



Version Control Statement

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Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy

Legal Framework Update

This policy is updated to reflect the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. Futureworks acknowledges its duty to take reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech within the law, to promote the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom, and to comply with new regulatory requirements set by the Office for Students (OfS). This includes the prohibition of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) used to silence victims of bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct.

Permissible Restrictions Clarification

Any restrictions on speech or academic freedom must be lawful, proportionate, and evidence-based. They must not be used to suppress lawful but controversial or unpopular views. Futureworks will ensure that any such restrictions are consistent with its duty to take reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech.

Code of Practice

Futureworks will maintain and regularly review a Code of Practice that outlines procedures for managing events, speaker invitations, and complaints related to freedom of speech. This Code will be publicly available and compliant with guidance from the Office for Students.

Complaints Handling

Staff and visiting speakers may raise concerns through the OfS free speech complaints scheme. Students may continue to use the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for unresolved complaints. Futureworks will cooperate fully with these bodies and ensure that complainants are informed of their rights.

Promotion of Free Expression

Futureworks is committed to actively promoting freedom of speech and academic freedom through training, events, and leadership. The institution will monitor and report on the implementation of this policy and its impact on the academic community.

This commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law is not absolute. Futureworks may itself apply restrictions in circumstances where they are necessary for the institution to:

- Discharge its obligations under the Education (No 2) Act 1986, The Education Reform Act 1988 or the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015;



- Safeguard the welfare of its registered students, employees and other persons lawfully upon the premises or engaged in activities associated with Futureworks, including giving effect to the safeguards set out in the *Equalities Act 2010*; or
- Enable use of Futureworks' premises to be consistent with maintaining and promoting the efficient conduct and administration of the institution's functions.

Just as Futureworks will not restrict debate or deliberation simply because the views being expressed might be considered unwise or even offensive, so it also expects members of the institution to show commitment to this same principle by not obstructing or interfering with the rights of others to express views with which they might disagree profoundly.