Alumni for FREE SPEECH

INSTITUTIONAL NEUTRALITY

Increasing adoption by UK universities

May 2026

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Core points

- Institutional neutrality is the principle that a university or other higher education provider ("**HEP**") itself, when acting or speaking as an institution, does not take sides on the contested moral, social, political and geopolitical matters of the day that do not directly affect its core functions. Its purpose is to create an open and tolerant environment where staff and students may freely express their views and take positions on such matters.
- Maintaining institutional neutrality had been the standard practice of UK HEPs for many years. In recent years, however, HEPs have come under increasing pressure to take positions on moral, social, political, and geopolitical matters.
- Further, while HEPs are not subject to a direct legal or regulatory requirement to maintain institutional neutrality, **there is a strong legal and regulatory compliance need for HEPs to do so.** This is illustrated by recent serious compliance failures which appear to have been caused in part by failures of institutional neutrality.
- Consistent with this, Professor Arif Ahmed, Director of Freedom of Speech at the Office for Students ("**OfS**"), has recently stated that "we think there is a lot of value in universities adopting an approach of institutional neutrality."
- AFFS has conducted research into the adoption of institutional neutrality at UK universities. Our research finds that:
  - Of 175 universities researched, 32 (18.3%) have now adopted a formal, public commitment to institutional neutrality.
  - **The number of universities that have formally adopted institutional neutrality appears to be growing rapidly**. Between January 2024 and January 2026, the number of Russell Group universities with a formal, public commitment to institutional neutrality more than doubled, rising from three (12.5%) to seven (29.2%).
  - A greater proportion of Russell Group universities have adopted institutional neutrality (29.2%) than non-Russell Group universities (16.6%).
- AFFS has analysed and rated those institutional neutrality statements which have been adopted, to assess how effective and comprehensive those statements are. We find that:
  - Of those commitments to institutional neutrality, the vast majority, 27 out of 32 (84.4%), are "good" or "excellent".
  - Only five statements are less than "good". Of these, only two are "seriously flawed".
  - These ratings demonstrate that it is eminently possible for an HEP, when it has decided to adopt institutional neutrality, to make an effective, comprehensive commitment.
- In summary: HEPs need formally to adopt institutional neutrality to reduce their risks of legal and regulatory free speech compliance failures. **If, as our findings suggest, the number of universities which have adopted institutional neutrality is rapidly increasing, then those which fail to adopt it risk appearing as laggards which are not**

serious about free speech protection and, from a governance and risk management perspective, to be willingly failing to take a significant step to reduce their risks of compliance failures.

Introduction

AFFS is a non-partisan organisation which aims to encourage high standards of compliance at universities and other higher education organisations with their obligations to protect freedom of speech.[1]

We recognise that it is not always easy for HEPs to walk what can sometimes seem like a tightrope between competing legal and regulatory requirements, or to secure free speech in the face of criticism from often passionate activists who are neither familiar with those legal and regulatory requirements nor themselves subject to them. However, we also believe that any competing obligations can be correctly identified, and compliance secured, with good legal advice.

Our associated campaign, Best Free Speech Practice ("**BFSP**"), has produced detailed statements about legal and regulatory obligations with respect to free speech. We refer to these statements in this report.[2]

AFFS has recently conducted a survey of which UK HEPs have adopted institutional neutrality. This report sets out what a commitment to institutional neutrality involves, presents the legal and regulatory compliance need for institutional neutrality, gives information on the HEP commitments that we have been able to access and makes comments on their appropriateness.

We hope that HEPs will find this a useful aid to their understanding and to ensuring full free speech legal and regulatory compliance.

Institutional neutrality – why it is important

What is institutional neutrality?

In recent years, HEPs have increasingly taken official, public stances on contentious social and political matters. This trend has contributed to the politicisation of higher education and created an untenable expectation that HEPs must comment about or adopt a position on every major political or social debate. Inevitably, such institutional positions risk establishing an orthodox view on campus, thereby threatening to restrict free speech and academic freedom which are the essence of the pursuit of truth and knowledge—itself the very purpose for which HEPs exist.

