

PRINCIPLES ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION

August 2024

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The latest version of this document is always to be found at:

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-181.pdf>

Summary

What is this document about?

It supports the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Expression available at:

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-032.pdf>

Who is this for?

The principles apply to the Board of Governors, and to all members of our University community. It also applies to guest speakers, visiting lecturers, and those who run events at University-managed premises, and to all attendees of those events.

How does the University check this is followed?

The Board of Governors has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the associated code of practice is followed. The University Executive Board will promote this code of practice regularly to staff and to students. Failures to follow this code of practice should be raised with the Executive Director of Corporate Governance. They may also be raised with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?

For any questions, please contact the University Solicitor or another member of the University's Corporate Governance team corporate-governance@port.ac.uk.

Principles

1. One

We value freedom of speech and expression.

We value academic freedom.

We recognise and promote the fundamental importance of these rights in support of education, research, free enquiry, and the scientific method.

2. Two

These rights are powerful.

They question orthodoxy, challenge authority and protect the vulnerable.

Universities have safeguarded these rights for centuries, and we will secure and promote these rights for the future.

3. Three

Freedom of speech and academic freedom help us learn, educate, and add to the sum of human knowledge.

They help our students and our staff to achieve excellence.

4. Four

We learn from those who disagree with us, as well as from those who share our views.

Our campus hosts a range of speakers and views. That does not mean that we all endorse everything that is expressed here.

Having the right to express your views does not mean your views are correct, or that others must agree with you.

We will treat others with respect, even if we disagree with their views, and even in extremes.

5. Five

Freedom of speech does not mean that all views are equal.

We are an academic community. We assess the quality of an argument by reference to evidence, facts, and the scientific method.

When we learn, teach, and research, we will be guided by this drive for quality.

6. Six

Freedom of speech and academic freedom are bounded by the law.

Unlawful harassment, threats and discrimination will not be tolerated.

7. Seven

Freedom of speech is not absolute.

A person's right to freedom of speech must sometimes be balanced against the rights and freedoms of others.

8. Eight

The University has other fundamental legal duties, such as its duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and participation in public life, and to care for its campus communities.

Balancing these rights and duties can be complex.

As with all it does, the University will strive for excellence in fulfilling its duties and promoting the rights of all.

Further information on the University's approach to issues of freedom of speech and academic freedom can be found in the documents below.

- Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom
- Procedure for External Speakers, Exhibitors and Event Sponsors
- UPSU Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

If you have concerns about the University's approach for freedom of speech or academic freedom, or a complaint, please contact the University Solicitor or a member of the Corporate Governance team.

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