

Cambridge Theological Federation: Statement on Freedom of Speech and Expression

Context

1. The Cambridge Theological Federation is required by law to outline principles for its members in relation to their right to freedom of speech in the context of other legal responsibilities of the Federation. This Statement takes into account the specific legal responsibilities, as set out in Section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986, the Equality Act 2010 and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.
2. This Statement outlines the principles of free speech which apply to all members of the Federation, staff or students connected to the Federation, and visiting speakers (i.e. speakers who are not members of the Federation or one of its constituent University bodies, namely the University of Cambridge, University of Durham, Anglia Ruskin University or any other University through which a member of the Federation is matriculated for their course of study).

Principles

3. The Cambridge Theological Federation is strongly committed to the principle of freedom of speech and expression. It fosters an environment where all of its members can participate fully in the life of the Federation, and where each member feels confident and able to research, question and test received wisdom, and to express new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without fear of isolation, marginalisation or discrimination. Equally, the Federation expects its members to receive and respond to intellectual and ideological challenges in a constructive and peaceable way. The Federation acknowledges its statutory duties in protecting its members and other people from “radicalisation”, in terms of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.
4. The Federation affirms that academic staff have freedom to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their job or privileges they may have.
5. Subject to paragraph 3 above, no premises of the Federation and/or respective Houses will be denied to any member or body of members by reason of the beliefs or views of that individual or of that body or the policy or objectives of that body. Whoever is acting on behalf of the Federation and/or respective Houses will have regard to the mission and ethos of the Federation and/or respective Houses, validating institutions, or national religious bodies.
6. In holding to these key principles, the Federation will take into account its obligations regarding freedom of speech, the management of the health and safety of its members and the general public, the promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination on the grounds of belief, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation or other legally-protected characteristics, and its duties associated with preventing people from being drawn into terrorism or the promotion of terrorist activities.

As an example of this, the Federation reserves the right to refuse access to its premises if it is of the opinion that a visiting speaker or the purpose of a meeting is likely to give rise to the incitement of crime and/or is likely to cause a breach of the peace.

Policies and procedures

7. In determining the likelihood of risk of harm to members of the Federation and/or the general public, or members of the Federation being drawn into terrorism, or otherwise promoting any violent or illegal action, the constituent bodies of the Federation or the Federation as a whole publishes policies and/or procedures to set out and manage:
 - a) the behavioural expectations of students (see respective House policies);
 - b) the management of events within the Federation at which controversial views may be expressed (whether or not they are held within the Federation); and
 - c) the management and conduct of visiting speakers at meetings held within the Federation (see Federation policy).

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