
Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech

University of Essex, Compliance, Academic
Section

Authors:	Academic Registrar
Publication date:	1 October 2016
Version:	1.0



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Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech

1. In accordance with the duties imposed upon it by Section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986, the Council of the University has instituted the following Policy to ensure that the University can promote academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law for members of the University (including the Staff/and Students of the University) and for external speakers invited to make use of University facilities.
2. Universities play an important role in society as places of debate and discussion within the law, where ideas can be tested, where students learn to challenge ideas and think for themselves, and where rationality underpins the pursuit of knowledge. The University of Essex is fully committed to promoting an environment in which intense inquiry and informed argument generates lasting ideas, and where members of its community have a responsibility both to challenge and to listen fully.
3. This commitment is of long standing. The University's [Royal Charter](#) (.pdf) provides that "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 in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges". This commitment was reasserted in the Strategic Plan 2013-2019 as one of the University's core values.
4. In order to give expression to this commitment, so far as is reasonably practicable, access to the premises of the University shall not be denied to any registered student or employee of the University or to any individual or body of persons invited to the premises of the University by a registered student or employee of the University on any grounds relating to:
 - the beliefs or views of that registered student, employee or person so invited: or
 - the policies or objectives of that body;

except insofar as the expression of such belief, views, policies or objectives shall be unlawful and where it is reasonably anticipated that the unlawful expression of such beliefs, views, policies or objectives might occur on the relevant occasion.

5. However, this commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law is not absolute. In addition to affirming the University's commitment to promoting academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law, this policy also specifies circumstances in which academic freedom and freedom of speech might properly be restricted. The University may itself apply restrictions in circumstances where they are necessary for the University:
 - to discharge its obligations under the Education (No 2) Act 1986, The Education Reform Act 1988 or the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015; or
 - to safeguard the safety, health and welfare of its registered students, employees and other persons lawfully upon the premises or engaged in activities associated with the University, including giving effect to the safeguards set out in the Equalities Act 2010; or
 - to enable use of the University's premises to be consistent with maintaining and promoting the efficient conduct and administration of the University's functions.

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6. Just as the University will not restrict debate or deliberation simply because the views being expressed might be considered unwise or even offensive, so it also expects members of the University community to show commitment to this same principle by not obstructing or interfering with the rights of others to express views with which they might disagree profoundly.
 7. In order to give expression to this policy, the University shall develop a set of procedures, Codes of Practice and guidelines that will specify the arrangements to be applied. These shall include:
 - External Speaker Code of Practice (.pdf)
 - Information Security Policy (.pdf)
 - IT Acceptable Use Policy (.pdf)

Title	Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech
Document manager	Academic Registrar
Section	Academic Registrar's Office, Academic Section
Policy owner	Richard Stock, Academic Registrar
Approved by	Council
Date of approval	February 2016
Effective date	1 October 2016
Frequency of review	
Date of last review	October 2016
Date of next review	June 2020
Document status	Approved - published
Document classification	Public
Reporting required	Not applicable
Questions and queries	safeguard@essex.ac.uk
Related policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Charter, Statutes and Ordinances ■ University Regulations ■ External Speaker Code of Practice (.pdf) ■ Information Security Policy (.pdf) ■ IT Acceptable Use Policy (.pdf)
Supersedes	Freedom of Speech
Superseded by	Not applicable
Stakeholders	<p>Safeguarding Advisory Group</p> <p>Students' Union</p> <p>Professional Services</p> <p>Registrar and Secretary</p> <p>Senate</p>
Stakeholder role	Not applicable
<p>If you require this document in an alternative format, such as braille, please contact Rachel A Brown, Compliance Manager (Safeguarding)</p>	