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Welcome to Durham University

Common Awards Student
Guide 2025/26

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The Common Awards partnership



Welcome to Durham University

Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to Durham University as a Common Awards (Theology, Ministry and Mission) student! More than 2,000 students are currently registered on Common Awards programmes.

Your main relationship will be with your College, known as a designated Theological Education Institution (or 'TEI') to Durham University. Your TEI is your first point of call for information and advice about all aspects of your educational experience, including teaching and assessment, personal support, and administrative matters. However, your TEI will work closely with the University during your time with them. We hope this guide is helpful in explaining the partnership between your TEI and the University, and how this impacts your student experience.

To supplement this guide, the University has a dedicated [Common Awards website](#), where you will find further information relevant to Common Awards students.

The Common Awards Framework

The Common Awards partnership

The Common Awards Scheme is a partnership between Durham University, the Church of England (and other partner churches), and your designated Theological Education Institution.

Your Theological Education Institution (or 'TEI') is the body you're studying with. It might be a residential college, or a regional training course, or you might be on a context-based programme.

Durham University has a contract with the Church of England, and separate contracts with each of the TEIs, to offer validation services. We ensure that the programmes offered by TEIs lead to recognised, high-quality, university-backed awards: certificates, diplomas, degrees, etc. In Durham, there's a dedicated Common Awards team: three academics (who are members of the Department of Theology and Religion), and an administrative and management team.

How Does the Common Awards Framework Shape Your Programme?

The whole Common Awards Framework is designed to be responsive to student feedback. It is sometimes difficult, however, for students to know which aspects of their programme depend upon Durham, and which depend upon their local institution. That can make it difficult to know how to direct feedback.

The Common Awards Framework doesn't dictate every detail of the programmes that you take. Instead, it sets some broad parameters for those programmes.

Your TEI, on the other hand, has considerable freedom within these rules and guidelines. Staff of your TEI chose which programmes to offer, picked which modules to include and how they should be arranged and taught, designed the detailed syllabuses for each module, decided what assessments to set, and created their own academic policies within the parameters set by Common Awards.

For further information and an example of how this works in practice, please visit the [Common Awards webpage](#).

Benefits

What does Common Awards provide?

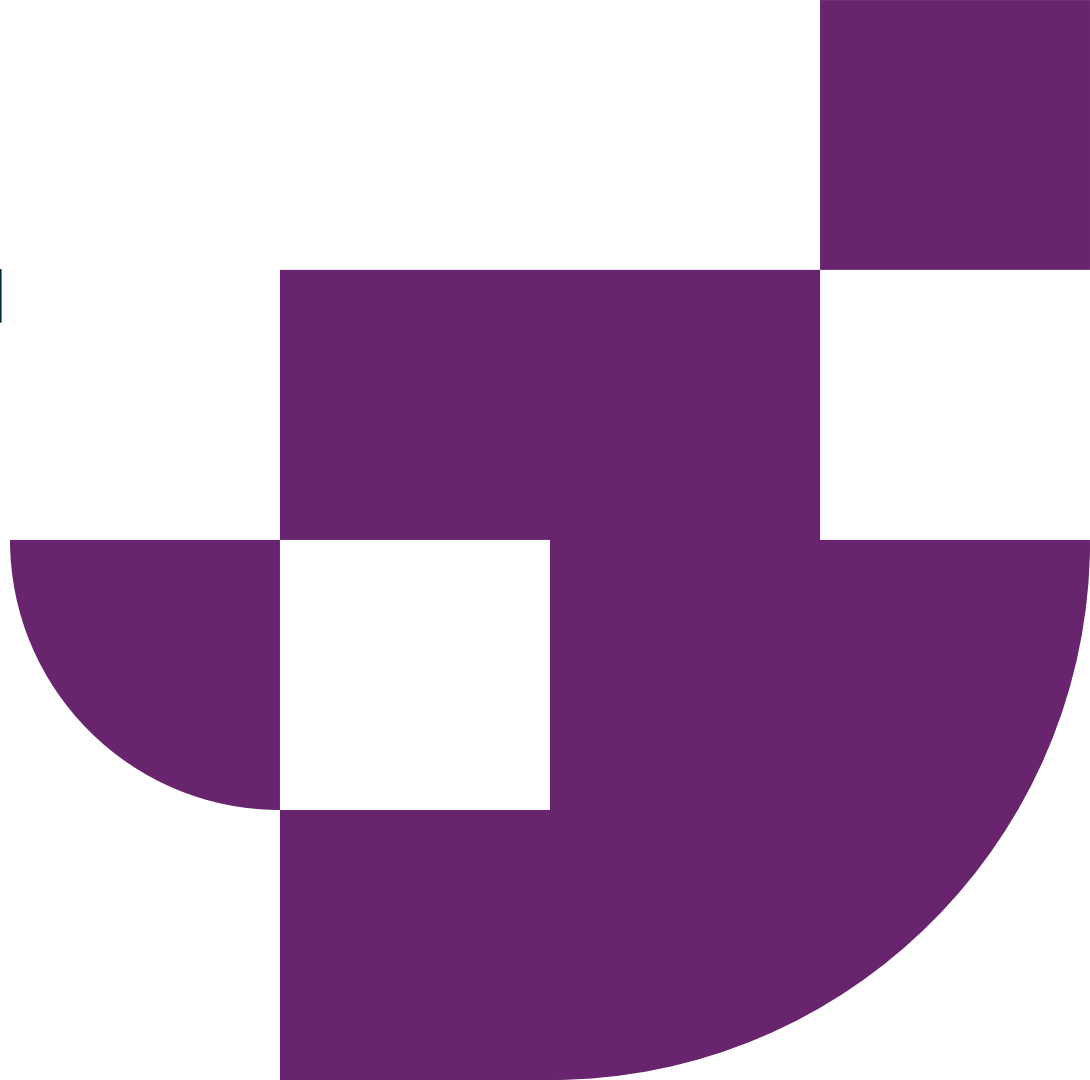
There are many benefits to being part of the Common Awards partnership. This guide will outline all you need to know about your access to various resources and dedicated student events, and opportunities for engagement.





