|  |
| --- |
| Policy and Code of Practice related to Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom |
| **2025 - 2028** |

**Policy and Code of Practice related to Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**

Contents

[1 Purpose 3](#_Toc186655921)

[2 Scope 3](#_Toc186655922)

[3 Definitions 3](#_Toc186655923)

[4 Our Values and Expectations 5](#_Toc186655924)

[5 Legislative and Regulatory Context 6](#_Toc186655925)

[6 Academic Freedom 7](#_Toc186655926)

[7 Protest 8](#_Toc186655927)

[8 Code of Practice 8](#_Toc186655928)

[8.1 Key Responsibilities 8](#_Toc186655929)

[8.2 Application of the Policy within Academic Settings 10](#_Toc186655930)

[8.3 Application of the Policy to Meetings and Activities 12](#_Toc186655931)

[8.4 Application of the Policy to the Distribution or Display of Materials 14](#_Toc186655932)

[8.5 Appeals 15](#_Toc186655933)

[9 Advice and Guidance 15](#_Toc186655934)

[10 Raising Concerns and Addressing Breaches 15](#_Toc186655935)

[11 Key to Relevant Documents 16](#_Toc186655936)

[Appendix A: Flowchart showing the procedure to follow for Meetings and Activities 17](#_Toc186655937)

[Endmatter 18](#_Toc186655938)

# Purpose

* 1. Edge Hill University and the Edge Hill Students’ Union (EHSU) value Academic Freedom and are committed to promoting Freedom of Speech amongst their members and visiting speakers. Universities and their Students’ Unions have a special role in promoting and encouraging vigorous debate, free speech and freedom of enquiry within the law. This means that the University and EHSU needs to be tolerant of a wide range of different viewpoints.
	2. Alongside this, both organisations have a legal duty to ensure the safety of all members and visitors, protecting them from discrimination, victimisation and harassment, and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act (2010).
	3. The purpose of this document is to specify the University and EHSU Policy on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, and the Code of Practice to be followed. This Policy sets out the principles which will guide the University and EHSU in the discharge of their corporate responsibilities such as activities, events with visiting speakers, and in teaching and research settings. This includes, for example, teaching in classroom and online settings (including lectures and seminars), the curriculum, teaching and lecture materials, field trips, conferences and research seminars.
	4. This Policy and Code of Practice is approved by the University Board of Governors, with the management and operational responsibility resting with the University Directorate and the EHSU leadership team.

# Scope

* 1. The University and EHSU have agreed to adopt a shared Policy and Code of Practice. This will ensure consistency for all members of the University community.
	2. This code of Practice therefore applies to:
1. All members, staff and students of the University.
2. Visiting speakers and all other persons invited to otherwise lawfully be on the premises.
3. The Edge Hill Students’ Union (EHSU), including its constituent societies, clubs and associations.
4. Those attending University or EHSU meetings and activities. This includes off-campus and online events which are funded by, affiliated with or branded in a way that associates them with the University or EHSU.
5. Third party organisations that wish to hold meetings and activities on University premises.

