

## 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\*\*\*

Draft agenda subject to change

8.30	Registration
9.00	<b><u>Chair's opening remarks</u></b> Senior Parliamentarian
9.05	<b><u>Enforcement of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 in England and priorities for regulation moving forward</u></b> Arif Ahmed, Director, Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, Office for Students Questions and comments from the floor
9.30	<b><u>Implementing new statutory duties and institutional approaches to promoting academic freedom and free speech</u></b> <i>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</i> Senior representative, university Senior representative, students' union Senior representative, legal Senior commentator Questions and comments from the floor
10.25	<b><u>Early lessons from student complaints cases - oversight and enforcement</u></b> Senior speaker confirmed from the <b>Office of the Independent Adjudicator</b> Questions and comments from the floor
10.50	<b><u>Chair's closing remarks</u></b> Senior Parliamentarian
10.55	Break
11.05	<b><u>Chair's opening remarks</u></b> Senior Parliamentarian
11.15	<b><u>Developing internal policies and governance for strengthened compliance</u></b> Senior representative, sector body
11.25	<b><u>Practical steps for the enforcement of free speech - managing resources, legal risk and options for future legislation</u></b> <i>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</i> Speaker representative, university Senior representative, legal Senior representative, interest group
11.40	Questions and comments from the floor
12.05	<b><u>International perspectives on promoting free speech and academic freedom</u></b> Senior representative, international university
12.15	<b><u>Developing a culture of free speech and open debate on campus</u></b> <i>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</i> Senior representative, university Senior representative, students' union Senior commentator
12.30	Questions and comments from the floor
12.55	<b><u>Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks</u></b> Senior Parliamentarian Sean Cudmore, Westminster Higher Education Forum



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