

Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

Introduction

This Code of Practice sets out the School's commitment to freedom of speech.

Our Commitment to Freedom of Speech

Freedom of speech means that all School staff and students have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, expression, association and assembly; that they have freedom within the law to hold and express opinions, question and test established ideas or received wisdom, develop and advance new ideas or innovative proposals, and present controversial or unpopular points of view. Freedom of speech within the law may include speech that is shocking, disturbing or offensive to some people.

The School upholds its commitment to freedom of speech through the provisions for academic freedom set out in its [Academic Freedom Policy](#), and also by ensuring that access to School premises is not denied to any registered student or employee of the School or to any individual or group lawfully invited to LIS premises by an LIS student or employee, on any grounds relating to their beliefs, views, policies or objectives, provided that the expression of these is not unlawful.

The School is committed to securing, so far as is reasonably practicable, freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. This includes but is not limited to its activities in respect of:

- admissions, appointments, employment and promotion;
- complaints and investigation processes;
- governance;
- research;
- meetings and events;
- teaching;
- training; and
- in the consideration of its policies and procedures, including those relating to discipline.

Restrictions on Freedom of Speech

Freedom of speech comes with the responsibility to respect the democratic rights and freedoms of others. Namely, as is set out in the School's [Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure](#) and its [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#), all School staff, students and visitors shall refrain from all forms of unlawful harassment and unlawful discrimination, whether on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender reassignment, sexuality, disability, or age.

The School also expects its students, staff and visitors to express their views in the appropriate fora, in ways that are clear, relevant, respectful, accurate and timely; they should endeavour to justify their views with evidence, facts or reasonable argument, and should make every reasonable effort to present their views in a constructive and sensitive manner.

Just as the School will not restrict debate because the views being expressed might be controversial or unpopular, it also expects its staff and students to respect the rights of others to express views with which they might profoundly disagree.

There are circumstances in which the School might be required to restrict freedom of speech. These include circumstances where restrictions are necessary in order for the School to meet its legal obligations, for example in respect of the Public Order Act, the Equality Act, or other legal requirements, whether set out in legislation, or under the common law.

Failure by a School employee or student to comply with the provisions of this Code of Practice, including the Visiting Speaker Procedure, may result in disciplinary proceedings, as set out in the School's Disciplinary Procedure (in the Staff Handbook).

Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct and Procedure

Introduction

The School's Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct and Procedure applies to all activities involving external speakers, including:

- Visiting lecturers invited by academic staff;
- External speakers speaking on campus;
- Events such as debates, speeches and conferences taking place in School facilities that have been organised by staff, students and external bodies.

Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct

Higher education institutions operate in a complex legal environment. All individuals involved, including the speakers themselves, should seek to familiarise themselves with the legal context that underpins this area. Relevant areas of legislation include:

- Criminal law, which encompasses hate crimes, terrorism, harassment, breach of the peace and public order;
- Private rights, including but not limited to those in respect of harassment, defamation, and breach of confidence;
- Public law, including freedom of speech and duties, including the duty to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act.

The School expects visiting speakers to act in accordance with the law, and not to breach the lawful rights of others. The School reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to deny an external speaker to speak at or attend a School event, and to refuse to permit an event and/or to halt an event at any time if it reasonably considers that there may be a breach of the law.

Below is set out some examples of unacceptable conduct by visiting speakers; this is intended as a guideline and is not exhaustive. During the course of the event in which they are participating, speakers must avoid:

- Breaching the criminal law in relation to public order;
- Incitement of hatred or violence, or any other breach of criminal law;

- Encouraging or promoting acts of terrorism, or promoting individuals, groups or organisations that support terrorism;
- Unlawfully discriminating against, or harassing any person or group on the grounds of their sex, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, status of gender reassignment, sexuality, disability, or age;
- Defaming any person or organisation;
- Making provision for segregation of their event by sex (except in some cases of religious worship).

Speakers must:

- Comply with the School's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and, where relevant, its [Academic Freedom Policy](#);
- Comply with the School's [Health and Safety Policy](#);
- Seek to express their views in ways that are clear, relevant, respectful, accurate and timely; endeavour to justify their views with evidence, facts or reasonable argument, and make every reasonable effort to present their views in a constructive manner.

Procedure in relation to meetings, events and other activities

The majority of speaker requests at the School will be straightforward and will present a low risk. However, some requests will be more complicated and will require further consideration. The School's Visiting Speaker Procedure reflects this. The School is committed to taking reasonable steps to secure and promote freedom of speech, within the law and this process is intended to enable events to go ahead, having completed appropriate risk assessments and any necessary mitigations.

Any individual, whether staff or student, who is organising an event that includes an external speaker must follow the Procedure in relation to meetings, events and other gatherings as set out below.

Prior to the confirmation of any external speaker, the event organiser must assess the visiting speaker against the following questions:

- Does the proposed theme or title of the event, and previous activity of the speaker present a risk that the views expressed by the speaker may be in breach of the Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct?
- Is the proposed speaker or theme likely to attract attendance from individuals or groups that have previously been known to express views that may be in breach of the Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct?

