

Secretary's Committee Manifestos:

University College:

Max Juskiewicz:

I am passionate about expanding the reach of the union, and bringing it to more people within my college community, in which I am already deeply engaged. The good reputation of the union within the university as a whole is also important to me, I feel it's crucial to make sure this space is approachable, and negative misconceptions are dismissed, making it all the more necessary to have a friendly face on the college level. I feel I'm both approachable, and dedicated enough to make an excellent link between University College and the Union.

Andrew Hall:

I have excellent experience in this area, having previously served as the Chairman of my school's Council. In this role, I had the responsibility of representing the student community and taking their opinions to staff, with my dedicated approach frequently delivering student's desires. Similarly in the Secretary's Committee, I am enthusiastic to put this knowledge into a new setting, serving as a vital link between Castle and the Union, increasing the representation of our college in the society and seeing our desires brought to fruition.

Hatfield:

Tommi Loke:

DUS's commitment to open debate on topical issues is something I appreciate is at risk. It thus remains the task of college representatives to win over students, by showing them debating's merits, as well as the other merits DUS provides, like opportunities to network with industry leaders and meet peers outside one's natural orbit. I can support my drive to support the Union with skills: I was a debating development officer at school, tasked with organising and promoting debates for lower years, so I not only know the merits of open discourse but also how to educate people of them.

Angel Ellis:

I am seeking the role as Hatfield's representative on the Secretary's Committee. I believe the Union Society is a core Durham tradition, and I am passionate about getting involved wherever possible. I was proud to speak in our first debate of the year, and I would be honoured to enable that amazing opportunity for others by aiding in the planning and promotion of future events. Within Hatfield, I would be keen to resolve any queries or concerns that may come my way, to ensure all Hatfielders have the best experience possible within the Society. Thank you for your consideration.

Alfie Grimes:

As I signed the matriculation book before the shrine of St Cuthbert, the glory of God was upon me and of his earthly servant the Prince Bishop Hatfield; I felt as Solomon being crowned by Zadok and Nathan. Immediately, my true vocation manifested: to be exulted and venerated amongst Hatfieldian men and women as the Hatfield Secretary for the Durham Union Society. Once unto the breach, dear friends, once more, and we shall be Vel Primus Vel Cum Primis.

Chad's :**Andrew Lucas:**

My experience as a Form Representative, Deputy Head Boy, and Founder of my school's debating society has equipped me with the skills and commitment necessary to represent my peers effectively and promote constructive intellectual discourse. As St Chad's College Secretary, I will:

- Strengthen the college-Union relationship: Serve as the primary liaison between St Chad's and the Union, fostering collaboration and bottom-up development.
- Prioritise student representation: Advocate for the interests of Chadsians within the Union, ensuring their voices are heard and needs are met.
- Promote the Union: Ensure that Chadsians, Members or not, are aware of the Union and upcoming events.

St. John's:**Florence Barnett:**

I am well-equipped for being a liaison between smaller student bodies and larger more authoritative ones considering my time as Head of School. This also means I am comfortable interacting with all years and consider myself a social person. Moreover I am effective at promoting events internally (i.e within college), which I did so during my role of Head of Logistics for Cambridge Model United Nations. Here I encouraged students from all subjects and years across my school to sign-up and participate. Thus as Secretary I would strive for further promotion through enthusiastically encouraging my peers to come along too.

St. Cuthbert's Society:**Kinvara Lawson:**

I am applying for this role as I have greatly enjoyed my time at the Union events held so far, and wish to promote the unique space we have for healthy, informative discussions on hot topic issues to my fellow students. Having been Drama Prefect and Head of House at school, I am well versed in communicating to a wide range of people and have had experience in organising events. Having set up and run my own after-school club bringing together people from ages 7-18, I understand the importance of engaging with potential new members who share a common interest.

Adam Dransfield-Duckworth:

I'm eager to join the Secretary Committee because I'm passionate about the Union and its commitment to free speech and a culture of civil debate. Inspired by the recent Britain debate, I am interested in serving as a link between the Union and my college, promoting our values and ensuring everyone feels confident speaking. This will hopefully encourage a wider range of questions and input, leading to richer debates. To enhance outreach, I'd engage with college members, gather feedback, and address any concerns to ensure the Union is a welcoming place for all in my college.