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Student events and representation



Events

The University coordinates a number of relevant events for Common Awards students to get involved in.

The University's [dedicated webpage](#) provides information on upcoming Common Awards events open to Common Awards staff and students. Details of these events and how to book your place are shared with key staff contacts at your TEI as soon as they are released, so look out for email updates from your TEI throughout the academic year!

Student representation

How can I have a say in the running of Common Awards at a national level?

The **Common Awards Management Board (CAMB)** is the committee with responsibility for and oversight of the quality and standards of the overarching Common Awards partnerships and programmes. The membership of the Board includes students from TEIs who represent the whole of the Common Awards student body. Student representatives are able to contribute to Common Awards decision-making, policy development and the ongoing monitoring and development of Common Awards on a national level.

If you have any feedback you would like the Management Board to consider, you can submit this to one of the CAMB student representatives at any point. The Board takes the issue of anonymity very seriously; individual students will not be named in any student feedback considered by the Board, and any identifying information will be removed before feedback is considered.

For the contact details of the current student representatives, and further information on the types of feedback to submit to the CAMB, please visit the [University website](#).

How can I become a CAMB student representative?

The Common Awards team usually facilitates an election process for CAMB student representatives in February, and those elected will begin their role from the following September. Any Common Awards student can nominate themselves for election. The self-nomination form will be sent to your TEI to forward to all students.

How does the voting work during a CAMB student election?

Once candidates have come forward, each TEI individually holds an election process for students to vote on their chosen candidate. Following their election process, each TEI then provides the Common Awards Team with a list of all candidates who received votes in ranked order. Once ranked preferences have been received from each TEI, the Common Awards Team uses a Single Transferable Vote system to identify the three candidates with the highest number of votes across all TEIs.

Common Awards Student Survey (CASS)

The Common Awards Student Survey (CASS) provides you with the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback to your TEI. The results of the survey are shared with TEIs to help enhance the student experience.

The survey includes questions on the learning and teaching experience, academic and pastoral support, the learning resources available, and the student voice. You will also have the opportunity to provide free-text comments on your overall experience at the TEI.

Your TEI will contact you in March each year of your programme to request permission to share your email address with the University for this purpose (on the basis of legitimate interest, in GDPR terms). You will be given an opportunity to opt out of sharing it, and can opt out of completing the survey at any time without your responses being included in the dataset.

For further information on the Survey, please see the relevant [Common Awards webpage](#).

How can I have a say in the running of my TEI?

Each TEI also runs its own election process to elect student representatives at a TEI level, and you can ask your own TEI about how to get involved in this. CAMB student representatives are put in touch with TEI student representatives to share feedback and good practice.