# Definitions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Academic Freedom** | Protecting the intellectual independence of academics to question and test received views and wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in danger of losing their jobs or privileges or experiencing a reduction in the likelihood that they would secure a promotion or a different job at the University. |
| **Activity** | One of the terms used (alongside the term *meeting*) within the legislation in relation to Freedom of Speech. For the purposes of this document, it can be any means by which information is communicated, published and/or disseminated. Including but not limited to verbally during meetings, lectures, seminars, workshops, demonstrations, debates, events, or in writing with the distribution of leaflets, display of posters, publication of content on paper, online, electronically and on social media. |
| **Application** | The Application form that must be completed by the Principal Organiser and sent to the Responsible Officer if the Checklist determines it is necessary.  |
| **Checklist** | The Freedom of Speech Meeting or Activity Checklist which must be completed to determine whether an Application is required. |
| **Controversial** | Controversial refers to something likely to provoke public disagreement, debate, or strong differing opinions due to its sensitive, divisive, or disputed nature. |
| **Enhanced Risk Assessment** | A risk assessment for a meeting or activity which has been enhanced to fully consider the risks related to Freedom of Speech and related issues. |
| **External Speakers** | Any person who is invited to speak at a meeting or be involved in an activity that is not a member of the University. |
| **Freedom of Speech** | Freedom of Speech is the right to express opinions and ideas without censorship or restriction, within the bounds of the law. It includes the freedom to seek, receive, and share information openly. |
| **Meeting** | One of the terms used (alongside the term *activity*) within the legislation in relation to Freedom of Speech. For the purposes of this document, it can be any means by which people come together. Including but not limited to meetings, lectures, seminars, workshops, protests, demonstrations, debates and events. |
| **Members** | All members of the University community (whether employed by the University or not) including governors, employees, volunteers, students, Students’ Union staff, officers and associates, and any person, organisation or group not falling within any of the above categories who wishes to hold an Activity or Meeting affiliated with the University. |
| **Organiser** | The person who is primarily responsible for organising and delivering the Meeting or Activity. |
| **Principal Organiser** | The person nominated by the University or EHSU and identified in the Policy as responsible for making an application to the Responsible Officer and for liaising with them thereafter. |
| **Premises** | All property owned, occupied, managed, hired and/or used by the University including buildings, grounds, gardens, courtyards, other open spaces and any premises designated for student use and/or occupied by EHSU. |
| **Proscribed Organisations** | Extremist groups or organisations banned under UK law and therefore ‘proscribed’ under the Terrorism Act 2000 as detailed on the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2). |
| **Responsible Officer** | The Officer responsible for reviewing the application for a meeting or activity and making a decision to allow, allow with conditions or control measures, or withhold permission for it to go ahead. |

# Our Values and Expectations

* 1. Edge Hill University and EHSU is a community of staff and students where open, critical thinking, and the creation, sharing and dissemination of knowledge is actively encouraged. We are dedicated to teaching, researching, and applying knowledge across a broad spectrum of disciplines. In this environment, Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech are essential: they allow all our members to freely challenge established ideas, question the views of others, and present ideas that may be radical or dissenting. We are committed to upholding Freedom of Speech within the bounds of the law for all our members, including staff, students, and visiting speakers. We are equally committed to ensuring Academic Freedom for all academic staff and visiting scholars invited by the University or EHSU, their staff, or students.
	2. We acknowledge that the ideas and views of different members of our community, as well as those visiting the University or EHSU, may sometimes conflict. Some opinions may be considered disagreeable, or even offensive, by certain members of the University or EHSU community. This is partly because universities do not exist in isolation; broader societal conflicts and disputes, whether related to ethnicity, religion or belief, personal identity, or political convictions, can surface on campus among students and staff. The University and EHSU is not responsible for protecting individuals from ideas or opinions that they find uncomfortable or disagreeable.
	3. However, Freedom of Speech is not an absolute right, and in section 5, we outline the relevant legislation that must be considered in this context. The challenge for universities is to foster an environment that upholds and promotes Freedom of Speech while also recognising when it crosses the line into unlawful territory. These situations are often complex, requiring difficult judgments, and may involve balancing perceived conflicting rights.
	4. The University and EHSU is committed to upholding Freedom of Speech and will take all reasonably practicable steps to promote and protect the lawful speech rights of its staff, students, and visiting speakers, regardless of the viewpoint being expressed. However, this does not restrict members of our community from expressing their own views on such matters; we fully recognise that staff and students may hold strong opinions and are free to express them lawfully.
	5. The University reserves the right to regulate the use of its premises and is not legally obligated to host public meetings on campus. The University’s normal academic and administrative business will take priority over other usage. However, in accordance with its responsibilities under the relevant legislation, the University will make every reasonable effort to ensure that access to its premises is not denied to any individual or group on any grounds related to:
1. The beliefs and views of that individual or any member of that body; or
2. The policy or objectives of that body.

