

**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\*\*\***



**WESTMINSTER  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
FORUM**

*Draft agenda subject to change*

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 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*  
**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**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 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  
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 student union and wellbeing teams in fostering a balanced campus culture | addressing concerns over cultural conflicts*  
**Lauren Amdor**, Activities and Communities Officer, LSE Students' Union  
**Rose Stephenson**, Director, Policy and Advocacy, Higher Education Policy Institute  
Senior representative, HE  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian  
**Sean Cudmore**, Westminster Higher Education Forum