Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:
Freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education - practice, regulation and next steps
Timing: Morning, Tuesday, 19th January 2027
*****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 **Sector priorities for protecting freedom of speech and academic freedom**
Megan Haskins, Policy Adviser, Universities UK
Questions and comments from the floor

9.30 **Implementation of freedom of speech duties - considerations for governance, compliance and institutional practice**
early experience of the OfS free speech complaints scheme alongside internal complaints processes | preparing for conditions E11 and E12 and future OfS requirements | implications for providers, staff, visiting speakers and applicants for academic posts | access to and signposting of the complaints scheme | governance arrangements, codes of practice and institutional policies | evidencing compliance, proportionality and reasonably practicable decision-making | implications of the University of Sussex judgment for regulatory and institutional decisions | managing events, visiting speakers, protest and security considerations | freedom of speech duties alongside equality, harassment, safeguarding and Prevent responsibilities
Smita Jamdar, Partner and Head, Education, Shakespeare Martineau
Duaa Jamal Karim, Founder, Actsure; and Lawyer and Researcher, University of Cambridge
Senior representative, university
Senior representative, students
Questions and comments from the floor

10.25 **Student complaints and freedom of speech - lessons from OIA cases**
Charlotte Corrish, Head, Public Policy, Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Questions and comments from the floor

10.50 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian

10.55 Break

11.05 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian

11.10 **Institutional culture and academic freedom in teaching, research and employment**
recruitment, promotion and career progression | EDI statements, expression and academic freedom | staff conduct, disciplinary and grievance procedures | protected beliefs and lawful but controversial expression | academic freedom in teaching and supervision | research independence, publication and institutional reputation | international collaboration, foreign interference and research security | external pressure, transnational repression and institutional autonomy
Senior representative, legal
Senior representative, university
Senior representative, union
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor

11.55 **Developing the new national community cohesion framework and supporting inclusive campus culture**
Senior commentator

12.05 **Supporting a culture of free speech and open debate on campus**
student perspectives on freedom of expression and academic freedom | students' unions, representative bodies and implications of planned changes to their statutory duties | protest, activism and disruption on campus | supporting open debate and avoiding unnecessary restriction of lawful speech, while acting on unlawful conduct | online expression, social media and university responsibility | confidence in institutional processes and concerns around self-censorship | community cohesion, belonging and respectful disagreement | institutional culture, complaints procedures and public confidence in higher education
Bartosz Rogala, President, Wellbeing and Community, University of St Andrews
Professor Alison Scott-Baumann, Professor, Society and Belief, SOAS University of London
Amy Norton, Head, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, London School of Economics and Political Science

12.20 Questions and comments from the floor

12.45 **Policy priorities for freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education moving forward**
Johanna Liddle, Senior Policy Lead, Freedom of Speech, Office for Students
Questions and comments from the floor

13.10 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Higher Education Forum