

# Executive Manifesto

## DUNDEE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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### Introduction

The DUSA Executive Manifesto plays a crucial role in structuring our plans and goals for the year ahead. It provides focus, direction, and a clear outline of the Exec's aims for their tenure. This is useful for the Exec to remain focused on the goals set out for the year, and allows students, staff, and other key stakeholders as to see the Exec's vision and hold them accountable for their commitments. The Exec collectively work to achieve this combined manifesto throughout their term. This document serves as a collective vision for them to strive towards as a team in 2024/25.

### Message from the team:

The four following branches of our manifesto, **Diverse and Dynamic Campus Culture; Visible Representation, Visible Results; Excellence and Equity in Education; and Thrive Together** are aligned with DUSA's strategic plan 2021-26, which states its strategic goals to *increase influence and impact, develop community, create opportunities, and provide high-quality student support*. The alignment of each of our goals, with the overall strategic plan and ideas to achieve it is detailed below.

This document serves three primary purposes. Firstly, to outline our collective goals for our year in office and the impact we want to make on the student experience. Secondly, to allow ourselves to be held accountable by students, staff and to promote transparency. Thirdly, to act as a pledge to the University of Dundee community, to always work collaboratively in the best interests of the student body.

Yours faithfully,

DUSA Student Executive, 2024-25

*Manaswi Budhathoki, DUSA President*

*Dani McFawns, Vice President of Academia*

*Nicole Okoro, Vice President of Representation*

*Nihin Akanni, Vice President of Student Wellbeing*

*Alishba Ahmad, Vice President of Community*

*Ravi Baral, Vice President of Student Activities*

*Esther Ajayi-Akinsulire, Vice President of Fundraising*

# Diverse and Dynamic Campus Culture

To create a *vibrant, diverse, social and sustainable* campus through cultural and community events, collaborations and building awareness of issues affecting the student body. One of our key focuses this year is to establish a campus that students feel is like 'home' by ensuring that everyone feels well supported and enjoys their time in Dundee.

## Introduction

Our mission this year focuses on establishing a campus environment where every student feels at home, well-supported, and able to fully enjoy their university experience. We aim to foster a dynamic and inclusive atmosphere through cultural and community events, collaborative initiatives, and a strong emphasis on giving back to our communities. By increasing academic and social engagement, advocating for improved campus facilities, and promoting arts, culture, and expression, we are dedicated to building a supportive community that celebrates diversity and ensures all students have the resources they need to succeed.

## Aims

### *Creating a dynamic and inclusive campus environment*

Ensuring inclusivity through a range of on-campus events and activities. This includes ensuring that our events are friendly, fun, accessible and vibrant to all students identifying from diverse groups and backgrounds.

### *Ensuring support for all students*

Inclusivity is crucial when it comes to supporting everyone with what we do. Creating awareness of the range of university-wide support for all students, from diverse backgrounds, and communities (BAME, LGBTQI+) along with a major focus on people with visible and invisible disabilities is our key priority for the year.

### *Increasing academic and social engagement*

Student engagement lies at the heart of everything we do! We are striving to reach a wider group of students this year to boost both social and academic engagement. Enhanced social engagement is based on the range of drinking and non-drinking events we have proposed throughout the year. Our approach on academic engagement is

### *Advocating for improved campus facilities*

Campus spaces are key to everyone's learning and socializing experience, we intend to better communicate the requirements and needs students have regarding their on campus physical spaces and facilities.

### *Promoting arts, culture, and historic expressions*

Dundee is so rich in its arts, culture and history! and we highly value this. Our contribution will lie in promoting both creative and emotional expression on campus through range of interactive arts events in collaboration with DUSA societies.



## **Sub-Themes**

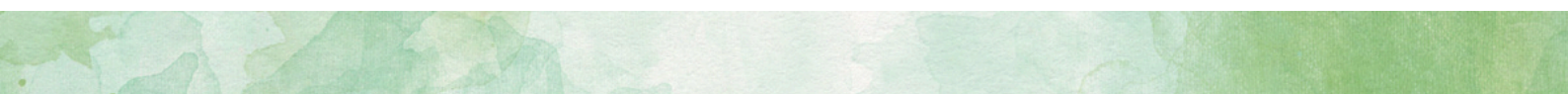
### **Culture, Community & Events**

Initiate and support events around ethical fundraising, focusing on cultural and social events, and promote arts, culture, and expression on campus. This theme is also linked to our Student Partnership Agreement which has initiatives that align with one of the university's strategies 'Vibrant Campus'.



