

Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:
Next steps for freedom of speech in higher education institutions
Timing: Morning, Thursday, 26th June 2025
*****Taking Place Online*****



**WESTMINSTER
HIGHER EDUCATION
FORUM**

Agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Baroness Ruth Deech
- 9.05 **Supporting universities in preparing for key measures in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and priorities for regulation moving forward**
Dr Arif Ahmed, Director, Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, Office for Students
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.35 **Implementing new statutory duties and fostering a culture of free speech within universities**
reviewing and updating codes of practice to align with statutory duties / adapting institutional governance structures to meet compliance obligations / managing speaker events and academic discussion under new regulation rules / impact of OfS enforcement powers on university finances and reputation / balancing free expression with duties under the Equality Act 2010 / embedding freedom of speech principles across leadership and staff training / addressing potential conflicts from the prohibition of NDAs in cases of harassment / preparing to implement OfS guidance and decision-making framework on lawful speech
Dr Bryn Harris, Chief Legal Counsel, Free Speech Union
Smita Jamdar, Partner and Head, Education, Shakespeare Martineau
David Bass, Director, EDI, Advance HE
Andrew Boggs, University Secretary, Royal Holloway, University of London
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **'How universities are protecting freedom of speech and academic freedom'**
Beth Cooper, Policy Adviser, Universities UK
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.45 **Chair's closing remarks**
Baroness Ruth Deech
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Lord Lucas
- 11.05 **Lessons from international higher education systems on managing freedom of speech on campus and within academia**
Dr Russell Skiba, Emeritus Professor and Director, Equity Project, Indiana University
- 11.15 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.35 **Exploring options for future primary legislation and legal frameworks for managing freedom of speech moving forward**
evaluating options for future legislation / next steps for regulatory oversight / balancing institutional autonomy with compliance / implications for HEI governance and legal accountability
Professor Ian Pace, Professor of Music, Culture and Society, City, University of London
Rose Smith, Legal Director, Doyle Clayton
Professor John Holmwood, Emeritus Professor, Sociology, University of Nottingham; and, Volunteer, Prevent Watch
Professor Christopher Higgins, former Vice-Chancellor, Durham University
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.15 **Assessing campus culture and emerging trends in free speech and student engagement**
trends in student views on free speech and self-censorship / approaches to supporting debate while safeguarding wellbeing / updating harassment, discrimination, and bullying policies in line with legal duties / improving inclusion for marginalised groups / role of students' union and wellbeing teams in fostering a balanced campus culture / addressing concerns over cultural conflicts / navigating OfS guidance on lawful speech
Lauren Amdor, Activities and Communities Officer, LSE Students' Union
Rose Stephenson, Director, Policy and Advocacy, Higher Education Policy Institute
Professor Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor, SOAS University of London
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**
Lord Lucas
Elsa Woodworth Jones, Westminster Higher Education Forum