

POLICY/PROCEDURE: STATEMENT ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Approval required by:	Executive	Y	Governing Body	Y
Senior Lead:	Vice Principal Students			
Responsible Manager:	Director of Quality (HE)			
Date approved:	May 2025			
Date to be reviewed:	May 2026			

EQIA required	N
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Significant changes to policy:

This policy has been re-written as an over-arching statement to encompass all activity at Barnsley College across further and higher education.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This statement sets out Barnsley College's commitment to freedom of speech. It applies to all staff, students, ITS and any other stakeholders.

Freedom of speech and academic freedom are fundamental to further and higher education. The core mission of colleges is the pursuit of knowledge, and the principles of free speech and academic freedom are fundamental to this purpose. They provide a necessary context for advancing new ideas, encouraging productive debate and challenging conventional wisdom.

All staff and students are entitled to work and learn in a culture that values vigorous debate, including – or perhaps particularly – in relation to difficult or contentious or discomforting topics. Barnsley College wants every student to have a fulfilling experience of further or higher education that enriches their lives and careers. Students will not have a high-quality education if that education is not grounded in freedom of speech. That includes freedom of speech for themselves, for fellow students, for those who teach or supervise them and for visiting speakers.

Barnsley College stands for the widest possible definition of freedom of speech: anything within the law.

Free 'speech' includes written materials and other forms of expression. It is not limited to the spoken word. Freedom of speech 'within the law' is protected. Unlawful speech is not protected. However, there is no need to point to a specific legal basis for a particular speech. Rather, the starting point is that speech is permitted unless it is restricted by law. Free speech includes lawful speech that may be offensive and hurtful to some. Speech that amounts to unlawful harassment or unlawful discrimination does not constitute free speech within the law and is not protected. Barnsley College will take appropriate action to ensure that freedom of speech and critical thinking are encouraged. Events and literature which contravene free speech laws, for example, by inciting violence, will not be permitted at Barnsley College.

LINKED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Prevent Policy.

- Safeguarding Policy.
- External Speaker Policy

LOCATION AND ACCESS TO THIS POLICY

This policy is available on the college intranet.