



FREEDOM OF SPEECH

MEETINGS AND EVENTS ON UNIVERSITY PREMISES

Under the Education (No 2) Act 1986, the University has a duty to protect lawful free speech and issues a code of practice under Section 43 of that Act¹

This Code applies to all members, students, and employees of the University and includes premises occupied by Cambridge Student Union and to outdoor and indoor meetings and events. Anyone in doubt about the application of the code must contact the Senior Proctor, who, in consultation with officers in the Registry's Office, will determine whether it applies. Separate but similar arrangements apply to meetings and events held in Colleges.

Permission for meetings and events on University premises

For space assigned to a single Faculty, Department or Institution, permission from that authority is required and otherwise permission from the central authority responsible for the space concerned. If a room is reserved, a booking must be made at least fourteen working days in advance. Further details are available in the Event Booking Guide at:

https://www.em.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/uoc_event_booking_guidance_0.pdf

To fulfil legal duties relating both to Prevent and Freedom of Speech there may be escalation by the authority to a Referral Group (and members of the University may also do this by email to referralconfidential@admin.cam.ac.uk). A decision by the Group that an event cannot take place or is subject to conditions is binding on all concerned, but with a right to appeal to the Vice-Chancellor or their deputy.



Management of meetings and events

Organizers must comply with any conditions set and meet the cost of doing so. All persons covered by the Section 43 Code who are present at or near an event or meeting must comply with instructions given by a Proctor or any other University officer or person authorized to act on behalf of the University in the proper discharge of their duty. Failure to do so is a breach of the Rules of Behaviour for Registered Students, of the General Regulations for Discipline for other members of the University and/or the terms of employment of University employees.

External Speakers and Attendees – Notification to the Senior Proctor

Notice is not required for academic meetings organized by a Faculty or Department or for meetings or classes of meetings approved by the Senior Proctor as being commonly or customarily held on University premises. Otherwise if a meeting or event is to be addressed or attended by persons not resident members of the University, then the organizers are required to give notice to the Senior Proctor (either on the form used to book the premises or to senior.proctor@cam.ac.uk), which should be received at least seven working days in advance (although the Senior Proctor may agree to receive information closer to the meeting or event).

Other Legal Requirements

Attention is drawn to sections 11 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 concerning processions and assemblies and to legislation concerning incitement to violence, breach of the peace or racial hatred or events that cause serious public disorder or breaches of the peace and to the Licensing Acts, which apply to certain University premises, including the University Centre.

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¹ Ordinances, Chapter II, Discipline, Meetings and Public Gatherings on University Premises
<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/>

*The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 places enhanced duties on universities with regard to the matters covered in this Notice and the Code of Practice. The relevant provisions have not yet come into force. The Code of Practice is likely to be revised and reissued during the academic year 2023-24.