### **Effective Collaboration and Fundraisers**

This year we aim to achieve our goals through a collaborative effort with all different teams at the university focused on supporting students. This also includes increased effort to build strong relationships with organizations across Dundee City to establish partnerships with DUSA for the benefit of students.



### **Environment and Sustainability:**

Environment and sustainability is one of our key priorities both as an organization and as a team. We are actively aiming to reduce our carbon footprint by prioritizing reusing, recycling, and reducing overusage of paper resources. We have initiatives like the 'Climate Conference' and the 'Kindness Corner' to promote environmental sustainability on campus this year!

# Visible Representation, Visible Results

*To increase influence and impact by empowering students to make their own impact on campus; to create opportunities for students to become involved in their representative structures and learn valuable skills; to develop community through fostering a sense of belonging within the student representative network.*

## Introduction

Student representation at university plays a crucial role in shaping the student experience and ensuring that the needs of the student body are met. Importantly, students must be aware of what their elected representatives are doing to represent them and see the resultant outcomes and their impact. This section of the manifesto looks at how we will ensure both our representatives and the results of their work are not only visible but championed.

## Aims

### *Ensuring the effective working of the representation structure*

It is vital to us that the Student Representation structure works productively and effectively to achieve results based on the concerns, and interests of our student body.

### *Encouraging student participation in on-campus dialogues and debates*

The Student Representative Council (SRC) is a great platform to propose initiatives, and have dialogues and debates. We aim to raise awareness of the (SRC) to cater to constructive discussions empowering the student's voice.

### *Increasing community engagement around student elections*

Tackling unawareness of the elections, DUSA exec, and our representation structure has always been one of our key challenges. Establishing effective engagement around the DUSA elections is an important factor that helps us reach the wider student population, therefore, *successful engagement around elections = more engaged student body!* Community engagement also includes providing students opportunities and, space to propose their ideas, expand, collaborate and work on their campaigns and events.

### *Exec visibility*

Exec visibility is vital to ensure we are representing our student population, and to establish a sense of accountability and communication around the work we do. The team has scheduled drop ins around the main campus, Ninewells and Kircaldy campus, to reach to students who struggle with reaching out to us.






## Sub-Themes


### Effective lobbying

This includes utilizing our engagement platforms to effectively lobby for student resources based on the requirements and needs raised by our student body. Involvement of DUSA's student rep structure, which includes the SRC, school presidents, class reps and a wider collaborative effort with DUSA societies and Sports Union is key to our approach.



### Effective communication and Accountability:

The importance of effective communication remains vital to establish healthy accountability of everything we do. Our target is to reach everyone through DUSA and university's communication channels to establish both accountability and transparency.



### Student Engagement and Visibility:

Some of our key successes are reliant on student engagement and it remains vital in every aspect of both DUSA and the university. One of the ways we are achieving this is by remaining visible and enabling in person interaction and being approachable for everyone.

# Excellence and Equity in Education

*To increase influence and impact through continued highlighting of our outstanding educational experience and create opportunities for students to develop skills, and networks, and to celebrate their academic successes.*

## Introduction

Education is at the forefront of the student experience; every student is here to achieve a qualification of some sort. This section of the manifesto covers our pledges to improve the academic experience for students, both inside and outside of the classroom.

## Aims

### *Providing opportunities to enhance skills and networks*

When you graduate from university, you take with you more than your degree certificate. You take the skills you learned both inside and outside of the classroom, and the connections you made throughout your career as a student. We aim to provide ample opportunities to increase these skills and networks, including the return of Academic Skills Week and the introduction of a new Employability Week, and a campus-wide Dundee Networking event in collaboration with the Careers Service.

### *Presentation and celebration of academic successes*

You got a great grade on that assignment! Now what? We want to ensure that students can celebrate their academic successes through formal recognition and offer opportunities to share their work through presentation. Dundee students produce revolutionary work across many diverse fields of study, and we believe this should be showcased and celebrated.

### *Sharing of best practices and awareness*

Each of the academic schools at Dundee is very different, but they all share some things in common. Particularly, they all teach a huge variety of students whose needs in learning should all be accommodated. This year, we want to strengthen ties between different schools to share best practices and raise awareness, particularly of neurodiversity and disability in academia. The establishment of a successful, lively network dedicated to improving student experience across the board is the end goal.

