



# Staff Council Members

Applicant Information

**2024**

## Message from the Chair of Council

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in joining Durham University Council.

Since my appointment as Chair of Council in 2018, I have been hugely impressed by the extraordinary achievements of members of the University. The commitment of all colleagues and students, especially throughout the pandemic, to the success of the University is evident and is reinforced in feedback from our alumni.

We are looking to make an appointment of one academic staff member to the University Council. The Council is the ultimate governing body of the University and is the Board of Trustees. The role of Council is to provide strategic insights and challenge to the Senior Leadership Team and to ensure the institution remains well-governed, expertly managed and properly financed. Council members are actively engaged in all the University's governance committees and strategic working groups, and as a result work with staff, students and alumni.

Council plays an essential role in the continued development and delivery of the University's strategy and will continue to ensure that the University's corporate governance is appropriate and effective, enabling the University to meet the challenges of the coming decades and beyond.

Yours Sincerely,

Joe Docherty  
**Chair of Council**

# University Governance and Management Structure

The University is an autonomously governed institution established by Royal Charter and governed by Statute.

## Council

Council is the governing body of the University and has ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the University and the power and authority to exercise all the powers of the University. Council has the custody, control and disposition of the University's property and finances, and sets the strategic direction of the institution. Council is responsible for reviewing the work of the University and taking such steps as it sees necessary to advance the interests of the University, maintaining its efficiency and encouraging the pursuit of education and research at Durham.

## Senate

Senate is the University's senior governing body for academic matters and providing assurance to the Council. Senate is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and draws its membership from senior academic and other staff, and representatives of the University's student body. Senate's role is to promote, direct and regulate the teaching and research work of the University.

## University Executive

The University Executive Committee (UEC) is a joint committee of Senate and Council. UEC manages the University's strategy and steers its business; monitors the achievement of the University's objectives; considers and make recommendations to Council and Senate and their committees on important policy initiatives; and takes ownership and management of key risks. UEC is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and is comprised of the University's Senior Leadership Team.

Further information on [Council](#), [Senate](#) and [UEC](#) can be found by clicking the hyperlinks.

## University Council Membership

Council has 24 members including 12 lay members, 2 student members, and 7 University staff. At least 5 of the staff members need to be academic staff with research and teaching responsibilities. None can be serving members of the University Executive Committee.

The Governance and Nominations Committee is responsible for recommending to Council the appointment of members, for ensuring continuity in Council's membership and that members of Council overall have the skills and experience necessary for it to meet its primary responsibilities.

## Staff Member Vacancy

There is one staff member vacancy to take up membership from 1 August 2024. The vacancy is open to all members of staff.

## Collective Responsibilities

The collective responsibilities of Members of Council concern strategy, performance and governance and include:

- Promoting and safeguarding the current and long-term interests and stewardship of the University and supporting the development of its mission and strategy to meet the needs of stakeholders;
- Ensuring that the University's performance against its strategic objectives is monitored and evaluated;
- Having ultimate responsibility for the assets of the institution;
- Ensuring the establishment and monitoring of systems of control, risk management and accountability across all its activities; and
- Ensuring that the University delivers its charitable objectives.

## Individual Responsibilities

All Members are expected to:

- Attend all meetings and commit the time and effort needed to carry out their responsibilities;
- Uphold high standards of integrity and probity; support the Chair, Vice-Chairs and other Council Members in acting corporately; and instilling the appropriate culture, values and behaviours, within and outside the Council;
- Play an appropriate part in ensuring that the business of Council is carried out efficiently and effectively and in a manner appropriate for the proper conduct of public business;
- Conduct themselves in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life (i.e. Nolan Standards of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership);
- Review their performance and the performance of Council through informal and formal processes designed and approved for use by Council;
- In their capacity as charitable trustees:
  - act reasonably and prudently in all matters relating to the University;
  - act always in the best interests of the University;
  - apply the income and property of the University only for the purposes set out in the governing document;
  - protect all the property of the University;
  - invest the funds of the University only in accordance with their power of investment (as granted by the Trustee Acts 2000 and the University's governing documents);
  - regularly review the effectiveness of the University;
  - act within their legal powers.
- Act as ambassadors and influencers for the University including, where possible, representing Council and the University at a range of events.

