

**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 Parliamentary
- 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  
Senior representative, HE  
Senior commentator  
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 Parliamentary
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentary
- 11.05 **Developing and aligning effective complaints procedures**  
Senior representative, regulation
- 11.15 **Lessons from international higher education systems on managing freedom of speech on campus and within academia**  
Senior representative, international university
- 11.25 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.45 **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
- 12.20 **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 Parliamentary  
**Sean Cudmore**, Westminster Higher Education Forum