

Meet your Prez

Nouse sits down with new YUSU President James Durcan



By [Oscar Bentley](#), Editor (2018)
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Image: YUSU

What have you been up to over the summer? It's been a really exciting summer, I got used to the role, learned lots of University structures and how YUSU works. It was great meeting the staff and I really cracked on with my manifesto, so it's been a lot of work. I've been dealing with lots of different bits and bobs from planning Freshers' Week talks and comms and welcoming new freshers; its been really exciting stuff.

When did you first think that you might run for YUSU President? Probably not for a while. I think I started student life getting engaged with lots of sports teams. I didn't really know too much about my college committee until second year and then ran for the position of college chair. That was an eye opener to how a few different things in the University come together. You get a few people asking: would you do that in the future? I probably didn't contemplate it until third year, but then decided it was something I'm really passionate about and want to see change.

What should the University and YUSU be doing to support students' mental health? I think it's really important that there's a concerted effort across the University, YUSU, and also student groups that work so well to provide student support. We're really keen for students to understand where they can access support. Here at York the University has invested over the last few years a lot of money into mental health support, but it's important that new students coming in, and also students that have been here before, really know how to access support services, whether that's for themselves or to point friends in the right direction.

How are you going to go about improving YUSU's presence on Hes East? A few small things that came up during election week; I was over on Hes East and people were like: "We have to trek over to YourSpace to collect Viking Raid t-shirts," so this year we're doing a giveaway over there. YUSU on the Move, which happens during Freshers' Week, we've got two days over on East as an opportunity to show YUSU's presence there, to meet students, and to really engage them with the student community. We're really encouraging societies and student groups to put events over there, there's some really new swanky nice buildings that are great for opportunities. Personally, I'm making sure I'm over there once a week, giving students the opportunity to come up to me, hearing what you guys want to see from your Union.

Would you ever support a no-platforming a speaker on campus? I think it's a really difficult question, something I've had quite a few discussions with other sabbatical officers about. I'm of the opinion that you'd have to have strong grounds to do so, and I think it's very circumstantial if that makes sense. I wouldn't necessarily say no to it ever, but I also think that you'd have to have extremely strong grounds to do so and I'd be really hesitant to put a blanket answer on the whole question.

What was your own experience as a fresher and do you have any advice? I loved Freshers' Week, just meeting so many different people and all these opportunities being thrown at you; it was a whirlwind. I think everybody felt absolutely knackered by the end of it but it's an amazing opportunity to get involved with loads of different things. That would be my advice: sign up to all sorts of societies, sports teams, come along to our Freshers' Fair, come along to all the events. Get to know different people as well, I think it's an amazing opportunity to meet people from all different backgrounds and to make some amazing friends that you'll stay friends with probably for life.

This interview has been abridged.



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