If the answer to all of these questions is no, the event organiser can confirm the visiting speaker, book the event, and begin to advertise it. The visiting speaker must be given a copy of the School's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice.

If the answer to any of the questions is unclear, the event organiser must seek guidance. A staff organiser must seek guidance from their line manager or head of department. A student organiser must seek guidance from the Registrar. In both cases, the reviewer will evaluate the visiting speaker against the questions above.

If at any time the answer of any of the question is yes, the event organiser must submit a Visiting Speaker Referral to the Registrar by email at least 28 days prior to the event (registrar@lis.ac.uk). Failure to submit within these timelines may lead to the event being automatically denied.

A Visiting Speaker Referral must contain the following information (this is intended to allow the School adequate time to mitigate any risks arising from the proposed events and to take reasonably practicable steps to allow the events to proceed):

- Name and contact details of principal organiser;
- Name and details of visiting speaker, including links to biographical information, and what organisation, if any, they represent;
- Date, time and place of proposed event;
- Statement as to whether the speaker has spoken either at LIS or another HEI before;
- Whether the speaker has attracted any controversy in the past, and of what nature;
- Overview of event (subject matter, appointed chairperson, format);
- Target audience (numbers expected to attend by group [students, staff, members of the public], including whether there is any reason to believe the event will attract groups/individuals that have been previously known to express views that breach the Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct);
- Any reasons to believe that there may be a threat of disruption caused by the proposed event, and the substance of that threat.

The Registrar will review the Referral against the School's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice (including the Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct), consulting where relevant with other members of School staff, and/or with third parties, such as legal advisors. The Registrar will provide an initial response to the Referral within ten working days of their receipt of the Referral. This response will be either:

- Approval of the Visiting Speaker; or
- Approval of the Visiting Speaker with conditions; or
- In the exceptional event that the School considers that the risks cannot be mitigated by the imposition of conditions, or the organisers refuse to comply with the School's conditions, the School has the right to cancel the event.

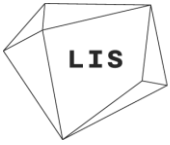
Apart from in exceptional circumstances, the School will not require the individual or body to bear some or all of the costs of security relating to their use of the premises. With this in mind, the School will not pass on the first £500 of security costs associated with the use of its premises by an individual or body. Costs exceeding £500 are considered to constitute exceptional costs. This applies to all individuals or bodies regardless of their ideas, opinions, policies or objectives. We will supply the organiser of the event with a clear written summary of our calculation of the expected security cost and an explanation for this calculation. If the organiser wishes to appeal this calculation, they should contact registrar@lis.ac.uk.

The event organiser has the right to appeal against a decision made by the Registrar to refuse a Visiting Speaker. This appeal must be made in by email to the Chief Executive within 5 working days of the receipt of the refusal notification (chiefexecutive@lis.ac.uk). Appeals will be responded to within 5 working days of receipt of the appeal, and the decision will be final.

Communication of Visiting Speaker Procedure

In order to ensure that our Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, including the Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct and Procedure, is prominent and easily accessible, the School will communicate it via a number of channels at least once every calendar year, including through:

- Staff handbook;
- Student handbook;
- The School website;
- The Learning Management System (LMS);
- The students' association and student societies;
- Induction for new staff where the external speaker procedure is relevant to their role;
- Events staff at the School.

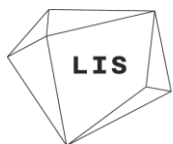


Conduct

The School is committed to exposing its members and students to the widest possible range of views. Protest is itself a legitimate expression of freedom of speech. However, protest must not shut down lawful debate. Attempts to subvert the provisions of this Code, or to disrupt or obstruct the exercise of lawful freedom of speech and/or academic freedom will be considered as a potential disciplinary matter in accordance with the School's policies and procedures.

Monitoring and Review

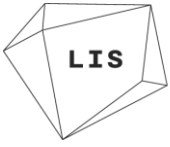
The Registrar will annually review and, where appropriate, suggest revision to this Code of Practice in the light of changes in legislation, geopolitical or socioeconomic events, and other factors. Any changes will be authorised by the Board of Directors.



Version Control

Name of policy/procedure:	Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech
Document owner:	Andrew Redford, Registrar
Date Originally Created:	02/2019
Related documents: (eg associated forms, underpinning processes, related policies or overarching policies)	Code of Ethical Conduct Academic Freedom Policy Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Dignity at Work and Student Policy and Procedure Safeguarding Policy and Procedure (including Prevent) Staff Handbook (includes Disciplinary Procedure)

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Brief summary of changes
1	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	18/02/2019	Original draft
2	Board of Directors	12/07/2019	Approved
3	Academic Council	18/12/2019	Approved, but requires review as part of overall update to general academic regulations given decision to pursue NDAPs
4	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	19/12/2019	Minor typo fixes, no major changes
5	Academic Council	16/03/2020	Approved
6	Michael Englard, Registrar	AC Chairs action March 2022	Minor working changes following EDIC/AC on LIS context and to better include gender identity and that it should include all touch points not simply external speakers
7	Andrew Redford, Registrar	BoD Chairs action, July 2025	Minor updates and inclusion of section on security costs



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