

**Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:**  
**Next steps for freedom of speech in higher education institutions in England**  
*Timing: Morning, Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026*  
**\*\*\*Taking Place Online\*\*\***



**WESTMINSTER  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
FORUM**

*Draft agenda subject to change*

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentary
- 9.05 **Enforcement of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 in England and priorities for regulation moving forward**  
**Arif Ahmed**, Director, Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, Office for Students  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Implementing new statutory duties and institutional approaches to promoting academic freedom and free speech**  
*designing and updating institutional codes of practice | developing complaints and investigation procedures | supporting staff and students in understanding rights and responsibilities | practical compliance with the OfS and OIA schemes | impact of new measures on university finances and legal exposure | embedding free speech principles across teaching and training | addressing concerns related to recruitment and promotion practices*  
Senior representative, university  
Senior representative, students' union  
Senior representative, legal  
Senior commentator  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **Early lessons from student complaints cases - oversight and enforcement**  
Senior speaker confirmed from the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator**  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.50 **Chair's closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentary
- 10.55 Break
- 11.05 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentary
- 11.15 **Developing internal policies and governance for strengthened compliance**  
Senior representative, sector body
- 11.25 **Practical steps for the enforcement of free speech - managing resources, legal risk and options for future legislation**  
*balancing lawful free speech with safeguarding, harassment and discrimination | resourcing and legal costs | staff training and internal escalation routes | governance of controversial topics, speakers and events | coordinating OfS and OIA remits | transparency, overseas funding and foreign influence*  
Speaker representative, university  
Senior representative, legal  
Senior representative, interest group
- 11.40 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.05 **International perspectives on promoting free speech and academic freedom**  
Senior representative, international university
- 12.15 **Developing a culture of free speech and open debate on campus**  
*assessing emerging trends in campus culture, drivers of expression and student views on free speech | evaluating effectiveness of policies and complaint handling | addressing concerns surrounding cultural conflict | impact of academic freedom protection on institutional reputation | role of student unions in promoting free speech | strategies for supporting open debate whilst safeguarding students from harassment*  
Senior representative, university  
Senior representative, students' union  
Senior commentator
- 12.30 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentary  
**Sean Cudmore**, Westminster Higher Education Forum