Your University student record



Your Banner record

Your TEI uses Moodle as their student records system; however, Durham University also needs to create and maintain student records in the University student records system (known as Banner) for those studying a Common Awards programme because:

- we need to gather basic student information and assessment information (e.g. module marks) so that we can classify awards and produce academic transcripts and parchments at the end of the programmes;
- we need to gather basic student information in order to provide access to facilities (such as permitting access to the library and creating campus cards);
- we need to know how many students are registered on Common Awards programmes at each Theological Education Institution (TEI) so that we can generate invoices for per capita fees and publish information in line with our external requirements.

You will be provided with your University Banner and Study Path ID shortly after you register with your TEI, and this information will be added to your Moodle record. You may need to quote this ID in any correspondence you have with the University, such as in relation to attending graduation.

Boards of Examiners

How is my award and classification decided?

Your marks are first considered by your TEI's Board of Examiners, which confirms all module marks. Those students who have completed a programme of study are then recommended by their TEI Board of Examiners to the Durham (Overarching) Board of Examiners, which considers completing students from all TEIs.

The Durham Board of Examiners is held twice a year, in late summer and early winter, and each meeting considers several hundred Common Awards students. Following the Boards, Durham aims to get pass list information back to TEIs within two weeks. By pass list, we mean confirmation of awards (e.g., whether a student has passed their programme, and/or what classification they have received). This information can only be shared with students once TEIs have heard back from the Overarching Board.



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Graduation and award documentation



Graduation (Congregation)

What is Congregation?

Congregation is the term the University uses for its graduation ceremonies and means a gathering of members and friends of the University to witness and celebrate the conferring of degrees.

When and where is Congregation?

The Common Awards graduation ceremony is held annually in January in Durham Cathedral. For more information on the details of your Congregation, see our [Events page](#), where details will be posted as and when they are released.

Please note that the graduation ceremony is followed by a Common Awards Celebration Event. This event is for students to celebrate their successes with their guests, TEI staff and the Common Awards Team. More information on the event is circulated to students when registering for Congregation and is available on our Events page.

Who can attend Congregation?

Common Awards students successfully completing one of the following programmes are eligible to attend Congregation at Durham University:

- BA in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V604)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60414)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60412)
- MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission (V60407)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Chaplaincy Studies (V60814)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Chaplaincy Studies (V60812)
- MA in Chaplaincy Studies (V60807)
- MA in Contemporary Christian Leadership (V60907)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Worship and Liturgical Studies (V62112)
- MA in Worship and Liturgical Studies (V62107)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Church Law (V62614)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Church Law (V62612)
- MA in Church Law (V62607)

Can I bring guests?

You can also bring guests to the ceremony. However, there is limited space in Durham Cathedral and you will be advised on how many guests can attend. You must indicate how many guest tickets you would like via the registration process.

Staff in TEIs are also able to attend graduation ceremonies, either as a guest or in the academic procession. The Common Awards Team will liaise with TEIs directly about this.

How will I hear about my graduation ceremony?

Invitations to attend are distributed to eligible students by their TEI. This will include information on how to register your attendance, along with any guests.

Does it cost to attend?

There is no charge for students or guests to attend the ceremony. However, students are required to wear the robes (gown and hood) appropriate for the award to be conferred at the ceremony. If you wish to attend your graduation ceremony you will need to pay for gown hire. Information on hiring gowns can be found on the [Ceremonies Unit](#) website.

What if I can't attend?

If you can't attend your graduation ceremony you may be able to defer your attendance. You can notify the University of your wish to do so via the registration process.

Please note that you must notify the Common Awards Team if you are unable to attend and wish to do so in the future. Graduands who do not notify the University will have their degree conferred in absentia.

You will also be able to graduate in absentia if you do not wish to attend a University ceremony.

For more information, and detailed FAQs, please see the information on the University's [Ceremonies Unit](#) webpages.

Degree Documentation

Following the Congregation ceremony, students will normally receive one copy of the degree documents listed below and overleaf, free of charge. These are not given out at the ceremony but the Common Awards Team will post this documentation to TEIs within 8 weeks of Congregation. TEIs are responsible for providing students with their degree documentation.

Parchment - A parchment is the word which the University uses to mean your certificate. Your parchment is an official document that proves that you have a University of Durham qualification.

