

CITY OF LONDON COLLEGE



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A UNIVERSITY SECTOR PREMIER COLLEGE

FREEDOM OF SPEECH POLICY

2022/2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. In accordance with section 43 of the Education Act 1986 the Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers.
- 1.2. The College is required to “issue and keep up to date” a code of practice setting out the procedures to be followed by members, students and employees of the establishment in connection with the organisation:
 - of meetings which are to be held on premises of the establishment and which fall within any class of meeting specified in the code; and
 - of other activities which are to take place on those premises and which fall within any class of activity so specified; and
 - the conduct required of such persons in connection with any such meeting or activity; and
 - dealing with such other matters as the governing body consider appropriate.
- 1.3. The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 stipulates that the College must “have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism” (Section 26).
- 1.4. In the past the College has not often made use of visiting speakers. However the College does recognise that such speakers can bring great diversity of experience, insight and opinion, enriching our events and activities and sparking discussion and debate among our students, staff and visitors alike.
- 1.5. The College must also “have particular regard to the duty to ensure freedom of speech” and “to the importance of academic freedom” (Section 31). Under Section 29, we must “have regard to any such guidance in carrying out that duty.” The College will comply with this duty in a proportionate response, which in practice means striking a balance between concerns around extremism and concerns around censorship.
- 1.6. The code of practice below is the current code of practice as required by the act and was approved by the Board of Governors in May 2016.

2. The College Code of Practice

- 2.1. The College believes that a culture of free and open discussion is essential in its role as an academic institution. This culture can only be achieved if all concerned behave

with necessary tolerance and avoid needlessly offensive or provocative action or language.

- 2.2. The College expects all persons taking part in its activities to respect its values, be sensitive to the diversity of its community and to show respect to all sections of that community.
- 2.3. The College will refuse to allow meetings to take place where it is likely to give rise to an environment in which people will experience, or could reasonably fear, harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or violence, particularly because of their ethnicity, race, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender, disability or age. A meeting conducted under such circumstances is also likely to be unlawful.
- 2.4. The use of College premises for meetings will not ordinarily be denied to a student, employee or visiting speaker of the College wishing to exercise freedom of speech within the law. Should the College deny a request for the use of its premises it will provide a written reason. Reasons for refusal to hold a meeting may include, but are not limited to:
 - the event being considered to give rise to a breach of the College's Standard of Conduct expected of students or the terms and conditions of employment for a member of staff;
 - the event being considered likely to incite those attending to commit a criminal act;
 - the event being likely to give rise to an environment in which people will experience, or could reasonably fear, harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or violence, particularly because of their ethnicity, race, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender, disability or age;
 - the safety of the speakers or attendees being compromised, before, during or after the event;
 - the event being in direct support of a proscribed terrorist organisation or an organisation whose aims and objectives are illegal or of doubtful legality or in the view of the College lead to the expression of views contrary to the criminal law;
- 2.5. The College convenes a number of formal and informal meetings and committees within which freedom of speech within the law shall be respected.
- 2.6. Employees wishing to convene a meeting outside of those meetings referred to in 2.5 are required to use the College's room booking system and provide an accurate description of the meeting to be held to their line manager at least ten working days prior to the meeting taking place. If this involves

- 2.7. Employees wishing to convene a meeting that involves a guest speaker or speakers, or wishing to use a speaker or speakers for teaching modules, must ensure that they refer to the External Speaker Policy and that the associated procedure is followed. All such events should have an External Speaker Booking Form completed and submitted to the College for approval.
- 2.8. Students wishing to convene a meeting should provide a written request, at least 14 working days prior to the event, with an accurate description of the event to the Student Welfare Officer.
- 2.9. An accurate description includes, but is not limited to:
- a clear description of the subject matter under discussion;
 - profile and contact details for any visiting speakers;
 - the format of the meeting e.g. seminar, lecture, debate etc.
- 2.10. Where notification of a meeting is received by an appropriate individual, he/she should take reasonable steps, using information provided by the meeting organiser, to ascertain whether the meeting may be covered by exclusions detailed in paragraph 3. If there is any question that it may do so it should be immediately referred to the College's Prevent Co-ordinator and copied to the Clerk to the Board of Governors.
- 2.11. The College's Prevent Coordinator has the discretion to refuse an event to take place in accordance with paragraph 3 above, or require the organiser to commit to any adjustments judged necessary in order to ensure the proposed meeting complies with the policy.
- 2.12. Where use of the College's facilities is refused, or adjustments to the event are required prior to use of facilities being permitted, the individual refusing or placing conditions on the event shall notify the Clerk to the Board of Governors of the decision taken.
- 2.13. Students and employees utilising College facilities agree to do so for lawful activities and are bound by all other College policies and procedures.
- 2.14. The College reserves the right to charge employees and students for the use of its facilities in line with agreed tariffs.
- 2.15. There is no direct route of appeal. Where an employee or student believes that the requirements of this code of practice have not been complied with they may bring it to the attention of the CEO and the Board of Governors.

2.16. The principles established within this Code of Practice may, at the CEO's discretion be applied to commercial events hosted by the College on behalf of a third party (e.g. conference bookings). Separate Terms and Conditions also apply to such events.

3. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or if there is a change in legal or other business or academic related requirement.

<i>Review date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Reviewer</i>
August 2023	Freedom of Speech Policy	Academic Director

Document history:

<i>Version date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Author</i>
22/11/2016	Policy approved and accepted by Academic Board	Task and Completion Committee
30/11/2017	Freedom of Speech Policy	Academic Director
30/11/2018	Freedom of Speech Policy	Academic Director
30/11/2019	Freedom of Speech Policy	Academic Director
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