

# Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

<b>Owner</b>	Secretary to the Board of Directors		
<b>Version</b>	2.2		
<b>Changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The following updates have been made in line with OfS Regulatory advice 24 (published June 2025) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlighted that speech within the law may be shocking, disturbing or offensive</li> <li>Added statement about limits on security costs</li> <li>Added statement about conduct in meetings</li> </ul> </li> <li>The process for booking rooms for speakers has been aligned with External Speakers Policy</li> </ul>		
<b>Approval date</b>	August 2025	<b>Approved by</b>	Board of Directors
<b>Implementation date</b>	August 2025	<b>Date of next review</b>	July 2026
<b>Related internal policy</b>	External Speakers Policy		
<b>Related external policies and regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015</li> <li>Education Act 1986</li> <li>European Convention on Human Rights</li> <li>Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023</li> <li>Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA)</li> <li>OfS Regulatory advice 24: Guidance related to freedom of speech</li> </ul>		

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## Introduction

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA) makes it clear that all universities and colleges which register with the Office for Students must uphold the existing laws around freedom of speech. Where they are registered, universities and colleges must follow the regulatory framework.

Under the framework, the Board of Directors of registered universities and colleges should take 'such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured within the provider.'

This includes a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that use of any premises is not denied to an individual or group on grounds connected with their beliefs, views, policies or objectives.

Reference to 'College premises' includes premises which are owned and/or controlled by the College and premises occupied or used by its students. For the purposes of this Code, it also includes online or electronic facilities used for and by students for the purposes of teaching and learning, or for College administration.

In order to facilitate the discharge of these duties, the Board is required to issue and maintain a Code of Practice setting out the procedures to be followed by members, students and employees, and their conduct, in connection with the organisation of meetings and other activities to be held on College premises and which fall within the scope of this Code of Practice.

## Scope

The Code of Practice shall apply to all staff (regardless of the nature of their contractual relationship) and students of the College. Furthermore, any persons invited to speak or otherwise take part in events held on College premises, or under the auspices of the College, will be required to comply with this Code.

The College shall take reasonable steps to ensure that all in the scope of the Code, and all others where their activities may bring them into scope, are aware of their obligations therein.

## Principles

Regent College London believes that 'the end result of education is character'. To that end, we wish to establish and maintain an inclusive community that recognises that people with different backgrounds, experience, skills, attitudes, beliefs and views bring fresh ideas and new perspectives.

Furthermore, whilst free speech is an essential freedom, the College recognises these freedoms come with a responsibility to ensure that they are exercised in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect for others and their views, within the law.

The law protects the rights of members of the College to engage in debate and argument about social, political, religious, economic and scientific ideas, provided that the views expressed are not contrary to law. Freedom of speech within the law may include speech that is shocking, disturbing or offensive.

Whilst we will seek to provide the widest possible opportunities for exchange of views, we will not provide a platform for activities which fall (or may lead to others falling) outside the law.

## **Academic Freedom**

The concept of academic freedom is one that academic staff in higher education providers should be protected from any loss of privilege, employment rights, rewards and benefits, as a result of challenging accepted norms, as part of their academic duties. Regent College embraces this concept, and nothing in this Code should be taken as undermining the right of academic freedom.

## **Events and use of premises**

### Meetings and Events

The starting point for any event is that it should go ahead and that cancellation is exceptional and undesirable. Permission will not be withheld to any individual or body of persons on any grounds connected with:

- a) the beliefs or views of that individual or that body; or
- b) the policy or objectives of that body.

Reasonable grounds for withholding such permission shall include, but are not limited to:

- a) circumstances where there is a real likelihood that a speaker may not be able to enter or leave the building safely and/or have the freedom within the law to deliver their speech without disruption;
- b) where there is reasonable belief that a breach of the law may be committed;
- c) the support of an organisation whose aims and objectives are illegal;
- d) where views to be expressed constitute views that risk drawing people into terrorism; or
- e) which give rise to a breach of the peace.

It is expected that all participants in events organised within, or under the name of the College, will conduct themselves and behave in a manner consistent with the values outlined in this Code, and in particular, by respecting the right to freedom of speech within the law.

The College is under no legal obligation to allow meetings to be held on its premises, or otherwise using its facilities, which are open to members of the public. Meetings held on the College's premises, or using its facilities, shall only be open to students and staff, unless permission is given in writing, by the Provost or his/her nominee.

### External Speakers

Where a speaker is to be invited from outside of the College, permission must be sought ahead of the invitation being confirmed. Permission should be sought via the External Speaker Request Form, which will be considered in line with the College's External Speakers Policy. These are available on the College's website.

The College's External Speakers Policy provides a framework for the approval and management of external or visiting speakers at Regent College London. It ensures that all speaking events align with legal requirements and the College's commitment to fostering a

safe and inclusive environment, while also upholding the principles of free speech and academic freedom as mandated under the Prevent Duty.

### Security Costs

The College may pass on the costs of security for using the premises to those arranging the relevant event or meeting in certain circumstances, such as where the costs are wholly disproportionate to the numbers likely to be attending the event and the event could be held in a more proportionate way, or where a visiting speaker could reasonably be expected to have their own security because of the political or state office they hold.