



# Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

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for meetings and other activities on LAMDA premises  
and LAMDA-branded events

## **Alternative formats:**

Please contact a member of staff in Student Services if you have a disability which makes it difficult to read this document or other information online. We can provide this information in a suitable alternative format.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. LAMDA (the “Academy”) believes in free speech and academic freedom and that these thrive where there is tolerance of a wide range of ideas and opinions which are lawfully expressed. It enables all members of the Academy to feel able to express their ideas and opinions within the law and be encouraged to be active members of our community. In pursuit of excellence, we work with plays and texts that express the widest possible range of views and beliefs. Our students must therefore be willing to work on productions of any of these texts (however controversial they may be), or play any character these texts may contain, including roles of any gender, race, faith, belief, sexual orientation, etc. Acceptance of a place at LAMDA will be deemed to be acceptance of our training requirements.
- 1.2. LAMDA is committed to taking reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law in its training, education and research.
- 1.3. Higher Education (Freedom of Speech ) Act 2023 (‘the Act’) imposes a duty on LAMDA to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for staff and students of LAMDA and for visiting speakers, lecturers and other professionals.
- 1.4. The Act imposes a particular duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the use of LAMDA premises shall not be denied to any individual or body of persons on any ground connected with their beliefs or views or their policies or objectives.
- 1.5. The Act imposes a further duty on the Board of LAMDA to establish, issue and keep up to date a code of practice (‘Code’) setting out:
  - procedures to be followed by members, students and employees of LAMDA with regard to the organisation of meetings held on premises of LAMDA and specified as being within the Code;
  - any other activities which shall take place on premises of LAMDA and specified to be within the Code. The Code shall also specify the conduct required of members, students and employees of LAMDA in connection with any meeting or activity mentioned above.
- 1.6. This Code sets out the rights and obligations inherent in supporting the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law and the procedure to be followed in connection with the organisation of events and meetings which fall under this Code.
- 1.7. The Principal or their nominee will be responsible for this Code and its review and will contribute to LAMDA’s review process.
- 1.8. The Board of LAMDA approved this Code at its meeting in June 2025, having due regard to freedom of speech and academic freedom and factors such as public safety, the safety of staff, students and visitors to LAMDA and the costs and practicalities of providing facilities to ensure their reasonable safety and protection.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1. This Code applies to
  - (a) all LAMDA members, staff and students;
  - (b) the Students’ Union and its clubs and societies; and
  - (c) visiting speakers and all other persons invited or otherwise lawfully on LAMDA premises.

- 2.2. All persons to whom this Code applies are under an obligation to take no action which would hinder freedom of speech or academic freedom within the law, or which would prevent the Academy from discharging its duty to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom.
- 2.3. Staff and students may book accommodation for meetings, classes and events that form an integral part of the Academy's normal artistic, academic and administrative business, subject to availability in accordance with LAMDA's usual procedures.
- 2.4. In the case of meetings or functions that come within the provisions of this Code and are organised by members of staff or students, the names of visiting speakers must be approved by the Academy prior to invitation.
- 2.5. This Code applies to informal or social activities as well as to any more formal meeting or lecture, in person and online. Examples include visiting lecturers invited by academic staff, religious or political representatives speaking on campus, and events such as debates, speeches and conferences taking place using LAMDA facilities that have been organised by staff or students.
- 2.6. References in this Code to "LAMDA premises" means those premises over which LAMDA exercises control (including online or virtual classrooms with communication spaces).
- 2.7. This Code also applies to events hosted by or on behalf of LAMDA on non-LAMDA premises.
- 2.8. For the avoidance of doubt, this Code does not apply to purely commercial meetings or events on LAMDA premises.
- 2.9. This Code will be posted on LAMDA's intranet and website.

### **3. Key Concepts**

- 3.1. Freedom of speech means that everyone has the right to express lawful views and opinions freely, in speech or in writing, without interference.
- 3.2. Freedom of speech within the law is protected. This means that freedom of speech will not be protected if it contravenes some other law, and illegal or unlawful acts will not be tolerated by LAMDA.
- 3.3. LAMDA has a duty to protect its staff and students from unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or threats of violence on the grounds of race, sex, age, religion or philosophical belief, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, or pregnancy or maternity. However, the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 should not be interpreted to undermine freedom of speech and academic freedom. As a result, students' learning experience and the working environment of staff may include exposure to research, course material, discussion or speaker's views that they find offensive, contentious or unacceptable, but are nonetheless within the law, and unlikely to be considered unlawful harassment or discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.4. There are other legislative requirements that may be relevant in particular cases, such as offences under the Terrorism Acts if speech encourages terrorism, or amounts to the incitement of religious or racial hatred or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation under the Public Order Acts, as well as statutory requirements relating to the holding of processions and assemblies. LAMDA is not under any obligation to secure or promote freedom of speech that contravenes any legislative requirements.

