

1. Do you think there is currently a free speech and/ or academic freedom problem at UK universities? Please give reasons for your answer, if you wish.

What we're currently witnessing isn't limited to universities nor the UK, but a global tussle over how we define and defend free speech in the culture wars. In my view, freedom of speech is integral to both a free society and academic inquiry. If we cherish the latter, then it is the responsibility of all of us to defend the former. But in doing so, we must acknowledge not just the right of others' to express their views, but our responsibility as the listener and how we react.

If principles such as diversity and inclusion are important to us, then this means making room at the table for voices we don't agree with. Suppression and segregation only entrench us further, creating an ever-greater divide. It is through engagement, understanding and active debate that we can find common ground, compromise and a way forward.

2. How overriding do you think protections for free speech should be? Where do you think lines between free speech and other concerns and agendas should be drawn?

For me, I have always found the principle of tolerance of everything except intolerance a good guiding principle. If someone's views are inconvenient or unpopular, this does not mean they should face reprimands for speaking their truth. Indeed, this is a core principle of scientific theory as it is from these sources that we find new, more accurate ways of thinking that can overturn centuries old dogma. However, when the words someone speaks are inspired by narratives of hate and demonization of 'the other' with a clear objective to harm, then it is right that those words come with consequences.

Ultimately, an individual can choose whether to extend their hand in friendship or pick up the sword and must live with their decision. The same applies to their mouths.

It could be argued that what we're seeing now is a result of our intolerance to intolerance acting as a pressure cooker for hate. What we must remember is that in the hearts of those who have fallen victim to this epidemic of hate is that at their core is often great pain: socioeconomic neglect, legitimate anger from inequality, a feeling of being left behind in a world that moves ever faster. There are those who have weaponized this pain through powerful narratives to their own causes. If we are to move forward as a society, we must be tolerant even of intolerance, acknowledge this genuine agony felt by many, and work with them to build a new narrative and positive vision for the future together.

3. How do you think Cambridge performs as regards:

- being a place in which controversial and/or unpopular views can be freely aired and discussed?
- promoting the importance of free speech and academic freedom?
- acting to protect free speech and academic freedom?
- enforcing its requirements for protecting free speech and academic freedom, including requirements as regards the behaviour of staff and students?

Where (if anywhere) did you stand as regards the 2023 Helen Joyce affair at Caius College: did you state any view or take any actions?

Cambridge has always been a remarkable space for robust debate evidenced by a breadth of viewpoints, but self-censorship and social-media pressure mean some students and staff may feel they must temper their contributions. It's worth noting that this is not a problem for any single political perspective and can be felt by those across the political spectrum. The University's 2020 statement on freedom of speech was an important reaffirmation, yet it is unclear how well that has been translated into day-to-day practice across colleges and faculties.

With regards to disciplinary processes, it is right to sanction genuine harassment, but we must ensure that this threshold for what is perceived to be "unacceptable" expression is not interpreted too broadly. To be clear, it is my view that an individual should be protected against ad hominem attacks, harassment and other hateful targeted activities. However, it is not the role of the University to protect staff from a disagreement with views that conflict with an individual's own values. It is an individual's responsibility to decide how they will react, not the institution's.

I was not in or around Cambridge during 2023, so I only observed the Helen Joyce affair from afar. Reviewing what was said by multiple sides I would offer that Cambridge should always find a way to enable such events go ahead safely (which this appears to have done), that disruption for others wishing to study caused by such events should be minimized (there was a protest – a bit of banging of drums and chanting, but peaceful), that the event itself should be one of genuine academic enquiry, i.e. all ideas, controversial or not, should be tested by all sides of an argument during the event, not just one (Joyce said it was, I wasn't there, I have no reason to doubt that it wasn't), and that academic freedom means just that, and an academic has the freedom to not engage with an issue as much as engage and they are perfectly with their right to free speech to explain why.

4. HEFSA:

a. If an active politician (e.g. a Member of the House of Lords), did you support or oppose the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (now Act) ("HEFSA") (or significant aspects of it) during its passage through Parliament? Please provide any further information you consider relevant about your stance.

N/A – I was not an active politician at this time.

b. Do you consider that the suspension of the coming into effects of the main provisions of HEFSA pending "review and possible repeal" by the new Labour Government in July 2024 was appropriate? Please give your reasons for your answer, if you wish.

A pause to evaluate implementation detail is sensible; an outright repeal would be premature. The problems the Act addresses are real, but regulation must be proportionate. The review should focus on evidence of impact rather than political signaling.

5. Please give examples of how you have actively supported free speech (including, but not limited to, in the Higher Education sector) and/or academic freedom in your public life.

As someone who works with universities across Europe on making impact from the research that comes from academic freedom, I have supported projects whether I agreed with them, or how they intended to apply their innovation, or not. Has such work required me to take a public position on academic freedom, when publicizing the projects, yes, but most of my work in this sphere has been within the university, managing concerns about university reputation should any of these projects attract controversy. Just as important as allowing free speech, is presenting your views to those who might disagree with them in a way that they will listen. Such research has included the causes and alleviation of poverty, homelessness, the value of immigration, social care work, sustainability, EDI, defence, the list goes on.

If you are an academic or an officer at a university or college:

- Can you evidence your work in support of free speech at your isn?

My LinkedIn profile is probably the best place to find the evidence.

- Have there been any controversies or other matters giving rise to free speech problems within your area of responsibility, or your institution more widely? What steps and public positions did you take in relation to them?