# Legislative and Regulatory Context

* 1. The University is required under Section 43 of the Education Act (No. 2) 1986 to have a Policy in relation to Freedom of Speech. Under Section 43, whilst there is no legal obligation on the University to permit Meetings or Activities on its premises, the University is under an obligation to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that Freedom of Speech within the law is secured for its Members and Visiting Speakers.
	2. The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic legislation, including Article 10 which covers the right to freedom of expression. This means that the University and EHSU are legally obligated to uphold and protect the rights of its staff and students to express their views and opinions freely, within the boundaries of the law.
	3. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010, requires the University and EHSU to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation. The organisations are also committed to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
	4. The Office for Students (OfS), through its Regulatory Framework, requires the University to adhere to a set of public interest governance principles, including Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. The Framework also governs these areas through Conditions E1 (public interest governance) and E2 (management and governance).
	5. Section 26(1) of the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 mandates that the University must consider the need to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism when performing its functions (the ‘Prevent duty’). In fulfilling this duty, the University is required to follow statutory guidance issued by the government.
	6. There are other legal responsibilities that apply to the University and EHSU which may impact on this policy, such as those relating to maintaining public order, general duty of care to staff and students, and the health and safety and wellbeing of employees, students, visiting speakers and visitors.
	7. The requirements on Universities and Students’ Unions in relation to the above issues differ. Some of the duties require Universities to “have due regard” to the need to achieve the aims of these pieces of legislation and others require Universities to “take such steps as are reasonably practicable”. The above legal duties must on occasion be balanced against one another, particularly with regard to our general duty of care to staff and students, and any decision taken may be subject to a reasonableness test (E.g. where a complaint is made of perceived harassment or offence).

# Academic Freedom

* 1. The University and EHSU are committed to upholding Academic Freedom for all involved in teaching, learning and research activities.  All members of the University community are therefore expected to respect diverse viewpoints and engage in constructive academic debate.
	2. Academic Freedom underpins the ability of staff and students to teach, learn, and engage in scholarly activities in a manner that fosters critical thinking, open dialogue, and intellectual growth. Academic Freedom includes the right to design, deliver, and participate in curricula that reflect rigorous academic standards and diverse perspectives, supporting an inclusive and dynamic educational environment. It also encompasses the right to challenge established knowledge and contribute to the development of new ideas through teaching and debate.
	3. The University is dedicated to guaranteeing that its academic staff have Academic Freedom and can act within the bounds of the law without fear of jeopardising their employment, privileges at the University, or their chances of promotion or obtaining different positions within the institution.
	4. A commitment to research integrity is central to Academic Freedom, ensuring that inquiry and innovation are pursued in a responsible, ethical, and transparent manner. All members of the University can explore complex or controversial topics without fear of censorship or reprisal, provided their work adheres to the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and care for their fellow colleagues, students and the wider world in line with the [University's Research Ethics Policy](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/research-ethics-policy/)
	5. The University is committed to safeguarding Academic Freedom by protecting staff and students from undue interference in their teaching and, research activities. This includes protecting individuals from external and internal pressures, such as political, corporate, or ideological influences. The institution will take all reasonable steps to ensure that academic work can be pursued independently and without fear of censorship, coercion, or retribution.
	6. Any member of the University community who believes their Academic Freedom is under threat is encouraged to report the matter using the procedures outlined in section 10. The University guarantees confidentiality and impartiality in addressing and resolving such concerns.
	7. By upholding Academic Freedom, the University fosters an environment where independent thinking and innovation can flourish, enhancing both personal development and the wider academic community.

# Protest

* 1. The University and EHSU recognise the right to lawful protest as an integral part of Freedom of Speech and expression. Protests are a legitimate means by which individuals and groups can voice their opinions and engage in public debate, contributing to the vibrancy and diversity of the University community. The University and EHSU are committed to facilitating peaceful and lawful protests while ensuring that such activities do not compromise the rights and freedoms of others, including the ability to teach, learn, or hold meetings and activities without undue disruption.
	2. Protests must be conducted in a manner that respects the safety and security of all members of the University community, as well as its property. Actions that involve intimidation, harassment, or the prevention of lawful speech or events are not acceptable.
	3. Members of the University community planning a protest will need to engage with the procedure detailed in section 8.3 in advance to ensure that appropriate arrangements can be made to support both the protest and the wider community.

# Code of Practice

# Key Responsibilities

* + 1. All University and EHSU staff members have a responsibility to uphold the principles contained within the Policy and take action as required under the Code of Practice. However, there are some members of staff at the University and EHSU with specific responsibilities and roles within the Code of Practice as detailed below.