Hild Bede:**Oliver Fitzgerald:**

Hild Bede is an increasingly exciting place to be a politician, public speaker, or debater. Just two weeks ago, a new public speaking society was ratified by our SRC, complementing our already thriving debating society. As secretary for Hild Bede College, I would aim to utilise my pre-existing friendships with people in the SRC to form meaningful links between Hild Bede's own organisations and the Union, hopefully tapping in to a pool of skilled orators who are yet to participate in the Durham Union Society, and encouraging them to take their own shot at the famed despatch box.

Adam Millington:

In the handful of weeks I have spent at Durham, I've already experienced the benefits of DUS and hope that on Secretary's Committee I would be able to spread these to others in my college. There's a strong contingent from Hild Bede, including in the first year, which gives a group to work with to show the Union's positives to those at my college. I'd aim to address the preconceptions many may have about DUS - there were friends who were uncertain before being dragged along in freshers and have now joined. I hope others would do the same.

St. Mary's:**Annabelle Clouthier:**

Building the bridge between the Union and St. Mary's requires communication and representation across diverse interests and cultures. My strong involvement in communication-centred societies, such as MUN and debate, gave me the basis to understand the means and structures of communication, negotiation, and persuasion. Having lived in multiple countries - Canada, UK, and the UAE - I have been exposed to individuals holding a range of backgrounds. This enables me with a unique and nearly innate understanding and appreciation of how people can connect and find commonality in increasingly polarised and opinionated societies. All features crucial for an effective secretary's committee.

Grey:

Ben Smith:

While my formal experience in debate is limited to school debate societies, I have found a deep appreciation for debate's ability to bring together those so ideologically opposed with the joint aim of common enlightenment. This admiration has only blossomed upon my recent experiences within the Durham Union, both in hearing from experts within the debates and a few self-proclaimed experts in the 24's afterwards! I have the passion to act as an ambassador for the Union within my college and the wider university. Furthermore, I have served on school welfare and charity committees, making this position a natural step.

Edward Tye:

Debate is for everyone. As a mathematics student, I am committed to inspiring and encouraging fellow Grey College members to join The Union regardless of their field. Sciences such as biology, chemistry and mathematics emphasise facts, not opinions, but I believe challenging ideas is essential across all subjects. The opportunity to develop critical thinking, communication and public speaking skills is beneficial for all. I will embrace diverse viewpoints and champion enthusiastic debate. I bring an ability to bridge different perspectives with diplomacy and expertise and thus provide a strong bond between this great society and my college.

Collingwood:

Ishan Mehta:

I am applying to the Secretary's Committee as I am a natural problem solver. The Union faces a reputational issue, from the Israel-Palestine debate fiasco to unfounded racism allegations, which has caused apathy for the Union within my college. I aim to restore the Union's standing as a bastion of free speech by clearing misconceptions through creating open communication channels within Collingwood. My experience in the Singapore Armed Forces, where I helped manage events for high-ranking officials, will ensure the utmost professionalism with and hospitality for speakers at the Union. It is time to make the Union great again.

South:

Omid Kiannejad:

As a strong believer in free speech, open debate, and democratic rights, I would be passionate about fulfilling a role representing the Union. I have experience in positions demanding proactive communication, like being section principal in a wind orchestra for example, where I was responsible for communication between the band leadership and my section. I have read extensively into the values of free speech and democratic rights, such as AD Lindsay's address '*I Believe In Democracy*', amongst others, supporting a conviction in these as essential democratic values, thus I would make a fitting representative of the Union.

Rhianna Gorman:

The importance of representing the range of interests at one of Durham's more socially diverse colleges cannot be overstated. As a Labour Party member, I believe that left-wing perspectives are crucial to address accusations of exclusivity that have troubled the Union. By presenting a different facet of the Society, I can create a forum for South College students who feel intimidated by lingering stereotypes of right-wing dominance, encouraging those from all political persuasions to join and make their voices heard. Through canvassing in elections, I can 'disagree agreeably', meaning students from all backgrounds can trust me to represent their interests.

Sean Smith:

FDR said, "Men are not prisoners of fate, but prisoners of their minds". I share his stance, hence I wish to find creative means to enhance the University's recognition worldwide. I believe the Durham Union is the way to achieve this. But we can do more, with tweaks to our broadcasting and outreach, it can compete with the Unions at Oxbridge, which is in our interests. With my experience fostering community cohesion, from my time as Head Boy to working for a Rwandan NGO, I believe I can assist the Union's Secretary Committee to become more dynamic, modern, and robust.

