

Purpose of Policy

- 1 This documents sets out the framework within which members of the College, staff and visitors enjoy the right to freedom of speech.
- 2 The freedom protected by this policy is confined to the exercise of freedom of speech within the law.
- 3 This policy covers all events taking place on College premises; or events held elsewhere which are college funded, affiliated or branded.

A free speech statement for the University of Oxford and its individual colleges*

- 4 Free speech is the lifeblood of a university. It enables the pursuit of knowledge. It helps us approach truth. It allows students, teachers and researchers to become better acquainted with the variety of beliefs, theories and opinions in the world. Recognising the vital importance of free expression for the life of the mind, a university may make rules concerning the conduct of debate but should never prevent speech that is lawful.
- 5 Inevitably, this will mean that members of the University/College are confronted with views that some find unsettling, extreme or offensive. The University/College must therefore foster freedom of expression within a framework of robust civility. Not all theories deserve equal respect. A university values expertise and intellectual achievement as well as openness. But, within the bounds set by law, all voices or views which any member of our community considers relevant should be given the chance of a hearing. Wherever possible, they should also be exposed to evidence, questioning and argument. As an integral part of this commitment to freedom of expression, we will take steps to ensure that all such exchanges happen peacefully. With appropriate regulation of the time, place and manner of events, neither speakers nor listeners should have any reasonable grounds to feel intimidated or censored.
- 6 It is this understanding of the central importance and specific roles of free speech in a university that underlies the detailed procedures of the University of Oxford/Regent's Park College, laid out in this Freedom of Speech Policy.

Policy

- 7 The Governing Body of the College as directed in Statute 2.8 will ensure it is understood by the College community as a whole that principles of free expression, academic freedom, autonomy, confidentiality, privacy and equality of rights according to the law provide the overarching context within which the College's PREVENT duty will be considered. The Prevent duty strategy will be implemented in a manner that is proportionate and positively secures and protects these rights (see statement above).
- 8 Members, students, and employees of the College are required at all times to conduct themselves so as to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students, and employees of the College and for visiting speakers.
- 9 The College believes that a culture of free, open and robust discussion can be achieved only if all concerned avoid needlessly offensive or provocative action and language. Only criminal speech is proscribed.
- 10 Whilst there is no legal prohibition on offending others, the College expects speakers and those taking part in meetings and other events to respect its values, to be sensitive to the diversity of its community and to show respect to all sections of that community. Speakers

- and audience alike should be reminded of their responsibilities to observe the College's policies on harassment and to conduct academic discussions in a civil manner.
- 11 Any infringements of the provisions of this policy may render those responsible liable to disciplinary action under the College's disciplinary procedures.
 - 12 In any case where the College is proposing to grant permission to an outside organisation or group to hold a meeting or event on College premises, the provisions of this policy will apply.

**This statement is based on a draft by Ken McDonald (Warden of Wadham College, Prevent advisor to Conference of Colleges) and Timothy Garton Ash (St Antony's College) and presented at a free speech symposium at St Anthony's College in May 2016.*