

Wolfson College Code of Practice on Meetings and Events

Preamble

1. Freedom of speech and academic freedom are central tenets of Wolfson College and the University of Oxford and thus underlie this Code of Practice.

2. Wolfson College seeks to protect robustly civic and academic freedoms and to foster an academic culture of openness and inclusivity, in which members of our community engage with each other, and the public, in debate and discussion, and remain open to both intellectual challenge and change.

3. The legal duty of UK universities to protect free speech is enshrined in legislation, including the Education (No 2) Act 1986 and the Human Rights Act 1998; and academic freedom is protected by the Education Reform Act 1988. Section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986 specifically requires universities to:
 - (a) 'take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers';

 - (b) 'ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, that the use of any premises of the establishment is not denied to any individual or body of persons on any ground connected with the beliefs or views of that individual or of any member of that body, or the policy or objectives of that body.'; and

 - (c) issue and keep up to date a code of practice for meetings and events.

4. Notwithstanding (3) above, the right to free speech does not extend to third parties a right to hold a meeting or event on College premises. The College reserves the right to decline to accept a booking by a third party, or to cancel such a booking, particularly (but not exclusively) with reference to para. 11 below.

Scope

5. This Code of Practice must be followed by all members of Wolfson College, Members of Common Room and visiting speakers in respect of:
 - (a) all meetings and other events, to be held outdoors or indoors, on Wolfson College premises, including those organised by third parties;
 - and
 - (b) all meetings and other events, which are funded by, affiliated with or bear the name of Wolfson College, Oxford, regardless of location.

6. It is not anticipated that events and meetings which have been organised as part of the academic curriculum or co-curriculum would cause concern under the provisions of this Code.

Key principles

7. Freedom of speech and academic freedom must be protected.

8. The College believes that a culture of free, open and robust discussion can be achieved only if all concerned engage critically but courteously with each other. The College does not tolerate any form of harassment or victimisation and expects all members of the Wolfson community, its visitors and contractors to treat each other with respect, courtesy and consideration. The College is committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all members of the College community are respected.

9. All activity must be risk assessed and planned in accordance with the College rules on health and safety.

Procedure

10. The President, Vicegerent, Bursar and Senior Tutor/PREVENT lead, on behalf of the President and College Officers, are responsible for assessing whether there are any major risks or issues in the context of this Code, particularly (but not exclusively) with reference to paras 7-8 and 11-12.

11. In particular, they shall scrutinise bookings for events and meetings in College, including bookings made by third parties, in order to satisfy themselves that no booking is for a meeting or event that is likely:

- (a) to give rise to an environment in which people will experience, or could reasonably fear, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or violence, particularly (but not exclusively) on account of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation;
- (b) to pose a risk to the safety of those lawfully on College premises, or to public safety;
- (c) to contravene section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000, in that:
 - (i) the proposed speaker belongs to, or professes to belong to, a proscribed organisation;
 - or
 - (ii) the proposed speaker will use the event to support, or to further the activities of, a proscribed organisation.

12. They shall be mindful of the College's legal responsibilities, including:

- (a) the importance of academic freedom (see para. 3 above);
- (b) the need to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured (see para. 3 above);
- (c) the rights and freedoms enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and incorporated into domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998;
- (d) to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different groups in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- (e) the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 which requires universities and other 'specified authorities' to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' (section 26 (1)) and which also provides that 'when carrying out the duty imposed

by section 26 (1)', universities 'must have particular regard to the duty to ensure freedom of speech; and to the importance of academic freedom'; and

- (f) the PREVENT duty (e.g. as defined by the Guidance for higher education institutions in England and Wales; updated 10 April 2019).

Role of the President and College Officers

13. All bookings for events and meetings in College, including bookings made by third parties, must be made formally through the Events Sales Officer. The Events Sales Officer shall regularly report bookings in writing to the President, Vicegerent, Bursar and Senior Tutor/PREVENT Lead on behalf of the President and College Officers as follows:

- (a) a list of all third party bookings, and all internal bookings which may raise issues related to this Code, including the names of all invited speakers (and any changes to invited speakers) at events, to be held in College or elsewhere (see para. 5 above), that have been made or received during the previous fourteen days
- (b) a list of all events and meetings in College on the Friday of the week preceding that in which they will be held.

14. The President and College Officers shall act in a risk-based and proportionate manner and with the aim, wherever possible, to enable events or meetings to proceed.

Booking a room

15. In order to hold a meeting a booking request must be submitted to the Events Sales Officer at least 7 working days in advance of the meeting or event and ideally several weeks or months before (although the Events Sales Officer may, at their discretion, permit late bookings should circumstances allow).

Decisions

16. The President and College Officers have the power to refuse a booking (see also paras. 4 and 11 above), to postpone or relocate a meeting or event or to impose conditions upon which it may take place. The responsibility for fulfilling any condition imposed rests with the organisers.

17. In the exceptional case that the President and College Officers consider that the risks cannot be mitigated by the imposition of conditions, or that the organisers fail or refuse to comply with conditions imposed, the College has the right to cancel the meeting or event without notice.

18. Any member of College may appeal to the Governing Body through its Secretary if the President and College Officers decide to refuse a booking.