## Time Commitment

The time commitment for staff Members may vary depending on the amount of time you wish to give. However, the minimum commitment is 18 days per year on Council business, including preparation for and attendance at the events indicated below:

- Council meetings: five or six part days (including occasional pre Council briefing sessions the evening before);
- Annual Council Strategy session, usually one day in September;
- A joint session with Senate, usually in February;
- Meetings as part of the Council Member appraisal process; and
- Engagement in at least one Council committee (e.g., Governance and Nominations, Finance, etc.).

University Secretary provides induction for all new Members, coordinates Member development events during the year, and encourages Members to attend relevant development opportunities provided by external bodies such as AdvanceHE.

Staff members serve as University Trustees with associate responsibilities and are not representatives of Senate or the staff community.

Staff members who take research leave during their period of appointment would be encouraged to continue to participate and attend Council meetings. Staff members on maternity leave could consider using their 'Keeping in Touch' days to attend Council meetings.

It is important for applicants to assess whether they have the capacity to carry out the role. It would be helpful to have a discussion your Line Manager before accepting an offer to discuss impact and cover of core work. The University Secretary can provide advice and guidance and explore solutions.

## Person Specification

The following criteria are essential for the role:

- A strong personal commitment to higher education and the values, strategic aims and objectives of the University;
- An understanding of and commitment to the University's mission as an educational charity;
- Ability to maintain a strategic focus and to test and constructively challenge management decision making;
- A demonstrable commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion;
- Ability to digest and act upon large amounts of information quickly;
- Ability to understand and challenge financial information;
- Excellent interpersonal and networking skills;
- Highly effective oral and written communication skills; and
- Experience of engaging in complex projects.

## Terms of Appointment

The appointment is made by Council, following interview by a panel appointed by the Governance and Nominations Committee.

The usual length of appointment is 4 years, with a possibility of renewal for a further period of 3 years. This vacancy is available from 1 August 2024.

Individual Council member review meetings take place annually with the Chair of Council, or Vice-Chair, to acknowledge members' contributions to Council, to identify any development needs and to enable them to enhance that contribution and to discuss performance.

As is common across the sector, membership of the University Council does not carry remuneration, but reasonable travelling and other associated expenses in connection with the role will be reimbursed.

Further information refer to the Council Member Role Description (**Appendix 3**).

## How to Apply

**This vacancy is advertised via Internal Vacancies within Oracle which can be accessed by clicking on the following link: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/hr/oraclefusionportal/>**

If you experience any difficulty in submitting your application, please contact Cherith Smith, Senior Recruitment Manager at [cherith.j.smith@durham.ac.uk](mailto:cherith.j.smith@durham.ac.uk)

Please include with your application:

- A cover letter of not more than two pages setting out how you address the responsibilities set out in the role specification, particularly the individual responsibilities; and
- A CV of not more than three pages.

The closing date for applications is **midnight on Friday 3 May 2024**.

Interviews will be held week commencing **3 June 2024**.

## Appendix 1: Statement of the Council's Primary Responsibilities

This Statement is based on the Model Statement contained in the Committee of University Chairs Higher Education Code of Governance, adapted to reflect the powers and responsibilities that the University of Durham's Council derives from the University Statutes.

The Council is the governing and executive body of the University. Subject to the powers of the Senate as indicated in the University Statutes, it has ultimate responsibility for all the affairs of the University. It is responsible for reviewing the work of the University and taking such steps as it thinks proper for the purpose of advancing the interests of the University, maintaining its efficiency, and encouraging the prosecution of learning and research in the University.

Consistent with the University's constitution, Council's primary responsibilities are as follows:

1. To approve the mission and strategic vision of the University, long term academic and business plans and key performance indicators, and to ensure that these meet the interests of stakeholders;
2. Subject to the powers of the Senate, to be responsible for the organisation of teaching and research, including the organisation of Faculties, Boards of Studies and other groupings, the appointments of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Heads of Departments (Chairs of Boards of Studies), and the prescription of the dates when the Michaelmas, Epiphany and Easter Terms begin and end.
3. To appoint the Vice-Chancellor as Chief Executive of the University and Accountable Officer, and to put in place suitable arrangements for monitoring his/her performance. The Council is responsible for the removal of the Vice-Chancellor for good cause.
4. To delegate authority to the Vice-Chancellor, as Chief Executive, for the effective academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resource management of the University.
5. To establish and keep under regular review the policies, procedures and limits within such management functions as shall be undertaken by and under the authority of the Vice-Chancellor.
6. To ensure the establishment and monitoring of systems of control and accountability, including financial and operational controls and risk assessment, and clear procedures for handling internal grievances and for managing conflicts of interest. Council is responsible for the appointment of the University's external auditors.
7. To ensure that processes are in place to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the University against the plans and approved key performance indicators, which shall, where possible and appropriate, be benchmarked against other comparable institutions.
8. To establish processes to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the

governing body itself and the University's system of governance.