Academic transcript - An academic transcript gives details of your academic performance. It includes information on your legal name, date of birth, college, mode of study, the qualification you obtained, the dates you attended, the date of your award (where appropriate) and the modules you undertook whilst studying, including the marks achieved.

Diploma Supplement - This document describes your qualification in a standard format that is designed to be easily understood and straightforward to compare. It contains information on the level, context, content and status of the studies that were successfully undertaken. This allows other universities or employers to understand your qualification in relation to the education system of the country you took your degree in. The Diploma Supplement is not a replacement for the official parchment and transcript issued by the University.

How do I order replacement Degree Documents?

You can order a replacement Parchment, Transcript and Diploma Supplement via the University's [Online Document Store](#). The original must be lost, damaged or stolen. Please contact your TEI in the first instance if there is an error on your degree documentation. Errors on degree documentation will be charged. Please see the Student Registry webpage for details.

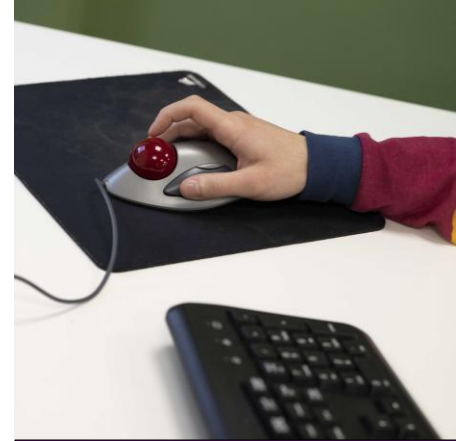
Access to resources



Common Awards Hub

As a Common Awards student you will have access to relevant subject-specific electronic resources (including journals and databases) on the **Common Awards Hub**, via your TEI's Moodle site.

Please contact your TEI if you need any support in accessing the Common Awards Hub.



Durham University Resources

As a Common Awards student you are entitled to a Durham University campus card, which allows physical access to Durham University libraries (but please note that you will not be able to request that books be posted out to you via the Postal Loan Service, order books and articles through the Document Delivery Service, or order articles through the Copy Service).

You are provided with access to IT facilities directly through your TEI, rather than through the University. You will not, therefore, be given a University IT account and email address. If the University needs to contact you (for example, to invite you to Congregation), it will do so through your TEI.

We have regularly been asked why we can't provide [durham.ac.uk](mailto:common@durham.ac.uk) email addresses. The main reason is that these addresses provide access to various resources and that the licenses for these resources do not cover Common Awards students. To extend them to cover Common Awards students – who number in the thousands – would result in a prohibitive increase in the cost of Common Awards to the churches and to TEIs.



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Disability and Financial Support



Disability Support

Durham University and the Theological Education Institutions delivering Common Awards programmes are committed to inclusive teaching and learning. Inclusive teaching and learning improves access and participation for all students and recognises that students have different needs and experiences.

What can you expect from the Common Awards team at Durham University?

The Common Awards team works closely with TEIs on a wide range of initiatives around diversity, inclusion and belonging. These include research projects, sharing of best practice between institutions, the creation of resources for staff and students, and training for staff. The Common Awards Management Board oversees this work.

Because of the way in which the Common Awards partnership is set up, Durham University cannot provide individual disability support or advice direct to students. The University also cannot offer individual student assessments. The University can provide advice for staff in your institution as they seek to support you in your learning.

What can you expect from your TEI?

Your institution should:

- Provide a clear and accessible way for you to disclose disabilities at the point of application
- Make reasonable adjustments so that you have the opportunity to meet the learning outcomes in each module you study. The Common Awards team at Durham University provides guidance to your institution about what kinds of reasonable adjustments may be appropriate
- Provide you with information about additional study support, pastoral support and mitigations available to you (e.g. extensions), should your disability have an unexpectedly significant impact on your studies at any point.
- The Common Awards team works with institutions to ensure that, collectively, we continually review our practices of support and inclusion.

What if I am diagnosed with a disability after this has already had an effect on my academic work?

Sometimes it becomes apparent in retrospect that a previously undiagnosed condition has been affecting your studies. What action you can take will depend on a range of factors including what stage you are at in your academic programme, exactly what impact your condition had on your studies, and what support you already had in place at the time you were diagnosed.

You should ask your institution for advice about the appropriate steps to take. Processes such as the Serious Adverse Circumstances procedure are in place to take account of such situations.

Can I apply for Disability Support Allowance?

