

Alumni for FREE SPEECH

Sent as an email.

Dear Professor Cox,

As you know from our letter to you dated 9 November 2022, AFFS exists to assist universities in complying with their existing and future free speech obligations.

We are writing to raise concerns about the contents of what appears to be compulsory training for students and certain staff in relation to contested matters of public controversy and debate. This is referred to on the University's website: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusivity/training>.

Although we do not necessarily believe everything we read in the newspapers, if there is any truth in the article at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/09/27/wearing-second-hand-clothes-example-white-privilege/>, we are concerned that, in common with other HEPIs and under the guise of so-called training, the University is engaging in practices which have troubling implications for freedom of speech at the University. Insofar as such so-called training is compulsory and/or takes no account of religious or philosophical views protected under the **Equality Act 2010**, it may also be unlawful.

We have in mind, for example, the obvious danger of effectively compelling students to hold beliefs and make statements contrary to their own lawful views. The **Human Rights Act 1998** protects the right to hold and manifest a belief by virtue of **Article 9** of the **European Convention on Human Rights**. This includes the right not to be obliged to manifest a belief (See: *Buscarini v Marino*, App no. 24645/94 [1999]). Further, **Article 10** of the ECHR protects the right to freedom of expression, which the UK Supreme Court has ruled includes the right not to express a particular point of view (See: *Lee v Ashers Baking Company* [2018] UKSC 49).

AFFS has a general concern about the free speech implications of so-called EDI training modules apparently now in wide use in our universities. We have already prepared a briefing note on the subject a copy of which is attached.

In light of the above, and before taking any further action, AFFS is anxious to establish the full relevant facts. To that end, it has prepared the attached Freedom of Information Request. We are, of course, copying in the University's Freedom of Information Team.

Yours sincerely,

Alumni for Free Speech