John Snow:**Annabelle Martin:**

Keen to promote the invaluable experience provided by the Durham Union, my time spent as President of my sixth form's Student Union strengthened many skills pertinent to this role. Whilst being a skilled listener, I am an equally skilled speaker, able to articulate my ideas, and those of others; this is supplemented by my confidence in public speaking. Additionally, my role as House Captain involved organising and presenting assemblies, and making speeches aimed at prospective students, and parents. Consequently, my experience coupled with my tenacity to promote the Union would make me a strong member of the Secretary's Committee.

Lenna Suminski:

To be quite frank and hopefully brief, I believe I would excel as Durham Union's Secretary Representative. As an international school student, I would strive to promote an inclusive and equally represented space between the college and union. My established background in activism as president of my school's feminist charity and children's charity demonstrate my passion for advocacy, as well as ability to organize local communities towards a unified cause.

Van Mildert:**Sujaan Singh Kochhar:**

I, Sujaan Singh Kochhar, believe myself a more than apt candidate for the illustrious Durham Union's Secretary's committee: at Sixth Form, I was the leader of all extracurricular activities (in a school of 1,984 students), coordinating an annual societies fair, overseeing outreach to younger students. Moreover, as president of my school's History and Law Societies, I liaised with external speakers, and increased society membership by over 200% through outreach and marketing campaigns. In my capacity as prefect, I helped organise an international conference in Xi'an, China, in January 2024, expanding links between schools on 3 continents.

Amaan Khan:

The Durham Union is a beacon of free speech and open debate in an increasingly polarised world. I am eager to contribute towards preserving that legacy. Previously, I led and represented a student body of over 3000 as my school's Head Boy. I headed its debating team and served as the youngest President of an independent debating society in my city. These experiences have given me unique insights into leadership, teamwork and the importance of community. I hope to promote the work of the Union as a diverse medium for critical thought, the exchange of ideas and respectful discourse.

Trevelyan:**Daniel Anbinder:**

I would like to express my interest in running for the College Secretary position for Trevelyan College. I believe that I possess the adequate communication skills, competency and passion necessary to be the College Secretary. Having previous experience being involved as an executive in youth political organisations in the United States, I can transfer the knowledge gained from these experiences to being the College Secretary. As College Secretary, I will be readily available to address all enquiries from members and non-members alike in Trevelyan College and will be actively promoting the Union's debates and events.

Hannah Zukic:

As an agent between Trevelyan College and the Durham Union, I primarily intend to encourage and facilitate ongoing communication between the two bodies. I have developed the necessary communication skills throughout my role as a Youth Leader, where I was entrusted with leading relevant and constructive conversations with younger individuals whilst also empowering them to walk in self-assurance and integrity. I also served as a representative of them by voicing their needs and interests to those in leadership above me, which I intend to carry onto this role on the Secretary's Committee, ensuring Trevelyan College's voice is effectively involved.

Marco Maffi:

The union was a major pull factor for me coming to Durham - for both the debates and addresses. So far, I have encouraged others on my landing and those I have met on formals and in corridors to join the union. Having been captain of my secondary school and sixth forms first 15 rugby teams, I am confident in my leadership abilities and aware of the importance of communication and enthusiasm to create a positive environment. Furthermore, I know I can manage emails and extra commitments alongside my studies. If given the responsibility I will boost attendance and engagement [Manifesto exceeded the 100-word limit]

Clara Bechteler:

I am an exchange student (third year at LMU Munich) in Durham for two Terms. Since I arrived this year, I believe I am suited for a First-Year Student position. I gained insights regarding the organisation of events as an assistant at the conference of the German Anthropological Association in Munich 2023. Additionally, my proficient German and intermediate French might be beneficial. As an enthusiastic member, who is taking part in the Debate Practice, I would be grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the society.