If you are registered on a Common Awards programme, you may be eligible to receive Disability Support Allowance from Student Finance England (and equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Student Finance England and equivalent bodies do not consider you a Durham University student for statutory support purposes. **You should not apply for support as a Durham University student.** If you do apply for support as a Durham University student by mistake please contact [Financial Support](#).

If you apply for financial support you should do so as a student of your Theological Education Institution. This means that to be eligible for support you need to be studying at an institution whose delivery of Common Awards programmes has been “designated” for statutory support under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011. Your institution will be able to tell you whether or not they have this designation.

What other sources of support are available?

If you are training for ministry, the Church or other organisation you are training with may be able to provide you with advice and support. For ordinands within the Church of England, there are specific support measures that may be available. You should talk to your institution for further information.

Financial Support

If you are registered on a Common Awards programme, you may be eligible to receive statutory support, including loans, from Student Finance England (and equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Student Finance England and equivalent bodies do not consider you a Durham University student for statutory support purposes. **You should not apply for support as a Durham University student.** If you do apply for support as a Durham University student by mistake please contact [Financial Support](#).

If you apply for financial support you should do so as a student of your Theological Education Institution. This means that to be eligible for support you need to be studying at an institution whose delivery of Common Awards programmes has been “designated” for statutory support under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011. Your institution will be able to tell you whether or not they have this designation.

If you are training for ministry, specific forms of financial support may be available from the Church or organisation you are training with. You should contact your institution for further advice.



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Absence, Illness and Other Adverse Circumstances



Absence, Illness or Other Adverse Circumstances

During your programme, you will need to attend taught sessions, study in your own time, and complete assignments. You may also need to attend placements and similar learning activities. You should aim to meet all your academic commitments. If you are struggling to do so, you should contact a member of staff in your institution as soon as possible to discuss what help and support your institution can offer you.

You may experience serious adverse circumstances arising from medical conditions, personal difficulties, bereavement or other significant causes. These serious circumstances can have an impact on your studies, and you can make an application through the Serious Adverse Circumstances (SAC) procedure for staff to look at your situation. Your institution will be able to guide you through this process.

Please see the relevant [University webpage](#) for information on what you should do if your academic study is disrupted by serious adverse circumstances, and how your TEI can help.



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University Campus Cards / TOTUM Cards



University Campus Cards

As a Common Awards student you are entitled to a University campus card, which offers the following benefits:

- Physical access to Durham University libraries* (but please note that you will not be able to request that books be posted out to you via the Postal Loan Service, order books and articles through the Document Delivery Service, or order articles through the Copy Service)
- Access to student discounts

New Common Awards students can request a campus card through their TEI. Campus cards are produced by the University's IT Team (known as CIS – Computing and Information Services) on behalf of the Common Awards Team and TEIs. Further information about how to request a campus card will be provided by your TEI.

**Students are automatically enrolled to Durham University libraries; however, you will need a physical Campus Card to gain entry to the building(s) should you wish to visit.*

TOTUM Cards

You are also eligible to apply for a TOTUM (formerly NUS Extra) card. Students looking to request a card must contact their TEI directly, requesting a verification link. TEIs will then need to contact the Common Awards Team who will issue verification codes upon request. The URL link will allow students to order TOTUM Cards directly, rather than being posted to their institution or college.

If you encounter any issues with the new process, please inform the Common Awards Team



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Appeals and Complaints



Appeals and Complaints

Your institution will have a policy that sets out how it handles complaints and appeals. This policy should be available to you. You should refer to your institution's policy for detailed guidance.

The dedicated [University webpage](#) provides information about the general principles your institution and Durham University follow when dealing with the following processes:

- Academic complaints
- Academic appeals
- Admissions complaints



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Contact Information



Contact Information for Students

Students will normally contact their personal tutors or module teachers if they have questions about their studies. Most issues are decided and resolved locally. Some issues, however, are appropriately referred to Durham. To work out whether the question or comment falls into that category, students should read our page on [shaping your programme](#).

For issues that do need to be raised with Durham, students can communicate with their [TEI's](#) **'Key Contact'**: a person who is in direct contact with Durham University throughout the year, and who will be able to find an answer to questions.

There may be times when you need to get in contact with Durham University staff; for example, in relation to student events, if you are a [student representative](#) on a formal committee (such as the Common Awards Management Board), or if you take part in some of the quality assurance processes (such as validation visits and periodic external reviews). In those cases, you can contact the [Common Awards Team](#).



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