

TO: Assembly  
FROM: Meg Haskins  
RE: **Accessibility: Core SU Position**  
DATE: 12 March 2019

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## **The belief and its justification:**

Durham SU and the University should be striving for more than the minimum standard of accessibility. Minimum standards enable students to participate to an extent, but can equally fall short of what is necessary for full participation. This means that some students' access to equal opportunities and learning experiences are limited due to the structural barriers within both the University and wider society.

## **Definition of a better future:**

What is understood to be an accessible university experience, and how to enable it, should be guided by the lived experiences of disabled individuals within Durham University and by research and innovation both within and beyond the higher education sector. Durham SU should promote best practice throughout the Union and University to ensure that disabled individuals can participate fully in all aspects of university life. Durham SU should advocate for awareness and acknowledgment of the barriers which these individuals face, as well as advocate for a proactive approach from the University in order to overcome barriers.

Accessibility should be a priority factor that is considered when planning any new buildings, or renovating existing buildings, in the delivery of teaching and assessment and in the creation of online learning and digital resources across the University community. Students who are affected by accessibility should be consulted during this process to ensure that appropriate measures are included during planning rather than only being recognised during implementation.

## **The barriers:**

Durham's campus remains incredibly inaccessible for students and staff with disabilities. Online and learning resources are often inconsistent in their addressing of accessibility needs, and the decentralised nature of our student communities makes it challenging for all groups to understand and reflect in practice the need to make their activities as accessible as possible in different ways. While the cause of some of these, such as the age of the University estate, can be clearly identified, barriers to change are often a combination of a lack understanding of accessibility needs and a lack of resources prioritised to create solutions.

The University remains unaware of the extent of the issue across campus and consequently, disabled staff and students continue to experience significant disadvantages during their Durham experience.

## **Belief about change and responsibilities:**

The position of Durham Students' Union is:

*That* Durham SU and the University should strive for best practice in accessibility, ensuring that no students' experience at Durham is limited by preventable inaccessibility.

*That* **all** students should have the opportunity to engage and participate fully in all areas of University.

*That* no student should ever face any form of discrimination, marginalisation or exclusion from a full student experience.