| **Role holder** | **Responsibility** |
| --- | --- |
| The University Board of Governors | To ensure that an appropriate Policy and Code of Practice is approved and in place to comply with legislative requirements. |
|  Vice Chancellor | To ensure compliance with the Policy and the effective management and operation of the Code of Practice within the University. |
| The Edge Hill University Students’ Union Board of Trustees | To ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to comply with relevant legislative requirements and ensure compliance with the Policy and Code of Practice within EHSU. |
| All University and EHSU staff members | To be aware of the Policy and Code of Practice and to uphold the principles and undertake any necessary actions under the Code of Practice.  |
| Head of Department (Academic and Professional Services)  | To ensure that the Policy and Code of Practice is upheld within their area, including identifying parts of the curriculum, meetings and activities that might require further consideration. To ensure that any additional measures that should be put in place to manage risk are actioned. To flag any concerns about external speakers invited as part of an academic programme. |
| Dean of Faculty, Senior Faculty Team members and Directors of Professional Services | To ensure staff within their area are aware of and comply with this Policy and Code of Practice.To have a good understanding of the legislation and the expectations of Freedom of Speech so that advice and guidance can be provided to Heads of Department as required. To consider any activity considered to be high risk within their area and escalate to the Responsible Officer where appropriate. |
| Organiser | To complete the Checklist and Risk Assessment for all meetings and activities they organise and ensure that Principal Organiser is informed of all those requiring an Enhanced Risk Assessment and an Application. |
| Principal Organiser | To review the Checklist and Enhanced Risk Assessment and make an Application for relevant meetings or activities. To ensure that all preparations for a meeting or other activity have been adequately made, in keeping with the provisions of any risk assessment. To be accountable for any events organised within their area. |
| Responsible Officer | To review the application for a meeting or activity alongside the Checklist and Enhanced Risk Assessment.To make a decision to allow, allow with conditions or control measures, or withhold permission for it to go ahead and provide a written decision to the Principal Organiser. |

| Department/Area leading on Organisation of Meeting/Activity | Principal Organiser |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Faculty/Department | Dean of Faculty  |
| Facilities Management (including Conferences and Events) | Director of Facilities Management |
| Professional Services | Director of Department |
| Edge Hill Students’ Union | CEO of the Students’ Union |

* + 1. A deputy or nominated other representative may act on behalf of the role holders above where necessary and appropriate.
		2. Another member of staff at an appropriate level may be nominated to take on the role of the Principal Organiser.
		3. The role of the Responsible Officer within this Policy and Code of Practice will normally be undertaken by the Director of Student Services (or their nominee).

# Application of the Policy within Academic Settings

* + 1. This section of the Code of Practice applies to activities taking place in teaching, education and research settings, whether organised by staff or students. It applies to activities that form part of the usual academic curriculum.
		2. Departmental or Faculty activities outside of the curriculum or as additions to timetabled activities such as Conferences, or events where external visitors can attend or are invited, should be considered under section 8.3 of this Code of Practice.
		3. When teaching potentially sensitive or controversial topics, organising activities such as research seminars, conferences or other academic events, the organiser should consider steps to safeguard Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. This includes fostering an inclusive environment where all participants have the opportunity to present and advocate for differing viewpoints, and teaching students how to respectfully disagree with others, such as providing evidence and rational arguments to support their perspectives.
		4. Where appropriate, staff should proactively consider precautions to minimise potential impacts on students or participants, such as addressing topics that may cause distress. This includes planning how to manage sensitive situations, speaking with participants beforehand, providing advance information on sensitive topics, and reminding participants of appropriate behavioural expectations.
		5. There remains the possibility that views expressed may cause distress to some individuals. Where feasible, steps should be taken in advance to reduce this risk. However, it is the responsibility of the academic staff member to determine the most appropriate response in such cases. This could involve providing an opportunity for those who are upset to articulate and explore their viewpoint or taking a temporary break within the group. The University and EHSU does not expect activities to be cancelled in these situations, as this would deny others the opportunity to exercise Freedom of Speech and engage with challenging issues.
		6. The organiser of an academic activity is responsible for compliance with this Code of Practice. It is the organiser’s responsibility to discuss any activity which may relate to the adherence with the CoP with their Head of Department before proceeding. The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that the Code of Practice is upheld within their area, including identifying activities that might require further consideration and ensuring that any additional measures that should be put in place are actioned. Heads of Department should seek advice from their line manager or other senior colleague as appropriate when considering the most appropriate course of action and before reaching a decision.
		7. Requests for Visiting Speakers as part of normal teaching, research or professional activity should be reviewed with the Head of Department to discuss the invitation and consider any risks.
		8. Risks could relate to the subject area (particularly if this is sensitive in the current political climate), the speaker themselves (if they are high profile or hold controversial views) or due to a risk of people being drawn into terrorism.
		9. Where no potential risks are identified in relation to the speaker, this will be recorded by the Department, and no further action is required.
		10. Where the Head of Department, or other senior colleague assesses that there are particular risks with the speaker or the activity in general, or where the academic event is being promoted outside the University or external representatives have been invited to attend, this should be escalated to and discussed with the Dean of Faculty. Where appropriate the Dean of Faculty may refer the activity to the Responsible Officer for a decision as per section 8.3 of this document.
		11. For information about the types of risks that should be considered, see the accompanying Freedom of Speech Meeting or Activity Checklist.

