



Independent External Group Statement

- Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger DBE, House of Lords, London
- Simon Johnson, Chief Executive, Jewish Leadership Council, London
- Mark Gardner, Deputy Chief Executive, Community Security Trust, London
- Rt. Hon Baroness Jan Royall, House of Lords and Principal, Somerville College Oxford

The Independent External Group is very impressed by the way that the University of Essex has addressed the serious issues that it faced earlier in the year. We are pleased to have been involved in what we believe to have been an exemplary process.

The Independent External Group believes that the University responded rapidly to the allegations of discrimination against Jewish students caused by the vote against establishing a Jewish society. It quickly removed the discrimination, held events in solidarity, commissioned this Report, ensured that evidence was collected and considered, and that this Report was independently scrutinised.

We therefore consider that this report represents a model of the response that an institution such as a university should make to allegations of, or concerns about, antisemitism or any other form of discrimination. We urge other Universities to learn from the spirit, actions and content of this investigation, whether in regard to Jewish concerns or those of any other group.

The approach taken by the University of Essex encapsulates best practice in addressing antisemitism and indeed any other form of discrimination. The recommendations follow through by advising on, or insisting on, actions to be taken. We are particularly pleased that the University has taken rapid and early action, without waiting to complete the Review or Report, and that the Students' Union has already changed its rules for the establishment of new student societies.

We sincerely hope that the implementation of these recommendations will better enable Jewish students at Essex to feel properly supported by the University, and that this helps to heal some of the hurt that they have felt.

With the very obvious exceptions of the threatened refusal to accept a Jewish society and the actions of a lecturer who has now, correctly, been dismissed, the other material that we reviewed from Essex students, staff and alumni was broadly similar to that experienced by Jews in other UK universities. It did not mark Essex out as being an especially hostile environment. It did, however, reinforce the need for all Universities to be fully aware of their responsibility for the wellbeing of Jewish students.

We believe that the implementation by Essex of the 33 Recommendations in the Report, which we welcome, would serve to address the complaints made in the evidence that we reviewed, and will make a considerable contribution to addressing cultural change.

As an Independent External Group, representing the Jewish community and going beyond it, we were very pleased to have been asked to advise on both the process and outcomes, to review the evidence and to comment on the Report. The fact that the University wished to involve us in this way is enormously welcome and the cooperation the University has given to us has been exemplary.

We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Professor Jules Pretty and all those involved. We particularly wish to commend the rapid and fair responses that Prof Pretty and his team gave to the issues that we raised in our scrutiny of the process.

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