St. Aidan's:**Ibby Javed:**

It would be an honour for me to join the Secretary Committee at St Aidan's College to contribute to promoting the society and ensuring members feel supported. With experience on my college's Socials Committee, I understand what students look for in events and how to meet their needs effectively. As a member of the Secretary Committee, I would take pride in being the first point of contact for queries, maintaining clear communication, and helping to organize high-profile debates and guest hospitality. My background in event planning and fostering community involvement would enable me to support the society's growth and ensure [Manifesto exceeded the 100-word limit]

Sinead O'Neill:

As a member of St. Aidan's College, I would ensure sufficient representation of the Union on the Hill. I believe involvement in debate and speech is imperative, so would work to ensure my college, in particular, is exposed to Union opportunities and activities. If elected, I would be committed to ensuring that the needs of Union members within my college are met, and that such individuals are aware of the plethora of events being hosted by the Union, to avoid a lack of proximity to the Chamber harming the attendance of Aidan's students. It would be my pleasure to represent [Manifesto exceeded the 100-word limit]

Stephenson:**Isaac Weatherill:**

I am well aware of the burden the duty of being on the secretary committee places upon the individual, being the point of contact between union and college, however, previous experience, co-running one's schools debating team; organising an address by lord Patten, and holding large debates and conferences with schools from across the UK, cultivating one's organisational and logistical skills, a necessity for this position, not as necessary, however, as a readiness and eagerness to inspire and showcase the brilliance of debating, and to diffuse that desire and passion throughout one's college, which is indeed a goal I gravitate towards.

Sebastian Gradzki:

Having had demonstrated my ability to network by being chairman of multiple political associations, I am more than keen to extend my ability in providing our guests and newcomers with the finest welcome, cheers, smiles and atmosphere. A flourishing committee is a team, we must care for each other and be guided by mutual decency, advancing the ripest of ideas through reasoned conversation in which it will act as a sieve for the strongest policies. This in turn will offer the welcome of a home away from home, prolonging and extending the legacy of this great Durham Union, thank you.

Joshua Doherty:

In the short time I have spent at Durham University, it has become increasingly clear to me that a communal and familial spirit is integral to both College life and the Durham Union experience. Having solidified an excellent relationship with the members of my College, as well as with the JCR President, Aidan Woodley, and Principal, Rob Lynes, I was selected to sing on behalf of Stephenson College at Matriculation. Therefore, I believe that I am the right fit to liaise between the Durham Union and Stephenson College, as I strive to become increasingly more involved with the Union.

Equalities Committee Manifestos:

LGBT+ Representative:

Francesco Janse – Hatfield:

In light of the Union's previous incidents, LGBT+ representative and Durham union almost seem oxymoronic. Select me as your representative, and such an association will be erased from the union's history. As an asexual individual whose experienced prejudice due to his orientation, the position of LGBT+ representative suits me best as it will enable me to steer the equality committee in the direction where the promotion of inclusivity, diversity and tolerance are not only taken seriously, but are done so without any masking of the true underlying issues that certain minority groups face in Durham.

Oliver Fitzgerald – Hild Bede:

As a gay man, one thing alone worried me about the Durham Union before joining. A third-year had warned of the Union's EDI issues. I found this claim to be unfounded; in reality, the Union is a very inclusive place. However, in any place where free speech prevails, there is always a risk of people feeling marginalised when they should feel promoted. I want to be a part of this committee to ensure the Union remains an inclusive place for all, as well as to challenge the incorrect perceptions of the Durham Union that unduly worried me when I joined.

Jamie Young – Grey College:

I am Jamie Young from Grey College, applying for the position of LGBTQ+ Representative. As the largest and oldest society at Durham, the Union offers exceptionally valuable opportunities that I strongly believe should be accessible to everyone. With the introduction of the Equalities Officer to the Standing Committee in 2021 and the creation of the Equalities Committee in 2022, I see a real opportunity for positive change within the Union—one that I am eager to help drive. My experience chairing my school's Pride Society, where I championed events like Pride week, has prepared me well for this role.

Avesta Afshari-Mehr – Hild Bede:

As the former Vice-President of DU LGBTQ+ Association and current President of Hild Bede LGBTQ+, I am incredibly dedicated to making Durham a truly safe space for all those within the community. A vote for me is a vote for change as I will advocate for a variety of events such as LGBTQ+ socials/addresses/debates, as well as making both the Durham Union and 24s the safe space it deserves to be. Together, we can make sure everyone feels valued and represented within the Union!