# Application of the Policy to Meetings and Activities

* + 1. The University and EHSU’s commitment to promoting and protecting free speech applies to all meetings and activities including demonstrations and protests.
		2. The procedure set out below must be applied to all meetings and activities involving a visiting speaker, as well as demonstrations, protests and similar events.
		3. For any meeting or activity that falls into the scope of this Policy, an Organiser should be identified. For EHSU student society events the Organiser should hold a key role within the society structure.
		4. If the meeting or activity is organised by an external organisation, there should be an Organiser assigned from within the University or EHSU (i.e. a University or EHSU staff member). This individual is then responsible for liaising with any Visiting Speakers.
		5. Speakers at religious worship events must liaise with the Faith and Community Service and must also adhere to the guidelines outlined in the University’s [Proselytising Policy](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/departments/support/studentservices/faith-and-community/proselytising-policy).
		6. The procedures to be followed by Organisers in the instance where a meeting or activity is planned are outlined below. A flowchart showing the decision procedure is outlined in Appendix A.
		7. Organisers are responsible for compliance with this code and also have a duty to ensure that all laws are upheld in the preparation and operation of the meeting or activity.
		8. The Organiser is responsible for completing the Freedom of Speech Meeting or Activity Checklist at an early stage, prior to invitations being issued or the publication of an event. The Checklist requires the Organiser to identify whether the meeting or activity may contain any controversial issues and to carry out due diligence checks on any external speakers.
		9. Where the Checklist identifies that an application is not required to proceed with the activity, the checklist will be shared with the Principal Organiser and saved locally.
		10. Where the Organiser identifies on the Checklist that there are particular Freedom of Speech risks and that permission is required to proceed, an Enhanced Risk Assessment (which includes full consideration of the risks associated with Freedom of Speech) must be carried out. This should be shared and discussed with the Principal Organiser.
		11. Risks could relate to the subject area (particularly if this is sensitive in the current political climate), the speaker themselves (if they are high profile or hold controversial views) or due to a risk of people being drawn into terrorism. Meetings or Activities organised by a Proscribed Organisation or involving a Visiting Speaker from or on behalf of a Proscribed Organisation will not be permitted on University Premises.
		12. The Principal Organiser will review the Checklist, the external speaker due diligence checks and the Enhanced Risk Assessment and make any necessary additions or amendments. The Principal Organiser will then make an application to the Responsible Officer for permission for the meeting or activity to take place using the online form.
		13. If Organisers are in any doubt as to whether there are particular risks associated with Freedom of Speech, an application must be made to the Responsible Officer for permission for the meeting or activity to take place.
		14. All Applications must be made as early as possible in the planning process to enable appropriate support to be provided. The Application form must be completed at least 20 working days before the intended date of the meeting or activity and before any commitment to a meeting or activity is made.
		15. If the Organiser fails to provide adequate notice, there may be insufficient time to assess the risks and implement necessary mitigations. In such cases, the Responsible Officer may determine that the meeting or activity cannot proceed on the requested date and should be rescheduled to a later date, allowing sufficient time for a full and proper consideration of the risk.
		16. The application must be accompanied by the most up to date version of the Freedom of Speech Checklist including the external speaker due diligence checks plus the Enhanced Risk Assessment, which demonstrates how any risks will be mitigated.
		17. The Responsible Officer will consider the Application, the Checklist and the associated Enhanced Risk Assessment including any proposed mitigating measures.
		18. The Responsible Officer may choose to hold a Panel to review the Application. Membership of the Panel will be based on the specific circumstances of the case. The Panel should usually include the Principal Organiser, a representative for Campus Support and a member of External Relations. Where a student group, or other SU activity, is involved, an SU representative will work in conjunction with the Responsible Officer to determine a suitable Panel.
		19. Acknowledging the University and EHSU’s responsibility to uphold Freedom of Speech, the starting point for the Responsible Officer/Panel will be that any meeting or activity will be allowed to proceed.
		20. The Responsible Officer may also, as part of their due diligence, consult with other University staff, EHSU representatives, and other external agencies including the Police, Local Authority or other third parties or organisations as is appropriate in the circumstances.
		21. The Responsible Officer will need to use their judgement to balance the protection of lawful free speech with other legal duties such as those set out in section 5 above.
		22. The Responsible Officer will provide their decision to the Principal Organiser in writing within 10 working days of the proposed Meeting/Activity.
		23. The Responsible Officer may, at their absolute discretion, make any of the following decisions:
* Allow the Meeting or Activity to take place as per the existing risk assessment with no additional conditions.
* Allow the Meeting or Activity to take place but enhance the risk assessment further and place additional control measures or reasonable conditions on the Meeting or Activity.
* Withold permission for the Meeting or Activity to take place.
	+ 1. The Responsible Officer may place any additional control measures or conditions on the Meeting or Activity that they deem to be reasonable to manage the risks. For examples of the types of additional control measures or conditions that may be required, please see the accompanying guidance notes for completing an Enhanced Risk Assessment.
		2. All organisers who have received written permission for their meeting or activity must adhere to all conditions set by the Responsible Officer and implement all mitigations outlined in the Enhanced Risk Assessment. The Principal Organiser is responsible for ensuring this is actioned.
		3. If the Responsible Officer withholds permission for the meeting or activity to go ahead, they will explain the reasons for their decision in writing to the Principal Organiser.
		4. The University or EHSU will cover reasonable security costs to facilitate the meeting and activity. If costs exceed this amount, external organisations may be required to cover the additional expenses. The Responsible Officer will determine this as part of the application process outlined above, and the organisers will be informed of any associated costs.

