

B. DELEGATED AUTHORITY

B.4. FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Royal Charter

Section 19 of the Royal Charter of the University provides that in relation to freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom:

- a) The University shall take reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech within the law for its staff, members, Students and visiting speakers.
- b) Academic staff shall have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves at risk of being adversely affected by losing their jobs or privileges at the University or the likelihood of securing promotion or a different job at the University being reduced

Legislative context

The Royal Charter was amended by Order in Council in 2024 to reflect the requirements of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

Under this legislation, Council has a duty to take reasonably practicable steps to **secure freedom of speech** within the law for staff, members, students, and visiting speakers. This obligation extends to the use of any of the University's premises by any individual or body, which shall not be denied as a result of their ideas, opinions, policy or objectives, provided they are within the law.

Council also has a responsibility to **secure the academic freedom of academic staff**, which means their freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves at risk of being adversely affected, such as through loss of their jobs or privileges at the University or the likelihood of their securing promotion or different jobs at the provider being reduced.

In addition, Council has a duty to **promote the importance of freedom of speech** within the law and academic freedom for academic staff, in the provision of higher education.

Code of Practice

In order to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom, Council is required to maintain a **code of practice** setting out:

1. the University's values relating to freedom of speech and an explanation of how those values uphold freedom of speech;
2. the procedures to be followed by staff and students and any students' union in connection with the organisation of meetings and other activities at the University's premises which are covered by the code;
3. the conduct required by such persons in respect of such meetings or activities; and
4. the criteria to be used in making decisions about whether to allow the use of premises and on what terms.

The code of practice may also deal with any such other matters as Council considers appropriate.

The University's code of practice shall be regularly reviewed and approved by Council. Council has delegated responsibility for preparing and advising on the content of such code of practice to the President.

The code of practice will uphold the University's values in respect of freedom of speech and academic freedom, including as provided at section 19 of the Royal Charter.

The President shall, from time to time, (i) report breaches of the code of practice and/or (ii) suggest appropriate amendments to the code of practice to Council.