9. To conduct its business in accordance with best practice in higher education corporate governance and with the principles of public life drawn up by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (see **Appendix 2**).
10. To safeguard the good name and values of the University and to be responsible for the ethical governance of the University.
11. To appoint the University Secretary as Secretary to Council.
12. To be the employing authority for all staff in the University and in the maintained Colleges and Societies and to be responsible for establishing a human resources strategy and, subject to the powers of the Senate, for the maintenance of discipline.
13. To be the principal financial and business authority of the University, including:
  - a) ensuring that proper books of account are kept; approving the annual budget financial statements and financial forecasts; establishing budget centres within the University for the efficient management of resources and appointing Budget Officers for each budget centre; the approval of fees.
  - b) having overall responsibility for the University's assets, property and estate.
14. To ensure that there are adequate and effective arrangements in place to ensure public funds are managed appropriately, in line with the conditions of grant and the principles of regularity, propriety and value for money, and to protect the interests of taxpayers and other stakeholders, including providing transparency about value for money for students and for taxpayers.
15. To be the University's legal authority and, as such, to ensure that systems are in place for meeting all the University's legal obligations, including those arising from contracts and other legal commitments made in the University's name. Council is responsible for making regulations for the custody and use of the common seal of the University and for representing the University in all negotiations for obtaining grants from public bodies in aid of the work of the University.
16. To act as trustee for any property, legacy, endowment, bequest or gift in support of the work and welfare of the University.
17. To consider the University's performance in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
18. To take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured within the University.
19. To receive and test assurance that academic governance overseen by Senate is adequate and effective.



20. To ensure that all students have opportunities to engage with the governance of the University and that this allows for a range of perspectives to have influence.
21. To be responsible for receiving assurance that adequate provision has been made for the general welfare of students. Subject to the powers of the Senate, to be responsible for the regulation of the relations between the Council and the students, and for the maintenance of student discipline.
22. To be responsible for effective planning, ongoing control, monitoring and review of the University's health and safety management mechanisms.
23. Subject to the provisions of the Statutes, to be responsible for the recognition of the recognised Colleges of the University. In particular, University Council shall approve the appointment of the Heads of the Recognised Colleges.
24. To approve changes to Statutes and to ensure that the University's constitution is followed at all times and that appropriate advice is available to enable this to happen.

## Appendix 2: ‘Nolan’ Principles of Standards in Public Life

Members of Council are expected to operate in accord with the following ‘Nolan’ Principles of Public Life.

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

<b>Selflessness</b>	Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.
<b>Integrity</b>	Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
<b>Objectivity</b>	In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
<b>Accountability</b>	Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
<b>Openness</b>	Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
<b>Honesty</b>	Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
<b>Leadership</b>	Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

## Appendix 3: Council Member Role Description

### 1. Membership

- a) Members are expected to play an appropriate part in ensuring that the necessary business of the Governing Body is carried on efficiently, effectively, and in a manner appropriate for the proper conduct of public business. They are expected to make rational and constructive contributions to debate and to make their knowledge and expertise available to Council as the opportunity arises.
- b) Members have a responsibility for ensuring that Council acts in accordance with the Statutes of the University, the University's internal rules and regulations (Standing Orders, Codes of Practice and General Regulations), the regulatory framework (Office for Students), and should seek advice from the University Secretary in any case of uncertainty.
- c) Members are required to act in a corporate manner and accept collective responsibility for the decisions reached by Council. Members may not act as if delegated by a particular group, or as a representative of any constituency, and may not be bound in any way by mandates given to them by others. Unless authorised by Council to do so, members should not act individually or in informal groupings to take decisions on Council business on an adhoc basis outside the framework of the meetings of Council and its committees.