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[1] For further information see https://affs.uk.

[2] Available at: https://bfsp.uk/universities-and-free-speech.

Institutional neutrality is the principle that an HEP itself, when acting or speaking as an institution, does not take sides on the contested political and moral matters of the day that do not directly affect its core functions. We discuss below detail as to what this requires, and appropriate exceptions. The principle of institutional neutrality needs to extend to the HEP's component parts, such as separate colleges, and to any person or body authorised to speak on behalf of such bodies as institutions.

For these purposes, the core functions of an HEP comprise education, research, and the pursuit of its charitable objects, as legally defined, often in its Charter.

The purpose of institutional neutrality is to create an open and tolerant environment in which academics and students can freely express and explore ideas and viewpoints on the contested matters of the day. Maintaining institutional neutrality is a highly effective step to foster a culture of tolerance and free enquiry.

Conversely, an absence of institutional neutrality is highly likely to have a chilling effect on those who do not hold the HEP's official view which will, in turn, dramatically increase the chances of the suppression or censorship of dissent or non-assent at the HEP. It is not possible to combine support for individual freedom of expression with the imposition of a collective ideology, and the establishment of an official ideology will always militate towards imposition. Institutional neutrality at HEPs is therefore a cornerstone of academic freedom and freedom of speech.

As the Kalven report from the University of Chicago eloquently states:

> *The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic. It is, to go back once again to the classic phrase, a community of scholars. To perform its mission in the society, a university must sustain an extraordinary environment of freedom of inquiry and maintain an independence from political fashions, passions, and pressures. A university, if it is to be true to its faith in intellectual inquiry, must embrace, be hospitable to, and encourage the widest diversity of views within its own community. It is a community but only for the limited, albeit great, purposes of teaching and research. It is not a club, it is not a trade association, it is not a lobby.*

The same report argues that the neutrality of the university arises neither from a lack of courage nor out of indifference and insensitivity. It arises out of respect for free inquiry and the obligation to cherish a diversity of viewpoints.

In sum: institutional neutrality means that if an HEP is *not required* to adopt a position in order to fulfil its mission of education and research, it is *required not* to adopt a position. However, institutional neutrality **does not:**

- Restrict individual academics, including those in senior positions, from expressing their own views on social and political issues—provided they do not do so on behalf of the institution.
- Mean neutrality about the HEP's fundamental commitment to free inquiry.
- Stop HEPs from stating an officially-sanctioned position on issues directly relevant to institutional operations (including financial decisions).

Institutional neutrality simply ensures that the HEP itself, when acting or speaking as an institution, does not take sides on the contested political and moral issues of the day that do

not directly affect its core functions, precisely in order to make space for scholars and students to express their views on those issues as individuals.

In context – adopting a formal commitment to institutional neutrality

As a pillar of free enquiry and of the HEP as an open, tolerant institution institutional neutrality was the unspoken, effective approach of HEPs for many years and has underpinned their global prominence.

However, in recent years, HEPs have come under increasing pressure, from both ends of the political spectrum, to take positions on the moral, social, political, and geopolitical matters of the day. These pressures have accompanied global and UK declines in academic freedom,[3] and well documented problems for freedom of speech and academic freedom at UK HEPs.[4]

Recently, a number of serious free speech compliance failures have occurred at UK HEPs, arising in part from failures to maintain institutional neutrality. We discuss these in detail below.

For these reasons, and partly at the urging of groups concerned to protect academic freedom and freedom of speech, a growing number of HEPs have in recent years adopted a formal commitment to institutional neutrality. This means that the HEP in question has a stated commitment to maintaining institutional neutrality in its policy documents, governing documents, or other formal documents, such that it is the policy of the HEP to maintain institutional neutrality. We also refer to such a commitment as an HEP's "institutional neutrality policy".