- 3.5. Academic freedom means freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without being at risk of being adversely affected. An individual would be deemed to have been adversely affected if they had either lost their job or privileges at LAMDA, or experienced a reduction in the likelihood that they would secure a promotion or different job at LAMDA.
- 3.6. LAMDA is committed to ensuring that academic staff have the freedom to question and test received wisdom and put forward new ideas and opinions without placing them at risk of using their job, privileges or future opportunities. Academic freedom shall extend to all academic staff and to any visiting or guest lecturer invited by LAMDA.

## **4. Values**

- 4.1. LAMDA recognises, supports and promotes freedom of speech and academic freedom, within the law, as a fundamental principle of a democratic society and one that is central to higher education.
- 4.2. The core mission of colleges and universities is the pursuit of knowledge, and the principles of free speech and academic freedom are fundamental to this purpose. Freedom of speech and academic freedom provide an environment to advance new ideas, encourage productive debate and challenge conventional wisdom. These freedoms help to ensure that students develop the skills to question, debate, think critically and develop confidence in forming and discussing their own views and opinions. Freedom of speech and academic freedom therefore receive a very high level of protection.
- 4.3. The starting point is that speech is permitted, unless otherwise restricted by law. LAMDA will ensure the use of LAMDA premises is not denied on grounds connected with the beliefs, views, policies or objectives of an individual or body, as long as such use is at all times within the law. All events taking place on LAMDA premises are private, unless the public is expressly invited to attend.
- 4.4. All LAMDA staff and students are entitled to teach, learn and research in a culture that values vigorous debate, including in relation to difficult, contentious or uncomfortable topics. LAMDA recognises that this may sometimes include speech that is offensive or unpopular but otherwise lawful.
- 4.5. LAMDA's values and behaviours are set out in our Strategic Plan, and repeated in the Student Regulations. LAMDA expects all staff and students to uphold these values and model these behaviours. The ensemble is at the heart of LAMDA's values, and the ensemble is:
- Inclusive
  - Collaborative
  - Compassionate

LAMDA's behaviours are more than what we do, they make us what we are. We are:

- Respectful
- Inspiring
- Innovative
- Supportive
- Inquisitive
- Rigorous

## **5. Steps LAMDA takes to ensure freedom of speech**

- 5.1. LAMDA will ensure that its teaching, curriculum, policies and procedures reflect its duties to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. In particular:
  - (a) its processes for programme development and approval, quality and assurance and academic assessment will respect the rights of freedom of speech and academic freedom;
  - (b) its processes for facilitating research will respect the rights of freedom of speech and academic freedom; and
  - (c) no individual will be subject to disciplinary action or other less favourable treatment by or on behalf of LAMDA because of the lawful exercise of freedom of speech or academic freedom.
- 5.2. LAMDA does not enter into non-disclosure agreements related to complaints about sexual misconduct, bullying or harassment.
- 5.3. LAMDA is aware that the terms of certain overseas funding, including funding from endowments, gifts, donations, research grants and conditions, and educational or commercial partnerships, from any overseas country, may present a risk to freedom of speech and academic freedom. Therefore, LAMDA has processes in place to ensure that risks to freedom of speech or academic freedom are identified and appropriately managed.
- 5.4. LAMDA shall:
  - (a) ensure this Code is brought to the attention of new students at registration and new staff during induction;
  - (b) draw the attention of students to this Code of Practice and the provisions of Part A1 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 annually;
  - (c) ensure that all staff receive training on freedom of speech and academic freedom;
  - (d) periodically survey staff, students and other stakeholders to secure their views on whether freedom of speech and academic freedom at the Academy are being adequately protected, and take the findings into account;
  - (e) ensure that there are adequate measures in place to raise concerns about freedom of speech and academic freedom;
  - (f) ensure that when new policies and procedures are introduced consideration is given to their impact on freedom of speech and academic freedom;
  - (g) monitor any concerns that have been raised about freedom of speech and academic freedom to ensure that they are addressed so far as is reasonably practical and that any lessons learned are incorporated into a review of relevant policies, practices and procedures; and
  - (h) take steps to secure compliance with this Code, including where appropriate proportionate disciplinary action.

## **6. Events and meetings**

- 6.1. Where any individual or body subject to the obligations of this Code wishes to hold an event, meeting or other activity on LAMDA premises for the expression of any views or beliefs held or lawfully expressed, consent shall not be unreasonably refused. Any conditions imposed on the holding of the meeting shall be kept to the minimum necessary in light of any risks identified in holding the meeting.