### 2. Standards

- a) Members have a responsibility for ensuring that they individually and collectively conduct themselves in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership (Nolan Principles). They must at all times regulate their personal conduct as members of Council in accordance with these standards. Members are required to be sensitive to the views of others, both inside and outside Council meetings.
- b) Council members are encouraged to participate fully in the debates at all the University committees in which they participate. However, in accordance with the principle of collective responsibility members are encouraged to support the final decisions made if invited to comment outside these forums.
- c) Members must make a full and timely disclosure of personal interests to the University Secretary in accordance with the procedures approved by Council. The registers are normally published as part of the University's public resources. Members should, as soon as practicable, disclose any interest which they have in any matter under discussion and accept the ruling of the Chair in relation to the management of that situation, in order that the integrity of the business of Council and its Committees may be and may be seen to be maintained.
- d) Members must maintain appropriate confidentiality of Council business and information received by them as members of Council or its committees.

- e) Members must comply with all current University policies applicable to their role, including:
- Council's approved guidance on the acceptance of business gifts and hospitality and (make full and timely declarations in accordance with this process);
  - CIS Policy and Regulations
  - Policy on Conflict of Interest and Personal Relationships at Work
- f) Members as trustees have the following responsibilities:
- To act reasonably and prudently in all matters relating to the University;
  - To always act in the best interests of the University;
  - To apply the income and property of the University only for the purposes set out in the governing document;
  - To protect all the property of the University;
  - To invest the funds of the University only in accordance with their power of investment (as granted by the Charities Act 2011, the University's governing document or a combination of both);
  - To regularly review the effectiveness of the University; and
  - To act within their legal powers.

All Council members are required to sign a trustee declaration and to inform the University Secretary and Chair of Council if, during the period of their current appointment, their circumstances change such that their declaration is invalidated.

### **3. Personal**

- a) Members will have a strong personal commitment to Higher Education and the values, aims and objectives of the University.
- b) Members will at all times act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement.
- c) Members are expected to read the papers for, and attend, all meetings of Council (normally 5 or 6 a year), Council Annual Strategy Day, a joint session with Senate, and pre-Council sessions, and all meetings of Committees of which they are a member, or give timely apologies if absence is unavoidable.
- d) Members must participate in procedures established by Council for the review of the contribution of individual members. They must attend any induction activities arranged by the University and should participate in appropriate training and development events drawn to their attention by the University Secretary. Members should attend relevant development opportunities provided by external bodies such as AdvanceHE. Any member who is asked to be involved in an HR process must receive relevant training organised by the HR department prior to involvement in this role.
- e) Members should seek to develop an insight into, and understanding of, the complex environment in which a modern university operates.

- f) Members should review their performance and the performance of Council through informal and formal processes designed and approved for use by Council.

#### **4. The Internal Role**

- a) Members have a responsibility for ensuring that Council exercises control over the strategic direction of the University, through an effective planning process, and that the performance of the University is adequately assessed against the objectives which Council has approved.
- b) Members should endeavour to establish constructive and supportive but challenging working relationships with the University employees with whom they come into contact, but must recognise the proper separation between governance and executive management, and avoid involvement in the day-to-day executive management of the University.
- c) Members will normally be invited by Council to serve on at least one formal Council Committee. They may also be asked to undertake ad hoc roles on behalf of the University. They are expected to play a full part in the business of those bodies to which they are appointed.
- d) Lay members are encouraged to engage with understanding the University's academic business, where appropriate, and departmental activities. They are also expected to participate in governance committees including, for example, Audit and Risk Committee, Finance Committee, Remuneration Committee, Governance and Nominations Committee, and Ethics Committee.
- e) Council members are also encouraged to engage in other University life including celebratory and ceremonial occasions.
- f) Council members may be asked to act as formal signatory on behalf of the University, e.g. in connection with the use of the common Seal.

#### **5. The External Role**

- a) Members are expected to act as ambassadors for the University and, at the request of the Vice-Chancellor, may be asked to use their personal influence and networking skills on behalf of the University.
- b) Members are asked not to engage with the news media unless asked to do so on behalf of the University by the University's press Team. Media enquiries should be referred to Marketing and Communications.

#### **6 Other Information**

- a) The likely overall time commitment required of members is in the region of 18 days a year. Contact may be made by the University with an individual member unexpectedly or at short notice.

- b) Membership of Council is not remunerated, but members are encouraged to reclaim all travelling and similar expenses (including First Class rail travel) incurred in the course of University business, via the Executive Assistant to the University Secretary. Directors and Officers Liability Insurance is in place.
- c) Members are appointed for an initial period of four years. The appointment is renewable for a second term of up to three years and exceptionally for a third term of up to two years. Members should not normally serve a continuous period of more than seven years and this should never be extended beyond nine years.
- d) The circumstance in which a Council member may be removed from office and the procedure to be followed is set down in Council Standing Orders.