# Application of the Policy to the Distribution and Display of Materials

* + 1. The University and EHSU recognise the importance of enabling staff, students, and affiliated groups to display materials that share ideas, promote events, and foster engagement. However, such displays must adhere to the University and EHSU’s commitment to lawful, respectful, and inclusive discourse.
		2. 8.4.2 All materials intended for display must comply with the guidelines set out in the Further Guidance on the Distribution and Display of Materials. This ensures that displays are consistent with free speech principles, do not cause harm or disruption, and respect the rights of all community members. Adherence to these guidelines helps maintain a constructive and respectful environment where ideas can be exchanged freely and responsibly.
		3. 8.4.3 Where there are any signifcant concerns, or where the individual or group wishing to distribute or display materials feels that the decision made under the process described in the guidance document is unreasonable, an application can be made to the Responsible Officer for a decision in line with the procedure detailed above in section 8.3.

# Appeals

* + 1. Appeals against decisions of the Responsible Officer must be made within seven working days of the decision in question, in writing to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and University Secretary or their nominee, whose decision shall be final.
		2. Appeals will typically be reviewed within 21 days of their receipt. However, if the decision involves complex factors, the appeal process may take longer to conclude.

# Advice and Guidance

* 1. Guidance for Organisers of events is available in separate supporting documentation. These documents provide guidance notes on completing the Checklist and the Enhanced Risk Assessment, plus advice for preparing for meetings and events and the delivery and conduct of these activities.
	2. The Guidance documents contain information regarding the key staff members that Organisers can contact to obtain additional advice and guidance.

# Raising Concerns and Making Complaints

* 1. The University is committed to upholding Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. Individuals who believe these principles are not being upheld, or who have concerns about the ineffective operation of the Code of Practice or issues relating to an external speaker, should follow the appropriate procedures outlined below.
	2. Informal Resolution - where possible, concerns should be raised informally in the first instance:
	+ General concerns about the operation of the Policy, Code of Practice, or external speakers should be directed to the relevant Dean, Director, or the CEO of EHSU. If a conflict of interest prevents this, the concern can be escalated to the Responsible Officer.
	+ Students can informally raise issues about Freedom of Speech with their Personal Tutor or Head of Department.
	+ Staff with concerns about Freedom of Speech should raise them with their line manager, the Head of Department, or the appropriate Director.
	+ Academic Freedom concerns should be reported to the Dean of the relevant Faculty. If a conflict of interest makes this inappropriate, individuals may escalate the issue to the HR Advisory Team or the Responsible Officer.
	1. Formal Procedures - if concerns cannot be resolved informally:
	+ Students can follow the University [Student Complaints Procedure](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/complaints-procedure/).
	+ University employees can escalate unresolved complaints through the [Formal Grievance Procedure](https://edgehill.sharepoint.com/sites/HumanResources/SiteAssets/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FHumanResources%2FSiteAssets%2FSitePages%2FForms%2C%2DPolicies%2Dand%2DDocuments%2FGrievance%2DPolicy%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FHumanResources%2FSiteAssets%2FSitePages%2FForms%2C%2DPolicies%2Dand%2DDocuments).
	+ If internal procedures have been exhausted and the complaint remains unresolved, individuals may, in certain circumstances, be able to refer their complaint to an external body or ombudsman.

