

# EDA COLLEGE



## Code of Conduct Freedom of Speech & Academic Freedom

### *Version Control*

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### *External Reference*

<i>Higher Education and Research Act (2017)</i>
<i>Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act 2023</i>
<i>OfS Regulatory Advice 24, January 2025</i>

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## **Policy Purpose and Scope**

1. This Code sets out the EDA College's commitment to uphold **freedom of speech within the law** and **academic freedom** for all members of the College community, in line with applicable UK legal and regulatory frameworks.

## **Scope**

2. The Code of Conduct applies to:
  - Staff and academic personnel
  - Students and student organisations
  - Visiting speakers and external collaborators
  - All campus-based and College-sponsored events and activities
3. This Code should be read alongside the College's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policies, Dignity at Work and Study policies, and relevant safeguarding, security and health & safety procedures.

## **Core Principles**

### **Freedom of Speech Within the Law**

4. The College recognises the fundamental importance of freedom of speech and expression, including unpopular, controversial or challenging ideas, as essential to critical inquiry and academic life.
5. Members have the right to express their views lawfully and respectfully. All speech must comply with UK laws — including those relating to harassment, hate crime, incitement to violence, discrimination, defamation, and terrorism — and College regulations.

### **Academic Freedom**

6. Academic freedom encompasses the right of academic staff to question, and test received wisdom, pursue research and to publish results without fear of sanction or undue risk to appointment, promotion or privileges.
7. Academic freedom also applies to students engaged in research and academic debate.

### **Respectful Engagement**

8. Freedom of speech is exercised responsibly: respect for others, their dignity, and the diverse backgrounds and identities within the College community must be upheld.
9. Debate and dissent are encouraged, provided they do not infringe the lawful rights and safety of others.

## **Duties of the College**

### **Securing Freedom of Speech**

10. The College will take all **reasonably practicable steps** to ensure freedom of speech within the law for its members, students, staff, and visiting speakers on College premises or at College-sponsored events.
11. Such steps include ensuring all lawful speakers can participate in open discourse without discrimination based on viewpoint and without arbitrary cancellation of events.

### **Promoting Freedom of Speech & Academic Freedom**

12. The College will actively promote awareness and understanding of free speech and academic freedom rights, including through induction activities, training and publications.
13. The importance of these freedoms will be reflected in curricula and student engagement programmes where appropriate.

### **Compliance & Reporting**

14. The College will ensure compliance with this Code, relevant laws and OfS regulatory expectations, including transparent processes for addressing concerns over alleged breaches.
15. Mechanisms will be in place to receive, investigate and respond promptly to concerns, with clear routes for escalation.

## **Conduct Expectations**

### **Lawful Expression**

16. Individuals are free to express views and engage in academic debate if their speech remains within the law. Speech that violates legal provisions (e.g. unlawful harassment, hate speech, incitement) is not protected.

### **Organising Events and Speakers**

17. Event organisers must ensure that events and external speakers adhere to legal obligations and this Code.
18. No College group may deny the use of EDA College premises on the grounds of a speaker's lawful viewpoints.
19. Organisers must manage time, place and manner to promote safety and lawful expression, while avoiding unnecessary restrictions on open debate.

### **Disruption and Protest**

20. Peaceful protest is recognised as a form of free expression, but actions that unreasonably disrupt lawful speech or academic activities are not permissible.

21. Protest activity must respect the rights of others and comply with EDA College safety and conduct standards.

#### **Academic Activity**

22. The marking, supervision, research opportunities, funding or academic standing of students and staff must not be influenced by their lawful views and expressions.

23. All research and academic discussion will be evaluated on scholarly merit, not on agreement with prevailing views.

#### **Responsibilities of Individuals**

24. All members of the College community are expected to:

- Uphold and respect the rights to lawful speech and academic freedom of others;
- Engage in debate and discussion in a manner that is civil and constructive;
- Refrain from discriminatory, abusive or threatening conduct that impinges on the lawful rights of others;
- Report concerns or potential breaches of this Code through established College channels.

#### **Procedures for Addressing Breaches**

25. Allegations of breaches of this Code will be investigated in accordance with the College's disciplinary procedures, ensuring fairness, confidentiality and proportionality.

26. Where necessary, sanctions will be applied in line with EDA College policies and relevant legal obligations.

#### **Review and Oversight**

27. The College's Governing Body will review this Code regularly (at least annually) to ensure continuing compliance with UK laws (including the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023) and OfS regulatory expectations.

28. Updates will be communicated widely to the EDA College community.