

Freedom of Speech and External Speakers Policy

1 Code of Practice and Policy Statement

- 1.1 The University of Huddersfield is committed to promoting the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. The University believes that an attitude of tolerance is essential to enable academic debate of a wide variety of ideas, including some which may be controversial, while having due regard to the welfare of its staff and students.
- 1.2 The University has a duty to promote freedom of speech and to protect academic freedom under the Education Act, the Freedom of Speech Act 2023, and is subject to regulation in this matter by the Office for Students. The University's commitment to freedom of speech and academic freedom is set out in its governing documents.
- 1.3 The University's approach to freedom of speech and academic freedom aligns with its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, and seeks to support staff and students to ensure these principles are captured in course design, associated learning materials and the environment created to facilitate debate and expression of differing views (within legal limits).
- 1.4 All persons to whom this policy applies are required to observe the principle of freedom of speech whilst on University premises and shall show respect and tolerance towards the expression of views, opinions and beliefs of others, even though those views, opinions or beliefs may run contrary to their own personal views, opinions or beliefs.
- 1.5 The University has a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, bullying, harassment, extremism or acts which could incite or promote terrorist activity. It has a duty to maintain safety and good order on its premises and is also under a duty to prevent individuals being drawn into terrorism under the Counter Terrorism & Security Act.
- 1.6 The University seeks to ensure that the use of University premises is not denied on grounds connected with the beliefs, views, policies or objectives of an individual body or body of individuals, as long as such use is at all times within the law. This policy and the associated procedures are designed to promote freedom of speech and academic freedom and to enable events to proceed when it is safe and legal. It should be noted that the use of the term 'premises' throughout this policy also includes the University's virtual teaching, learning, meeting and event environments.
- 1.7 This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Procedure for arranging external speaker events

Room Booking Terms & Conditions

[Social Media Policy](#)

[Equal Opportunities Policy](#)

2 Who and what is covered by this Policy?

- 2.1 The policy applies to all staff, students, governors, employees, visiting appointments and visitors to the University.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all activities undertaken at the University. Every individual has a duty to ensure that freedom of speech and academic freedom is protected on University premises, including in lectures, tutorials, research and other activities, including peaceful protest. Individuals also have a duty to assist the University in meeting its obligations under the Prevent duty.
- 2.3 By following this policy and for external speakers, the associated procedure, individuals can ensure they balance their responsibilities effectively.

3 Responsibility for the Policy

- 3.1 The Vice-Chancellor appoints the University Secretary to act on his behalf to ensure compliance with this policy, the associated procedure and its review. The policy will be reviewed every three years, unless a change in law requires an earlier review.
- 3.2 Responsibility for ensuring that activities (including events) comply with this policy shall rest with the following people, who shall be referred to as the **Responsible Person** in the rest of this policy:
 - 3.2.1 For activities organised by a School or Service – the Dean or Director of that School or Service
 - 3.2.2 For activities organised by the Students' Union and its ratified student led groups – the Chief Executive of the Students' Union
 - 3.2.3 In any other case, the senior member of staff or student involved.
- 3.3 Although the individuals named above have overall responsibility for activities, every person at the University has a duty to ensure that this policy is followed.
- 3.4 If you are concerned that there may be a breach of this policy then you must report it to the Responsible Person who should seek advice from the University Secretary where appropriate.

4 Misconduct

- 4.1 The section below provides a guide to types of conduct which may be indicative of intolerance or extremism, and which could breach this policy. The University will review any accusations of a breach of this policy to determine whether the conduct about which a complaint is raised could reasonably be considered to be a breach of this policy.
- 4.2 The essence of misconduct under this policy is a failure to respect the rights of others to freedom of belief and freedom of speech; and/or action associated which otherwise damages the reputation of the University as a tolerant and inclusive academic institution. The following list indicates behaviours which may constitute misconduct. This list is not definitive and is for indicative purposes only:

- disruption of, or improper interference with, the academic, administrative, sporting, social or other activities of the University, whether on University premises or elsewhere;
- violent, indecent, disorderly, threatening or offensive behaviour or language whilst on University premises or engaged in whilst on University premises or engaged in any University activity;
- harassment or discrimination against any student, member of staff or other employee of the University or any authorised visitor to the University;
- damage to, or defacement of, University property or the property of other members of the University community caused intentionally or recklessly, and misappropriation of such property;
- placing posters, signs or notices on any surface other than where authorised to do so in accordance with this policy;
- conduct which constitutes a criminal offence where that offence:
 - i. damages the good name of the University, or
 - ii. itself constitutes misconduct within the terms of this Code, or
- behaviour which brings the University into disrepute;
- failure to disclose information to an officer or employee of the University when requested to do so in accordance with this Policy;

4.3 The following are some indicative examples of conduct relevant to extremism and intolerance which constitute misconduct and will be treated accordingly. This list is not definitive and is for indicative purposes only:

- taking photographs of students or others at events (e.g. when making enquiries at a particular stand at a freshers' fair) with the intention of deterring them from attending or enquiring or to intimidate them, or with the intention of identifying them subsequently for improper purposes
- coercing other students into conformity, e.g. in clothing or attendance at worship
- distribution of discriminatory, threatening, obscene or insulting leaflets or literature (including circulation by e-mail)
- physical disruption of meetings, public or private in such a way that it is designed to prevent the freedom of speech. This does not affect students' rights to hold peaceful protests
- speech or literature explicitly supporting terrorism or violence, including assassination.

5 Written Material (online and in print)

- 5.1 Anyone responsible for posters, notices, signs or any other literature which are offensive, intimidating, threatening, indecent, illegal or circulated to promote terrorism or extremism or a proscribed group or make others fearful, anxious or apprehensive will be in breach of this policy.
- 5.2 Materials, including posters and flyers, may only be posted on designated notice boards with the permission of the relevant School or Service. Any such materials should be in English and should clearly name the person or organisation behind the poster.

- 5.3 This policy applies equally to postings, messages and other online communications, whether by email, on message boards or on websites. Anyone making postings which are discriminatory, defamatory, or which could constitute harassment will be in breach of this policy. Any such postings shall also be subject to the University's social media policy.
- 5.4 The University may remove any materials (whether online or otherwise) which it believes to be in breach of this policy.

6 Segregation

- 6.1 Under the Equality Act, any events held on campus must be held in such a way so as to ensure that no one is unfairly discriminated against.
- 6.2 Segregation of an audience at an event will constitute unlawful discrimination unless it is for one of the specifically defined purposes set out below. If the Event Organiser wishes to segregate the audience, they will need to obtain permission from the University Secretary in advance of the event. Permission will only be granted if the segregation is for one of the following reasons:-
- 6.2.1 Sports sessions involving a high degree of physical contact or in sporting competitions where physical strength, stamina or physique are significant factors in determining success or failure;
 - 6.2.2 Positive action measures in order to overcome or minimise a disadvantage faced by a particular group or tackle low participation by a group provided that this is a proportionate means of addressing the disadvantage;
 - 6.2.3 Associations restricted to members who share a particular protected characteristic under the Equality Act; or
 - 6.2.4 Religious worship or religious purposes in order to comply with religious doctrine.

7 Penalties for breach of this policy

- 7.1 Individuals who breach this policy may be subject to the University's staff and/or student disciplinary procedure. It may also result in the withdrawal of services, including access to Computing and Library Services and the Faith Centre. They may also be liable to civil or criminal prosecution.

POLICY SIGN-OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS	
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Compliance Checks:	Audit of External Speakers' Log
Related Policies/Procedures:	Procedure for arranging external speaker events Social Media Policy Equal Opportunities Policy

REVISION HISTORY			
Version	Date	Revision description/Summary of changes	Author
V4.0	January 2024	Updated to reflect new legislation and findings from internal audit	University Secretary
V3.0	26 May 2022	Reporting section 2.2	University Secretary
V2.0	2 July 2020	Including virtual events	University Secretary
V1.0	23 November 2017	First redraft under the University's Policy Framework (previous versions are held by the University Secretary's Office)	Legal Officer