When issues of free speech come up, the most common fundamental issue has been to separate the individual view from the institution, i.e. making clear that academic freedom means just that – and that another academic, even in the same research group, may take a different view on a particular issue. What you cannot have is an academic presenting “the Cambridge view.” Of course, you could have this discourse out in the open, but reaching for the megaphone first is not usually the best way of resolving issues.

6. In your public life, have you done anything which could be construed (or was considered by some to be) actively hostile to free speech and/or academic freedom? For instance, have you ever made severe personal attacks on someone you disagreed with in relation to a matter of lawful public debate, or instigated or joined in an online pile-on against them? If you have, please give details and explain the reasons for your actions.

I often debate ideas I do not agree with robustly, but this debate should always focus on the idea. Therefore, I have not targeted individuals for de-platforming, nor joined pile-ons.

7. If someone is expressing views which are unpopular or offensive to some, but which were not illegal, would you consider they should be free to hold and express them? Please give reasons for your views, including any qualifications, if you wish.

Yes. The test is legality, not popularity. Suppressing lawful speech drives it into echo-chambers, hardening extremes.

Let us use immigration as an example. I happen to agree that immigration is a net benefit to the UK – it enhances our wealth not just economically, but as a society. That said, it is also true that many in the country feel immigration has led to less opportunity for existing UK citizens while failings to invest in infrastructure has led to many concluding that immigration is the cause of barriers to healthcare and other provisions. This point of view could be seen as offensive by others who share my own position, but that does not make it any less legitimate for those who perceive immigration in a negative light.

The appropriate response to immigration concerns should have been counter-argument, evidence and, where necessary, support for those affected. Instead, the suppression of these views inspired Brexit and similar movements more broadly, while also fostering a hardening of these views that expresses itself as hate speech and crimes. Thus, by not engaging because of our collective liberal discomfort, we have instead enabled a much worse outcome.

8. Do you think that institutional neutrality at UK universities is necessary for the protection of free speech and/or academic freedom, including in the review, approval of and/or support for research plans, topics, applications and/or projects and the grant or allocation of research funding?

Institutional neutrality on contested political matters is vital so that scholars feel free to disagree with officialdom. Universities should not endorse partisan positions except on issues directly affecting academic mission (e.g. research funding). Senior officials retain personal speech rights but must signpost when speaking in a personal capacity and ensure administrative coercion is absent.

9. What do you think of the recent fines by the OfS on the University of Sussex?

Were they appropriate? What do you think their implications are for Cambridge?

The fines were a stark signal that procedural shortcomings—however well-intentioned—carry consequences. They highlight the need for clear, timely risk assessments and demonstrable viewpoint neutrality. Cambridge must audit its own processes now, rather than wait for a test case.

10. Do you think that the promotion and enforcement of programmes and policies relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (“EDI”) can give rise to any free speech/academic freedom issues? We would be interested in hearing your views either way.

EDI and free speech are born from the same goal: providing a platform for more voices. The tension arises when EDI – which should be an apolitical objective viewed through the more hard-nosed take that EDI encourages organizational divergent thinking necessary for growth and innovation – is instead politicised. The solution is to frame such initiatives as invitations to

engage and evolve, not creeds to be assented to, and to welcome critical questioning within them.

11. Do you consider that there are any free speech implications in asking for evidence of support for “EDI” or campaigns (such as Stonewall or Athena Swan) in job application and promotion processes, and in the review, approval of and/or support for research plans, topics, applications and/or projects and the grant or allocation of research funding? We would be interested in hearing your views either way.

Yes. Requiring pledges or compelled speech risks ideological filtering. Candidates should be assessed on their ability to contribute to an environment where all can excel, not on affiliation with particular advocacy organisations. A focus on inclusive practice rather than ideological alignment preserves both diversity and freedom.

12. Do you think that it is necessary for a healthy free speech environment that a university should have a senior, experienced, non-conflicted officer responsible for promoting free speech and academic freedom (and developing and enforcing policies and requirements for achieving this? We would be interested in hearing your views either way.

Desirable, provided the role is advisory not censorious. Independence from political, commercial and disciplinary pressures enhances trust. The officer should monitor policy compliance, mediate disputes swiftly and publish an annual report.

13. Do you think it is necessary and/or appropriate to require students and/or staff (whether in the context of matriculation in the case of students, appointment and/or promotion in the case of staff or otherwise) to be required and/or invited to undergo “training” on subjects such as gender ideology and/or aspects of Critical Race Theory? In relation to such “training”:

a. Should the contents of the “training” (including questions asked of participants) be publicly available?

b. Should students and/or staff be:

Training should be available, not compulsory. When offered:

a. Full materials ought to be publicly viewable and open for debate.

b. Participants should not be required to pass belief-based tests.

c. Declining should carry no academic penalty, though basic conduct modules (e.g. harassment law) may be mandatory for legal compliance.

14. Will you actively advocate for and support free speech protection and academic freedom, within the limits of the role of Chancellor of Cambridge University? Will you view such support as a material requirement for the appointment of senior officers to the University? Please give any information that you think is relevant to share.

Absolutely. As Chancellor I would:

- Champion free speech in ceremonial addresses and visitor meetings.
- Ask for demonstrable commitment to academic freedom in all senior-officer appointments.
- Convene an annual Chancellor's Forum on Free Inquiry, bringing students, staff, alumni and external critics together to review progress.

Finally we welcome any other thoughts you may have on free speech at our universities, and at Cambridge in particular. Please do add them below.

Cambridge's motto *Hinc lucem et pocula sacra* reminds us that illumination comes from exposure to many lamps, not one. Our task is to ensure no lamp is needlessly dimmed, and that when sparks fly, they light the way rather than scorch the earth.