- 6.2. It shall be reasonable to refuse consent where LAMDA reasonably believes (from the nature of the speaker(s) or from similar activities in the past whether held at LAMDA or otherwise) that:
- (a) the views likely to be expressed by any speaker are contrary to the law;
  - (b) the intention of any speaker is likely to be to incite breaches of the law or to intend breaches of the peace to occur;
  - (c) the meeting will include or is likely to include the denial of the right to hold or to express an opposing opinion;
  - (d) the speaker and/or the organisation they represent advocates or engages in violence or non-violent extremism in the furtherance of their political, religious, philosophical or other beliefs;
  - (e) the views likely to be expressed by any speaker are for the promotion of any illegal organisation or purpose, including organisations listed on the government's list of proscribed terrorist groups or organisations; or
  - (f) it is in the interest of public safety, the prevention of disorder or crime or the protection of those persons lawfully on premises under the control of LAMDA, that the meeting does not take place.
- 6.3. Where LAMDA is reasonably satisfied that the otherwise lawful expression of views at an event or meeting on LAMDA premises is likely to give rise to disorder or threats to the safety of participants or the wider LAMDA community, the Academy shall consider what steps it is necessary to take to ensure the safety of all persons and the security of the LAMDA premises. These may include, but are not limited to: requirements as to the provision of security/stewards, the speaker being part of a panel or ensuring that a member of staff is attendance. LAMDA may impose such conditions and requirements upon the organisers as are reasonably necessary in all the circumstances, ensuring that the conditions and requirements go no further than is necessary to address the risks it has identified. LAMDA shall only pass on the costs of security for using the premises to those arranging the relevant event or meeting in exceptional circumstances.
- 6.4. Where LAMDA concludes that imposing conditions would not be sufficient to prevent serious disorder within LAMDA premises, it may decline to permit the meeting to proceed.
- 6.5. Where any person or body to whom this Code applies is seeking to hold an event or meeting outside of the normal academic curriculum the arrangements and procedures set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of this Code shall be followed.

## **7. Conduct at events**

- 7.1. Everyone has the right to free speech within the law. LAMDA expects students, staff and visitors to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is assured.
- 7.2. LAMDA seeks to expose its staff and students to the widest possible range of ideas and views. All persons to whom this Code applies are required to observe the principle of freedom of speech and expression while on LAMDA premises and shall show tolerance towards the expression of views, opinions and beliefs of others, even though those views, opinions or beliefs may run contrary to their own personal views, opinions or beliefs.
- 7.3. A member of staff or student who organises an event on LAMDA premises shall be responsible for ensuring, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the event is conducted in a manner to promote freedom of speech whilst maintaining good order and academic discipline and does not involve or lead to damage to property or an infringement of the law. Speakers remain responsible for their own compliance with the law.

- 7.4. LAMDA staff and students are required to ensure that they do not wilfully engage in conduct that prevents, obstructs or disrupts the holding or orderly conduct of any meeting or other lawful activity that takes place on LAMDA premises.
- 7.5. Nothing in this Code shall be taken to prohibit the lawful exercise of the right to peacefully protest. Protests against an event must be conducted without infringing the rights of others, including others' rights to freedom of speech. No protest should prevent an event allowed under this Code from going ahead as scheduled.
- 7.6. Nothing in this Code shall prevent a senior officer of the Academy from taking such reasonable and proportionate steps as may be necessary at any time to ensure the safety of members of the Academy or other persons, or to safeguard the premises and property of the Academy.
- 7.7. Infringements of, or departures from, this Code in whatever respect may render those responsible subject to disciplinary proceedings. In addition to disciplinary proceedings, breaches of the law may give rise to prosecution. All students and members of staff are under an obligation to assist with any investigation into any allegation of a breach of this Code.

## **8. Arrangements and procedures**

- 8.1. When a member of staff or a student wishes to hold a meeting or event that is not directly related to the Academy's normal artistic, academic or administrative business on LAMDA premises, or is to be hosted in LAMDA's name off-site, a written request must be made to the relevant senior member of staff, which shall be either the Principal & CEO (for staff requests) or the Vice-Principal Actor Training & Drama School (for student requests) ('Designated Officer'). Requests should be made as far as possible in advance of the projected meeting date, and not less than two weeks in advance. Requests should provide the information outlined in Appendix 1.
- 8.2. A risk assessment of the event should accompany the request, using the guidance in Appendix 2. The risk assessment will be reviewed by the relevant Designated Officer. The staff member or student submitting the request should indicate whether an event is likely to give rise to difficulties in relation to freedom of speech or to the safety of the speaker or others within the audience (as described in paragraph 6.2 above). This will inform any judgment concerning whether permission to host an event is given.
- 8.3. The relevant Designated Officer will review the request and risk assessment and reach a judgment. They may seek further information in relation to the request, including consulting other members of the senior management team. In the light of the risk assessment the Designated Officer may determine to postpone or cancel an external event, or to set any other reasonable conditions (including but not limited to security arrangements necessary, restrictions on external attendance, and the time the event must end) on any event which is permitted to take place.
- 8.4. Prior to receiving approval, events must not be advertised without the express permission, in writing, of the Executive Director or their nominee.
- 8.5. Any decision about whether the event may take place will be communicated to the organiser, usually within a week of receiving the request.

