

Life at Durham

Durham University is recognised as the third oldest university in England, and as one of the few collegiate universities in the UK. With most subjects in Durham consistently ranking in the top 10 in University league tables, Durham has built a solid reputation of academic excellence and top quality research whilst also investing time and resources into the other parts of education such as volunteering, leadership and sports. This focus on creating well rounded graduates has naturally meant that Durham Students are highly sought after in the world of employability as seen by the incredibly high rates of employment or further study after graduation.

In this article, we will look at everything that might influence your decision to apply to Durham such as academic points like the teaching style or non-academic points like the collegiate system or clubs and societies.

Location

Durham is a small but beautiful city located in the North East of England. Steeped in history and culture, every day you will be immersed in memories from years ago. Whether that be having lunch at the UNESCO world heritage site which houses its own castle or walking down the cobbled streets to your college accommodation. A surreal experience either way. With Durham being a compact city, the walks to your lectures and contact hours will not be long ones with most journeys being a short 10-15 minute trip that are often a pleasure in themselves. This could be to a variety of locations all situated within the centre of Durham, such as the science site which also houses the university library or Elvet Riverside which is right beside Durham University Student Union. The convenient size of Durham is a great advantage to most students as it allows a real student community feeling to be created. However, if Durham is proving to be a bit small one day then you are just 10 minutes away from a memorable day or night out in Newcastle.

Student life: Non-academic

Social Life: Although Durham might be considered small, that doesn't stop it from having an incredible number of different opportunities to socialise and have fun. As well as the typical bars and clubs that can be found, we have societies from the student union and from your own college that are run by the very students you might walk to lectures with. Over 130 student clubs and societies to find your new hobby at or often a new group of friends. The massive variety in activities mean there is something for everyone. From playing quidditch with fellow potterheads to learning to skydive with Durham's freefall club, there will be something for you.

Collegiate System: For a lot of students, a large part of their social life is contributed from their own college. Each student is admitted to a college as well their department when they join Durham and this college will stay with them throughout their University life and beyond. There are always a variety of social events such as college balls, college days, themed formals or even just pub quizzes to give you that opportunity to see all your friends and have a good time. Perhaps those events don't take your fancy, then you can join one of the many casual college teams for your favourite sport and engage in some fun intercollege competition. This aspect of Durham's collegiate system is a particularly great point compared to many other universities where you will find yourself having to play at university level if you wish to continue your sport. Something many people might find quite intimidating.

Clubbing: Durham might not be best known for its clubs but a good night is guaranteed if you know where to find it. Whether it's Jimmy Allens for last minute free entry or if it's at the infamous Klute, which for those of you that haven't heard of it, has been voted as Europe's worst nightclub after the original first place burnt down. An experience unlike any other!

Networking: With Durham being one of the best universities in the UK, graduate employers are always looking to sponsor clubs and societies for networking events such as dinners, open bars, presentations etc. As well as the employer sponsored events, many societies in Durham hold their own networking events in order to get to know the future leaders being educated right beside you.

Student life: Academic

Studying at Durham: The teaching at Durham really varies depending on your subject. All subjects have lectures which are typically a 50 minute session with the lecturer at the front of the lecture hall talking the entire time with minimal audience participation. Apart from lectures, students can have seminars or tutorials which are classes of usually around 8-10 students with a department expert, applying the knowledge from the lectures or asking any questions that they might have about the course content. Typically for science courses, you might also have practicals that could be in a lab for Chemistry or in a Computer room for maths. It all depends on your subject and module choices. Academic Advisors are also a big part of your academic life as these are professors from your department that help you adjust to university level education and also help guide you on your journey towards finding a career in academia or industry.

Career opportunities: Durham is recognized internationally for its employer reputation, recognized as one of the top 40 globally and top 10 in the UK. Over 97% of undergraduates completing their first degree are found to be in employment or pursuing further study 3 and a half years after graduation which is the highest rate of any UK university according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Durham's reputation for excellence in teaching and research is invaluable to any students career as well as the incredible range of employability enhancing activities and opportunities such as executive positions in clubs and societies, cv and cover letter workshops, and year round access to the university career service where you can get guidance and advice from experts in applications and careers.

Accommodation

First years typically have guaranteed accommodation in their allocated/chosen college which in the majority of cases are catered but self-catered is still available at a couple of them. There are 2 main parts to Durham's college accommodation and 1 long lasting rivalry. The Bailey Colleges on one side and the Hill Colleges on the other. The Bailey colleges are often seen as the older and more traditional colleges near the river while the Hill Colleges are typically newer colleges situated on, unsurprisingly, the hill near the Science site. No matter which college you're at, you will be in a very comfortable walking distance of your lectures and will love your college no matter where you go. After first year, students tend to live out in student housing with friends they have made in first year though there are still some students who live in the college accommodation again.

Traditions

Formals: All colleges in Durham host a variety of themed formals that have 3 course meals with a typical dress code of Black Tie or Lounge Suit. Or it could be a themed evening which really opens up your options. These formals are steeped in traditions themselves which are usually very old but there are a few relatively new ones in there.

Balls and College day: Each college has their own balls and college day. Now the number of balls varies depending on your college but there will typically be at least one in Michaelmas term (First term) and one in Summer term after exams. These are opportunities to dress up in your tux or your best clothing and really celebrate with the rest of your college. Again, these feature 3 course meals, Wine, and even a step further with entertainment that will last into the early hours of the morning. A memorable night for anyone lucky enough to go. College days are a little less formal, and are an all day (and sometimes night) affair. Again, these days consist of entertainment, food and drink all day with all of your college community.

College Families: In freshers week, you are introduced on parenting night to your college parents and siblings. An opportunity to ask your predecessors any questions you might have about your upcoming student life and also an opportunity to have fun with some students who know where the best places to go are!

Did you know?

If you're looking for a magical university experience then look no further, Durham Cathedral has actually featured in the Harry Potter films multiple times for various notable scenes such as the Hogwarts 'quad' and Ron's slug spell gone wrong.