

LASE Standing Panel on Freedom of Speech Terms of Reference

1. Constitution

- 1.1 The Standing Panel on Freedom of Speech is a committee of the Academic Board, operating under delegated authority.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The role of the Standing Panel is to oversee the University Group's codes of practice, policies, guidance and procedures on freedom of speech and academic freedom, ensuring compliance with Office for Students' requirements. The Standing Panel also oversees freedom of speech complaints and appeals.

3. Membership

- 3.1 The membership shall comprise:

Ex officio members

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Chair)
- Group University Secretary
- Group Chief People Officer or nominee
- Representative of the University Group's in-house legal team
- A representative from the University Group's EDI team

Other members

- A Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost nominated by the Vice-Chancellor (to act as Vice-Chair)
- 2 x academic staff members of the Academic Board appointed by the Vice-Chancellor
- An elected student officer nominated by LASE Students' Union

- 3.2 Other members of the Standing Panel shall normally be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor for a term of two years and are eligible for re-appointment. The elected student officer member shall serve a term of one year.

- 3.3 For the Standing Panel on Freedom of Speech, the quorum is one third of the membership.

4. Attendance at meetings

- 4.1 Other staff may be invited to attend for specific items where their attendance can inform and support the Standing Panel.

5. Frequency and format of meetings

- 5.1 The Standing Panel on Freedom of Speech will normally meet twice per academic year. Additional meetings may be called by the chair as necessary.
- 5.2 Meetings will be held either in-person, via electronic means (e.g. online) or via a hybrid format, subject to agreement by the chair. The Standing Panel may also decide matters by email circulation. In between meeting of the Standing Panel, the chair is empowered to decide matters falling within the Committee's remit by chair's action; matters decided by chairs action shall be reported to the next meeting of the Standing Panel.

6. Delegated authority

Under the Academic Board's Delegation Framework, the Standing Panel is authorised by the Academic Board to:

- 6.1 **Freedom of speech complaints:** consider and determine freedom of speech complaints and appeals related to events where consideration by the Standing Panel is required by LASE's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice or any Freedom of Speech Code of Practice operating in LASE's academic divisions;
- 6.2 **Complaint and appeal procedures:** the Standing Panel shall agree procedures for considering and determining freedom of speech complaints and appeals which shall ensure that they are considered fairly and impartially by individuals who are not involved in the matter to which the complaint or appeal relates;
- 6.3 **Guidance and training:** approve advice, guidance and training relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom.

7. Other duties

The other duties of the Standing Panel shall be to:

- 7.1 **Freedom of Speech Code(s) of Practice:** develop a Group Freedom of Speech Code of Practice for LASE for approval by the Academic Board and Board of Governors; keep the Group Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and any Freedom of Speech Codes of Practice operating in LASE's academic divisions under review, recommending any changes to the Academic Board and Board of Governors;
- 7.2 **Integration:** promote the integration and standardisation of Codes of Practice, policies and procedures relating to freedom of speech, academic freedom and approval of events across the University Group;
- 7.3 **Horizon scanning:** keep under review the Office for Students' guidance on freedom of speech and other relevant legal and regulatory requirements and ensure the University's Group's compliance, making recommendations to the Academic Board and the Board of Governors; seek good practice within the sector and make recommendations for changes where appropriate;

- 7.4 **Promotion of academic freedom and freedom of speech:** oversee an annual training and communications plan for staff and students to ensure that freedom of speech and academic freedom requirements are understood and embedded across the University Group;
- 7.5 **Students' Union:** monitor the approval of events and speakers by the LASE Students' Union and the operation of the Students' Union's policies and procedures for event and speaker approval to ensure that they are consistent with the Group Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, with clear escalation pathways to the University Group;
- 7.6 **Monitoring:** monitor the operation and effectiveness of the University Group's Freedom of Speech Code(s) of Practice and procedures for the approval of events/speakers and procedures for handling freedom of speech complaints and appeals, liaising with Student Life Directorate over student complaints. Identify any areas for improvement and make recommendations to the Academic Board and Board of Governors;
- 7.7 **Reporting:** provide an annual report to the Academic Board and Board of Governors covering the operation of Freedom of Speech Code(s) of Practice and procedures, including data on events and speakers, complaints and appeals.

8. Reporting Procedures

- 8.1 The Standing Panel on Freedom of Speech reports to the Academic Board as follows:
- **Frequently:** through summaries of the minutes of each meeting to the next meeting of the Academic Board. Additionally, the Committee Chair delivers an oral report (along with other committee chairs) as an item on the Academic Board meeting agenda.
 - **Annually:** through its Annual Report to the Academic Board and Board of Governors (see 7.7).
 - **Periodically:** via other policies, reports, plans and progress updates which it reviews and/or recommends for Academic Board approval within the business cycle and its terms of reference;
 - **Ad hoc:** where urgent Group-wide matters require direct escalation to the Academic Board for decision or discussion.

9. Secretarial arrangements

- 9.1 This meeting will be clerked by the Group's University Secretary or their nominee.

10. Review

- 10.1 The Standing Panel will review its own effectiveness annually and in greater depth at a minimum of every three years. Reviews may be performed as part of wider governance effectiveness reviews.

- 10.2 These terms of reference will be reviewed annually to ensure their effectiveness and any amendments recommended to the Academic Board for approval.

Approved by Academic Board: 7 October 2026

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