



DOWNING COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

Statement on Freedom of Speech

Policy/guidance owner	Senior Tutor
Approving committee	1. General Purposes Committee (GPC) 2. Governing Body (GB)
Administrator	College Secretary
Scope	All members of the College, staff and students connected to the University or another College, and visiting speakers.
Last reviewed	24 April 2023 (GPC), 5 May 2023 (GB)
Next review date	5 May 2026
This document may only be modified with the ratification of the approving committees. Please contact the administrator with any queries.	

Context

1. Colleges are required by law to outline principles for their members in relation to their right to freedom of speech in the context of other legal responsibilities of the College. This Statement takes into account the specific legal responsibilities, as set out in Section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986, the Equality Act 2010 and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.
2. This Statement outlines the principles of free speech within the law which apply to all members of the College, staff or students connected to the University or another College, and visiting speakers (i.e. speakers who are not members of the University of Cambridge or one of the Colleges).

Principles

3. The College is strongly committed to the principle of freedom of speech and expression. It fosters an environment where all of its members can participate fully in the life of the College, and where each member feels confident and able to research, question and test received wisdom, and to express new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without fear of isolation, marginalisation or discrimination. Equally, the College expects its members to receive and respond to intellectual and ideological challenges in a constructive and peaceable way. The College also acknowledges its statutory duties in protecting its members and other people from “radicalisation”, which in this context means being drawn in by others to support terrorism, or to commit acts of terrorism.
4. Subject to paragraph 3 above, no premises of the College will normally be denied to any member or body of members by reason of the beliefs or views of that individual or of that body or the policy or objectives of that body.
5. In holding to these key principles, the College will take into account its obligations regarding freedom of speech, the management of the health and safety of its members and the general public, the promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination on the grounds of belief, race, gender or sexual orientation or other legally-protected characteristics, and its duties associated with preventing people from being drawn into terrorism or the promotion of terrorist activities.

As an example of this, the College reserves the right to refuse access to its premises if it is of the opinion that a visiting speaker or the purpose of a meeting is likely to give rise to the incitement of crime and/or is likely to cause a breach of the peace, as defined by law.

Policies and procedures

6. In determining the likelihood of risk of harm to members of the College and/or the general public, or members of the College being drawn into terrorism, or otherwise promoting any violent or illegal action, the College publishes policies and/or procedures to set out and manage:
 - a) the behavioural expectations of students and student unions;
 - b) the management of College events at which controversial views may be expressed (whether or not they are held at the College); and
 - c) the management and conduct of visiting speakers at meetings held within the College.

Policy agreed by the General Purposes Committee 13 June 2016