# Addressing Breaches

* 1. Any breaches of this Policy and Code of Practice may lead to action being taken under the University or EHSU’s procedures or regulations.
	2. This includes but is not limited to breaches such as the failure to uphold the principles of the Policy, failure to follow the requirements within the Code of Practice, failure to implement the control measures of a risk assessment, and failure to implement the conditions or control measures imposed by the Responsible Officer.
	3. Additionally, if any such actions may involve breach of the law, the University will assist the relevant authorities, as appropriate, to implement the processes of the law. Any internal disciplinary proceedings may be deferred or suspended pending the outcome of criminal proceedings.
	4. Action could also be taken under the University or EHSU’s procedures or regulations where a member fails to comply with any reasonable obligation placed on them by the Code of Practice, deliberately disrupts any meeting or other activity in an unreasonable way, or makes vexatious objections to meetings and activities held by particular groups or individuals.
	5. The procedures or regulations that may be used in such circumstances include but are not limited to:
		+ - [Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/download/attachments/35817993/Disciplinary%20Policy%20and%20Procedure.pdf?version=12&modificationDate=1659450411000&api=v2)
			- [Non-academic Misconduct Procedure](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/student-disciplinary-regulations/) (students)
			- EHSU [members code of conduct](https://www.edgehillsu.org.uk/main-menu/union-info/governance) (students)
			- EHSU staff disciplinary policy/procedure (staff and officers)

# Monitoring of Policy and Code of Practice

* 1. To ensure the effective implementation of the Freedom of Speech Policy and Code of Practice, the University will regularly monitor and review its application across campus.
	2. Data will be collected and analysed as follows:
		+ - Applications submitted to the Responsible Officer will be recorded, along with the decisions and outcomes of the process.
			- Freedom of Speech complaints will be documented, with recommendations and actions being tracked. This includes concerns raised regarding the operation of the Code of Practice. Any lessons learned will be communicated to relevant stakeholders.
			- Feedback on the implementation and use of the Policy and Code of Practice will be actively sought from departments and units involved in event planning and delivery.
	3. In line with the Office for Students (OfS) requirements for all established providers subject to Prevent monitoring, the University will submit an annual accountability and data return. This return will cover information on events and external speakers. Given the clear connection to the Prevent monitoring process, the data collected will be reviewed annually and reported to the University Board of Governors in accordance with these requirements.
	4. The outcomes of these monitoring and reporting activities will drive continuous improvements to the policy, ensuring it remains effective and responsive to the needs of the University community.

# Key to Relevant Documents

[Bullying, Harassment and Hate Crime Policy](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/bullying-harassment-and-hate-crime-policy/)

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-edi-strategy/)

[University Student Charter 2023/24](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/student-charter/)

[Student Code of Conduct](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/code-of-conduct/)

[University Staff Code of Practice](https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/humanresources/Forms%2C%2BPolicies%2Band%2BDocuments)

[University Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/display/humanresources/Forms%2C%2BPolicies%2Band%2BDocuments)

[Proselytising Policy](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/departments/support/studentservices/faith-and-community/proselytising-policy/)

[Non-academic misconduct procedure (students)](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/student-disciplinary-regulations/)

# Appendix A: Flowchart showing the procedure to follow for Meetings and Activities



# Endmatter

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Title | Policy and Code of Practice related to Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom |
| Policy Owner | Director of Student Services |
| Policy Manager | Student Services Compliance Officer |
| Approved by | Board of Governors |
| Date of Approval | 17 March 2025 |
| Date for Review  | March 2028 |