## **9. Appeals against decisions to refuse permission**

- 9.1. If a request to book accommodation or host an event is denied, the requestor has right to appeal against this decision to the Principal. Such an appeal will be considered by the

Principal or their nominee as soon as is reasonably practicable. The Principal's ruling shall be final.

9.2. In considering appeals, the Principal may seek the advice of a Freedom of Speech Panel which will normally comprise:

- another member of the Senior Management Team not involved in the operational assessment of this Code
- two members of teaching staff, normally to be members of Academic Board
- a student member drawn from the HE courses student representatives

and may conduct its business through a face-to-face meeting, a tele-conference, videoconference or by correspondence.

9.3. Members of the Freedom of Speech Panel for each case should not include individuals who have been involved in determining whether or not an event may proceed before it reaches the appeal stage.

## 10. Breaches and complaints

10.1. If an offence is allegedly committed at or in connection with an event or activity to which the provisions of this Code apply, in addition to any internal disciplinary procedures (staff or student) that may be appropriate, the Academy may take steps to assist the police in identifying any persons committing offences.

10.2. Any concerns or complaints regarding this Code or the actions of the Academy in respect of it should be directed to the Head of Student Services & Registrar in the first instance.

10.3. The Office for Students (OfS) operates a free speech complaints scheme. Under that scheme, the OfS can review complaints about free speech from students, staff and (actual or invited) visiting speakers. Information about the complaints that the OfS can review is available on its website <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/freedom-of-speech/>

10.4. Students have the right to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator ("OIA") if they are not satisfied with LAMDA's response to their complaint.

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### Version Control: Document History and Next Review

Academic Board has responsibility for approval of any amendments to this policy and for keeping all such academic policies under regular review.

<b>Version</b>	3
<b>Date policy approved by Academic Board:</b>	June 2025; effective from 1 Aug 2025
<b>Due for next review:</b>	June 2026
<b>Owner</b>	Student Services





## Appendix 1: Visiting Speaker/Event Request Form

Where an external speaker or function outside of the normal artistic, academic and administrative business of the Academy takes place on Academy premises or on external premises in the Academy's name, the information below must be provided **at least two weeks in advance**.

Please do not market or publicise this event until approval has been granted by the Principal and CEO.

The form to be completed is available online, via Canvas.

For ease of reference, the form requests the following Information:

1. Event Name
2. Event Description
3. Date of Proposed Event
4. Location of Proposed Event (LAMDA / external)
5. Details of external venue, where relevant
6. Name of LAMDA student / staff / group organising
7. Names, contact details and brief background of visiting speakers
8. Please supply a copy of any proposed advertising materials promoting the event
9. Event URL
10. Intended audience (eg students / staff / external invited guests / general public)
11. Estimated number of people attending
12. Are any of the speakers / performers or guests likely to attract media attention? (Y / N / DK)
13. Have any of the speakers / performers or guests been refused permission to speak or work at LAMDA in the past (Y / N / DK)
14. Are any of the speakers / performers or guests known to be controversial in relation to reputation or political / social / religious views? (Y / N / DK)
15. Please describe any possible public order risks related to guests arriving or leaving the event.

Also requested is the following information about risk assessments:

- a) Has a risk assessment been undertaken?
- b) If not, please explain why
- c) A member of SMT will help you complete the risk assessment. When it is complete, please send it to the Principal & CEO for approval.

## Appendix 2: Example risk assessment for visiting speakers and events

If a risk assessment is required for the proposed event, you may find this example useful for calculating the overall risk rating.

Category	Rating 1 (low) to 5 (severe)
(a) the views likely to be expressed by any speaker are contrary to the law	
(b) the intention of any speaker is likely to be to incite breaches of the law or to intend breaches of the peace to occur	
(c) the meeting will include or is likely to include the denial of the right to hold or to express an opposing opinion	
(d) the speaker and/or the organisation they represent advocates or engages in violence or non-violent extremism in the furtherance of their political, religious, philosophical or other beliefs	
(e) the views likely to be expressed by any speaker are for the promotion of any illegal organisation or purpose, including organisations listed on the government's list of proscribed terrorist groups or organisations	
(f) it is in the interest of public safety, the prevention of disorder or crime or the protection of those persons lawfully on premises under the control of LAMDA, that the meeting does not take place	

### Overall Risk Calculation

6 to 12	Low
13 to 24	Medium
25 to 30	High