



## Freedom of Speech Code of Practice

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This Code of Practice outlines Goldsmiths' Students' Union's values and procedures in relation to securing freedom of speech within the law for its members, students, employees and visiting speakers, in accordance with the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 and Education Act 1994.

This code of practice acts alongside the Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom policy at Goldsmiths University in light of the Freedom of Speech Higher Education Act 2023 and the OfS conditions of registration.

1.2 This Code of Practice shall be communicated to all students and students' union staff at least once per academic year in addition to being publicly available on the students' union website.

### 2. Values

2.1 Goldsmiths' Students' Union, herein referred to as GSU, will take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students, employees, and visiting speakers.

2.2 The following states the objects of the Union and how GSU will uphold its values in relation to Freedom of Speech when following these objects. According to GSU's Constitution, the objects of the union are the advancement of education of Students at Goldsmiths' College for the public benefit by:

2.2.1 "providing opportunities for the expression of Student opinion and actively representing the interest of Students." In following this object, GSU will support freedom of speech by ensuring that students have platforms and opportunities, including democratic avenues, to voice their opinions, concerns, and ideas. Please refer to [GSU's Motion Submission](#) and [Democratic Meetings](#) for more information on our democratic procedures.

2.2.2 "acting as a channel of communication in dealing with Goldsmiths' College and other external bodies." By effectively communicating student concerns and perspectives to the college administration and external bodies, GSU ensures that



student voices are expressed within the institution and to external bodies, thereby reinforcing their right to free speech.

2.2.3 “promoting the welfare of Students at Goldsmiths’ College.” Student welfare encompasses the protection of student rights, including the right to freedom of speech within the law. By focusing on Student welfare and its legal duty to prevent unlawful speech such as hate speech in accordance with the Public Order Act 1986 and the Equality Act 2010, GSU ensures that students feel safe and supported, which is essential for the free exchange of ideas and opinions. For more information, please refer to our Safe Space Policy[LINK-CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW].

2.2.4 “facilitating the social, recreational, cultural, sporting and educational interests of its Membership, through providing services and support for its Members; and working with other students’ unions and affiliated bodies.” These activities provide alternative forums and contexts in which students can practise their right to free speech. For a more detailed approach see section: 3. Procedures.

### **3. Procedures**

#### **3.1 Meetings on GSU premises**

3.1.1 Meetings include democratic meetings such as AGM, Student Forum and committee meetings, meetings and events organised by Clubs and Societies and other GSU meetings, which can be held both online and in person at designated GSU locations.

3.1.2 The expression of ideas or opinions which are unpopular or controversial do not, if lawful, constitute grounds for the refusal or cancellation of an event or an invited speaker on GSU premises.

3.1.3 As a member-led organisation, GSU gives priority to its members when organising events, including, but not limited to, speaker-led events.

3.1.4 Any Society or individual planning an event on GSU Premises must complete GSU’s Room Booking and Risk Assessment forms. Room bookings with technical requirements or external speakers must be made at least 14 working days in advance; all other bookings must be made at least 10 working days in advance. A working day is from 9am-5pm from Monday to Friday. Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays do not count as working days.



3.1.5 The notice period is to ensure risk assessments are undertaken and moving through necessary processes and all mitigating actions are taken. Once risk assessment and room booking requests have been approved and confirmed via email, the Society or individual planning an event will then be able to formally invite speakers and advertise their event.

3.1.6 Any individual or group organising and attending events through GSU are required to act in accordance with statutory free speech duties.

3.1.7 GSU will consider if the organisation of an event constitutes a criminal offence, a threat to public order, and/or is likely to incite others to commit criminal acts, and will reserve the right to decide if practical considerations may require an event to be modified, curtailed, postponed, or, in exceptional circumstances, cancelled.

3.1.8 [Room Booking requests](#) are reviewed by GSU and Goldsmiths University's Room Bookings team. GSU will not be liable for any decision made by, or lack of response on the part of, Goldsmiths University in regards to a Room booking request or a risk assessment form. Additionally, for events that are held on University premises, the ultimate decision sits with Goldsmiths University and not GSU. This includes events that are advertised by a society's social media account and may/may not involve members of the society, but have been organised through the academic departments of the college.

3.1.9 GSU will consider if an event is likely to infringe on the protections or legal duties codified by legislative, including but not limited to the Equalities Act 2010 and Public Order Act 1986, or regulatory requirements such as GSU's charitable objectives, in line with the Charities Act 2011. Where GSU judges a proposed event may infringe on these rights, it reserves the right to propose alterations to events, including but not limited to, requesting an additional roster of speakers for balance, altering timing or location, and requesting additional security and logistical actions, whilst balancing the ultimate right for the event to proceed in line with Free Speech considerations

## 3.2 Other Activities on GSU premises

3.2.1 GSU offers a broad range of activities and services to its members, and will promote and uphold freedom of speech for its members and staff in all of its activities, including but not limited to the day-to-day running of GSU, welcome fair, advice service, elections, and the CARE project.



3.2.2 GSU will provide training on Freedom of Speech for all relevant staff and full-time officers as part of their induction.

#### **4. Complaints**

4.1 Anyone this code applies to is entitled to make a complaint to GSU if they consider they have personally suffered adverse consequences in relation to their rights to free speech through the GSU [complaints procedures](#).

#### **5. Interaction with other GSU policies and Charity Commission Guidelines**

5.1 This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with other GSU policies, such as the Safe Space Policy[CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW], Social Media Policy, Societies Handbook, and all other relevant policies.

5.2 As a registered charity, GSU should comply with charity law. This includes but is not limited to being financially sustainable, only carrying out activities that further GSU's charitable purposes, and protecting the charity's reputation. GSU will take both Charity Law and Free Speech duties into account while making decisions.

#### **6. Right to amend this Code of Practice**

6.1 GSU reserves the right to amend this Code of Practice. As the landscape of Free Speech changes and new guidelines are published, we value that we as a Union will need to adapt in order to support this and our members. A designated member of staff approved by the Trustee Board will be responsible for reviewing and amending this document.