### *Refining of academic policy*

The use of generative AI in academia, especially in assessment, is one of the hottest topics in the higher education sector, and it's something we want to tackle head-on. We plan to work closely with the University to introduce clear, simple, and robust guidance on the use of AI, both for students and also for markers, to streamline the assessment process and reduce stress for everyone involved.

### *Opening of a digital cafe*

Not everyone can be on campus all the time. This goes for distance learners, commuter students, disabled students, students with caring responsibilities... and the list goes on. This year, we want to pilot the introduction of a digital cafe; an online space where those who can't be on campus can still feel part of the Dundee and DUSA community.



## Sub-Themes

### Opportunities to succeed

Everyone hopes to leave university with a qualification of some sort, but we should encourage and assist people to go above and beyond, setting them up for not only academic success, but career success, and success in personal and skills development.



### Community in academia

**Recent government studies from last year have shown that universities can feel isolating for many students.** Whether people want to become involved in extra-curricular activities or focus only on their studies, they should still feel part of the Dundee and DUSA community, both on- and off-campus.



### Accessibility in academia

More people from disadvantaged backgrounds are attending university than ever, which is a massive success. However, accessibility should not stop after matriculation. Students from widening access backgrounds, additional commitments and responsibilities, and disabled students must be set up to succeed in an equitable, not just equal, way.

# Thrive Together

To *develop community* through connecting students from different backgrounds with campaigns that matter to them and champion equality, diversity, and inclusion; to *create opportunities* for students to get involved with wellbeing campaigns, creating strong networks and enhancing wellbeing; to provide *high-quality student support* through advocating for their welfare and ensuring access and signposting to different kinds of support that students require during their time at university.

## Introduction

Mental health and wellbeing is one of our key priorities of the year. The theme is focused on the overall well-being of all students and staff. This theme is important in ensuring everyone feels well-equipped to reach the support they need to fulfil and maintain their academic performance and the overall student experience.

## Aims

### *Signposting available resources:*

There are ample resources and support in place at the university to support everyone's overall well-being. Students struggle with finding all the right resources themselves, especially our freshers, remote learners and commuting students. We are focused on ensuring that students are well supported and efficiently signposted to the right teams from the student services and DUSA's advice and support team.

### *Educate, raise awareness and challenge Community issues:*

Issues like Gender-based violence (GBV), racism and any form of hate have a huge impact on the mental and overall wellbeing of our students and staff. These issues are not uncommon, and we are striving to educate, raise awareness and challenge this through various campaigns like 'Orange the campus', 'Choose Love' and 'Show Racism the Red Card', along with on-campus, and citywide collaborations with various organizations in Dundee.

### *Address Cost of Living Issues via expanded available resources:*

Cost of living is a huge challenge which co-relates with mental health and wellbeing issues faced by everyone in our community. DUSA's Breakfast Club and Campus Pantry, has been a huge success over the years, and we are working on expanding these to both Ninewells and Kirkcaldy campuses. The 'Kindness Corner' is DUSA's new cost of living initiative to provide students with free winter jackets and books, which is our effort towards encouraging everyone in making sustainable choices and most importantly enabling people to 'Give what you can, take what you need'.

### *Expand and enhance mental health and wellbeing resources:*

The communication around what resources both students and staff need around wellbeing is vital to navigating how well we are doing with supporting students. Here, expansion of resources means revitalising what is available, collecting evidence on the requirements and improvement of resources. We are aiming to loop in both students and staff to better understand how DUSA and the university can support.

## Sub-Themes

### Awareness

Our focus on raising awareness and understanding of key issues faced by students around mental health and well-being, racism, GBV, etc. This means improving how we educate and inform the students about these important topics in creating a supportive network and a safe environment.

### Equity and Inclusion

Advocate for a fair and inclusive campus environment where all students feel valued, respected, and supported, regardless of their background or identity.

### Safer and kinder community

Our campus should be a space students can paint their own journeys and thrive both as an individual and a community! We want to make this happen by creating a kinder and a safer environment for everyone.





# THANK YOU!

We want to express our gratitude to all DUSA and university staff for ensuring that we have the right support and guidance in place to achieve our goals for the year. We are striving to have a successful year ahead but most importantly make a genuine impact and offer our support to all students throughout their time at university. The year ahead will definitely be full of challenges, we are excited and are looking forward to embrace and embark this journey.

Lastly, we want to express our sincere appreciation to all students for having faith and believing in us for this year!

We want to extend our special thanks to:

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media: / edits/ graphics person etc

## **DUSA Student Executive, 2024–25**

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