



University of Oxford
St Edmund
Hall

Free Speech Statement of St Edmund Hall in the University of Oxford

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.

Inevitably, this will mean that members of St Edmund Hall are confronted with views that some find unsettling, extreme or offensive. The 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. It is this understanding of the central importance and specific roles of free speech in a university that underlies the detailed procedures of St Edmund Hall, as laid out below.

Overarching Principles

1. The College adopts policies that secure and protect free expression and academic freedom and recognises the primacy of these values in institutions of higher education, in accordance with the Free Speech Statement above.
2. The College adopts policies that secure and protect the rights of academics, students and staff to hold, articulate and act upon their political, religious and ideological opinions at all times, within the law, and subject only to their contractual agreements and terms of employment.
3. The College adopts policies that respect the rights of academics, students and staff to confidentiality and privacy at all times, in the absence of a risk of serious crime, subject only to their contractual agreements and terms of employment.

4. The College adopts policies that are not discriminatory, and which secure and protect the rights of all academics, students and staff to equal treatment under the law, regardless of racial or ethnic origin, or religious belief, and which are in the strictest accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
5. The College adopts policies that are proportionate, noting where the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism is judged to be low, and which remain subject to, and do not undermine, existing rights including under the Education (No.2) Act 1986, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and data protection legislation.

The College puts the above principles into practice by means of the Governing Body ensuring that it is understood by all key individuals, and by the College community as a whole, that principles of free expression, academic freedom, autonomy, confidentiality, privacy, and equality of rights, according to law, provide the overarching context within which the PREVENT duty is to be considered; and that the duty must be implemented in a manner that is proportionate and positively secures and protects those rights, in line with the College's harassment and other applicable policies.

6. The College conducts PREVENT training to ensure that practice remains subject to, and does not undermine, the rights of academics, students, staff and visiting speakers under existing law, including the Education (No.2) Act 1986, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and data protection legislation. The College puts policy A6 into practice by means of the Governing Body commissioning PREVENT training from the Dean, as Prevent Lead, in order to ensure that it is understood by all key individuals, and by the College community as a whole, that principles of free expression, academic freedom, autonomy, confidentiality, privacy, and equality of rights, according to law, provide the overarching context within which the PREVENT duty is to be considered; and that the duty must be implemented in a manner that is proportionate and positively secures and protects those rights.

The St Edmund Hall **PREVENT Policy** is available as a separate policy document.

Approval and Review

This Free Speech Statement was prepared by St Edmund Hall.

It will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure continuing appropriateness.

Policy approved by the General Purposes and Bursarial Committee and recommended for approval by Governing Body.

Date: May 2023

Next review date: May 2026

Version Control:

Version	Date Created	Created By	Position	Authorised By
1	20/06/2016	N Davidson	Dean / Prevent Officer	S Costa
2	17/01/2019	S Sweeney	Domestic Bursar	Governing Body
3	17/11/2019	C Sweeney	Domestic Bursar	Governing Body
4	20/01/2020	C Sweeney	Domestic Bursar	Governing Body, 10/02/2021
5	31/05/2023	L Butler	Governance Officer	Governing Body, 14/06/2023