer for students, but that isn't the same as agreeing with everything the university's executive wants to do! Our trustees understand this balancing act – as do our university executive! – and we have a mature and sophisticated approach to managing this tension.

What we should expect from each other

We want to be upfront about mutual expectations because we hope that'll help you in making a choice about applying to be a Durham SU trustee.

We'd like you to have a positive approach to the core role of being a trustee, even if it's a new thing for you. We understand this about having an enthusiastic commitment to the essential duties of a trustee. You should:

- Act in Durham SU's best interests.
- Act with reasonable skill and care.
- Ensure Durham SU is carrying out its purposes for the benefit of Durham students.
- Manage Durham SU's resources responsibly.
- Ensure Durham SU is accountable.
- Comply with Durham SU's governing documents, and the law.

You need to be aware of and abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivities
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

You'll need to be eligible to serve as a trustee, and not be disqualified for any reason. We'll register you with Companies House and with the Charity Commission if you're appointed and you'll need to declare your eligibility to serve to the statutory regulators. If you have any reason to believe this is a problem for you, please discuss this with us.

Durham SU's [Code of Conduct](#) for trustees sets out our expectations of behaviour and standards.

We expect all trustees (and applicants) to declare any relevant interests. Our [Management of Interests Policy](#) sets out the way we understand and manage interests.

Practicalities

You can expect that we will:

- Budget for and deliver annual development for all trustees, collectively, and for any individual trustee that takes up an additional role such as Chair of a Committee.
- Continually brief you on issues that will help you do well in role (for the past few years, we've used the morning before a Board meeting to have an external guest speak to the trustees, and Durham SU managers, about issues such as student life in Europe, Durham University strategy, the voluntary sector in the North East, the future of NUS, and so on).
- Invite you to showcase student events, such as performances and awards.
- Give you at least five days to read papers before a meeting.
- Give you at least 24 hours to think about an emergency decision.

We expect that there will be five Board meetings in a year. Each meeting lasts around three hours, and we think reading and discussing papers in advance will usually take about two hours for each meeting. We have one full day of strategic development each year. The dates for the next year of meetings are:

- 24 June 2026.
- 9 September 2026 (Board development day)
- 25 November 2026.
- 27 January 2027.
- 17 March 2027.
- 26 May 2027.
- 14 July 2027 (Board development day).

Trustees may be asked to pick up a project such as sitting on an appointments panel or meeting with auditors or attending a student awards ceremony. These are optional additional opportunities, and it isn't a problem if you can't take us up on these invitations, per se, but an open mind to participation would be very welcome. It would be reasonable to assume that taking on this role would require a commitment of one day per month (on average).

Trustees are volunteers who do not get paid, but we encourage all expenses to be claimed so there is no cost to you to serving on our Board. We commit to spend whatever time and money is necessary to support your access needs, and personal development.

External trustees are usually appointed for a term of four years.

Diversifying our Board

We are committed to ensuring that people with a diverse range of skills and experience are encouraged to apply and contribute fully as trustees. We will strive to remove the barriers that prevent people from applying to become trustees and ensure that our application and selection processes are inclusive of and accessible to people with a wide range of skills and lived experience.

The ACEVO and Voice for Change Home Truths report in 2020 highlighted a significant lack of representation of Black and Asian individuals in senior roles within the charity sector and the huge lack of opportunity for Black and Asian individuals to begin, develop, and succeed in their careers in the sector, including as trustees. We would therefore particularly welcome applications from Black and Asian candidates, those who identify as women or non-binary, and disabled candidates.

If you are interested in becoming a trustee at Durham SU and aren't sure if you meet the requirements, please get in touch for an informal conversation.