## Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference: Next steps for freedom of speech in higher education institutions

Timing: Morning, Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025

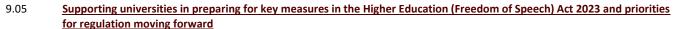
\*\*\*Taking Place Online\*\*\*

Agenda subject to change



9.00 Chair's opening remarks

**Baroness Ruth Deech** 



**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 <u>'How universities are protecting freedom of speech and academic freedom'</u>

**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 <u>Exploring options for future primary legislation and legal frameworks for managing freedom of speech moving forward</u>

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 <u>Assessing campus culture and emerging trends in free speech and student engagement</u>

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

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