People of Colour Representative:

Tommi Loke – Hatfield:

Dissidents opposed to the DUS's long-standing promotion of free and open debate for too long have commandeered allegations of racism as justification. By thoroughly and openly investigating these allegations, the DUS can simultaneously create an environment where more people feel comfortable to join, increasing uptake of membership, while also revealing those who oppose its free speech merely on ideological grounds. As a POC myself, I despise the notion that people of colour deserve handouts or "positive" discrimination, so I will work tirelessly to ensure that all people of colour gain the same treatment that others do -- no better, no [Manifesto exceeded the 100-word limit]

Ibby Javed – St. Aidan's:

I would be delighted if I could join the Equalities Committee as the People of Colour Representative because I believe in creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment at Durham. The role is vital in representing and listening to historically underrepresented groups, ensuring their voices are heard, and addressing the challenges they face. As a person of colour, I understand the unique struggles many students in our community experience, and I am committed to advocating for their needs. I would engage with student bodies, foster open dialogue, and promote activism that supports positive change within the Union. My goal is [Manifesto exceeded the 100-word limit]

Taha Imran – John Snow College:

In my roles as ISOC Treasurer and a Societies Analyst at John Snow College, I've worked to foster inclusive spaces and improve outreach to underrepresented groups. As Person of Colour Representative, I aim to bring more diverse voices into Union conversations by organizing small, focused discussion groups around race and identity. My realistic goal is to create lasting, incremental improvements that ensure people of colour feel seen, heard, and valued within the Union.

Women's Representative:

Maddy Chamings – St. John's:

The Union has provided me with the chance to push my boundaries and engage with new ideas that have been a key part of my time here in Durham. The Society's female representation has naturally been a part of that, and must be encouraged even further in order to enhance the member experience! My time on different committees over the years has given me a great understanding of our society, and I have enjoyed my time in this role greatly and would love the chance to commit myself again to help with further progress ;)

Lana Serfözö – John Snow College:

I wish to apply for the position of The Women's Representative within the equalities committee. I hold a deep sentiment for female empowerment, derived from being born into a line of oppressed women from cultures which are unfortunately not tolerant towards women. My upbringing was also rooted in these cultures hence, the primary and secondary perspectives I have gained make me a qualified applicant for this role. Uplifting women has always been an unequivocal passion of mine. Therefore, when the Russo-Ukrainian conflict broke out I felt that it would be pertinent to organise charity fundraisers to distribute feminine hygiene products [Manifesto exceeded the 100-word limit]

Claudia Williams - John Snow College

I would like to become the women's representative for the Durham Union as I am extremely interested in making meaningful change for women both within the Durham Union and externally in outreach. Having been on the outreach committee within my college, I have a good understanding of how outreach operates. Furthermore, I have experience surrounding womens issues working in Women's Aid and so I have an understanding on what needs to happen to achieve sustaining and meaningful change. I hope you will consider me for the Durham Union's women representative.

Low Income/State School Representative:**Isaac Weatherill – Stephenson College:**

I would like to nominate myself for a position on the equalities committee, being of Latino descent and having attended a state school all my life, I am aware of the trials and tribulations faced by the majority of students not fortunate to have a private education. Indeed, in an increasingly globalised and polarised world, activism is a necessity, however, activism is not to be confused with raving and ranting, this does no one any favours, thence in line with the principles of the Durham union, activate debate and involvement in pressing issues is the only way to achieve true [Manifesto exceeded the 100-word limit]

Stanislaw Jan Klodzinski – University College:

As the Unions State School Representative, I would aspire to create and foster a more welcoming environment for new members, as it is evident that the Union as an institution can appear quite daunting and at times almost elitest. I believe it is of the utmost importance for the Union to dispel this negative image to become more accessible to a wider more diverse number of new members. As someone from a working class and immigrant background I feel I am well suited to fulfill this role.

Oli Bodja – Grey College:

Growing up in challenging circumstances, including attending a poorly resourced state school and facing significant adversity at home, I understand the struggles of students from low-income backgrounds. My journey to Durham reflects resilience and determination. As a low-income state school representative, I will create an inclusive environment, ensuring access to vital resources and support. I aim to foster dialogue around the unique challenges we face and advocate for practical solutions that promote equity within our union. I believe together we can build a community where every voice is heard and valued.

Brendan Almqvist – South College:

To many of the 2nd and 3rd years of the society, my name is one that needs no introduction but to those who do not know me, I have reliably served on House Committee and then as Assistant Secretary. I went to a deprived state school in Southeast London of which very few students enter universities such as Durham or Oxbridge. Whilst leafletting for this society as Assistant Secretary, you really do get a sense that there is a widespread perception that we are 'privately educated club'. I seek to serve on the equalities committee to change that.