

Barnet and Southgate College Higher Education Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Statement

Overview of Statement

Barnet and Southgate College is committed to protecting freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. We support the right of students, staff, and visiting speakers to express lawful views and opinions, to challenge ideas through evidence-based discussion and to participate in open and respectful debates as part of a vibrant educational community.

Statement

Barnet and Southgate College is committed to securing and promoting freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law for all students, staff, visiting speakers, and members of the College community engaged in Higher Education provision.

We recognise that freedom of speech is fundamental to learning, teaching, research, intellectual inquiry, and the advancement of knowledge. The College believes that higher education should provide an environment where ideas can be expressed, examined, challenged, and debated openly and respectfully.

The College supports the right of individuals to express lawful opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints, including those that may be controversial, unpopular, or challenging. We acknowledge that freedom of speech includes the expression of views that others may disagree with, find offensive, or find uncomfortable, provided such expression is within the law.

In accordance with our duties as a higher education provider, the College will take reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech within the law and to ensure that individuals are not disadvantaged, denied opportunities, or subjected to adverse treatment because of their lawful views or opinions.

The College is equally committed to protecting academic freedom. Academic staff engaged in higher education teaching, scholarship, research, and knowledge exchange are entitled to question and test received wisdom, develop new ideas, and express academic judgments and professional opinions within the law without fear of institutional censorship or adverse consequences to their employment or professional standing.

The College expects all members of its community to engage in discussion and debate in a manner that is respectful, constructive, and lawful. Freedom of speech does not extend to conduct that is unlawful, including harassment, discrimination, threats, intimidation, incitement to violence, terrorism, or hatred prohibited by law.

In fulfilling its commitment to freedom of speech, the College will:

- Promote a culture of open enquiry, critical thinking, and respectful debate.

- Support the expression of diverse viewpoints within the law.
- Enable lawful meetings, events, lectures, demonstrations, and speaker activities to take place.
- Take decisions regarding speaker events and academic activities in a fair, transparent, and proportionate manner.
- Balance freedom of speech with other legal duties, including those relating to equality, safeguarding, health and safety, and the prevention of unlawful harassment.

The College believes that exposure to a wide range of perspectives is an essential part of higher education and prepares students to participate effectively in a diverse society, workplace, and democratic community. We therefore encourage robust but respectful discussion and recognise that disagreement, challenge, and debate are integral to academic and personal development.