Such a formal commitment will give an HEP's approach to institutional neutrality a robust, defined position within the institution's governance and affirm publicly the HEP's commitment to open debate, intellectual diversity, and the unfettered pursuit of knowledge, at a time when academic freedom and freedom of speech are under threat. HEPs which make a formal commitment to institutional neutrality also protect themselves from accusations of political bias and reduce external pressures to take positions on complex political issues. In the UK, 32 universities, including Queen Mary University of London, Imperial College London, the University of Edinburgh, King's College London, and the University of Bristol have already formally embraced neutrality as a safeguard for academic freedom.

Finally, we note that in the United States, where threats to freedom of speech and academic freedom are generally regarded to be considerably greater than in the UK, over 140 universities have by now formally adopted institutional neutrality, with no doubt more to come.[5] A firm commitment to institutional neutrality can act as a pillar of an HEP's

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[3] V-Dem Institute, *Academic Freedom Index*: https://academic-freedom-index.net/

[4] See, for instance, the Office for Students' latest research, conducted by YouGov: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/icjgzjab/freedom-of-speech-poll-outputs-yougov.pdf

[5] Arnold, Shaw, Tenhundfeld and Barbaro. The Rising Tide of Statement Neutrality in Higher Education: How Universities Are Rethinking Institutional Speech.

independence and autonomy, and a defence against external political pressures, fashions, and activists.

Legal considerations: neutrality is necessary to reduce legal risks

Beyond fostering pluralism and academic freedom, institutional neutrality is one of the most effective ways to limit legal and compliance risks under existing legislation and regulatory requirements protecting freedom of speech and belief, in particular under:

- The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 ("**HERA**"), as amended by the Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act 2023 ("**HEFSA**"), which requires HEPs to take all reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom.
- The Equality Act 2010, which protects against discrimination and harassment based on belief and other protected characteristics.[6]
- The Human Rights Act 1998, which safeguards freedom of expression.
- English HEPs' Conditions of Registration with the OfS, in particular, conditions E1, E2, and E6, which require HEPs to have governing documents which uphold freedom of speech and academic freedom, to have governance and management arrangements adequate to deliver freedom of speech and academic freedom, and, amongst other matters relating to harassment, to have particular regard to, and place significant weight on, the importance of freedom of speech within the law, academic freedom and tolerance for controversial views, when constructing their harassment policies.
- HEPs' charitable purpose of advancing education: charity law defines the purpose of "advancing education" broadly, but an intention to promote or an attempt to inculcate a particular view or political orientation – i.e. "propaganda" – is not educational for the purposes of charity law. These considerations militate strongly towards an HEP adopting a formal position of institutional neutrality. Increasing numbers of HEPs are referencing their obligations as charities when they do so, as can be seen from the Appendix.

If an institution fails to maintain institutional neutrality and, instead, picks a side in an area of passionate and polarised debate on a contested and controversial issue, it necessarily formally sets itself against the other position however many people lawfully take the opposite view. This gives rise to a very obvious risk of suppressing both free speech and academic freedom, either through concrete measures being taken, or through a chilling effect caused by open or implied institutional disapproval. As a result, it also creates severe and obvious risks of disadvantaging (i.e. discriminating against) or creating a hostile environment for (i.e. harassing) people who hold that other viewpoint and thereby creating or tolerating

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[6] Under Section 109 of the Equality Act, an HEP is vicariously liable, as an employer, for any discrimination and harassment committed by its employees in the course of their employment whether it knows of it or not, unless it can show, under Sub-section 109(4) (the "**Section 109(4) Defence**"), that it took all reasonable steps to prevent that discrimination and harassment.

environments in which attacking people for their viewpoints is both acceptable and accepted (including, implicitly, by the HEP itself).

Where an HEP, by failing to maintain institutional neutrality, creates or fails to prevent the development of a hostile environment for holders of protected beliefs, its chances of qualifying for the Section 109(4) Defence, and thus of avoiding liability for discrimination and harassment committed by its employees, are very considerably reduced.

A failure to maintain institutional neutrality at an HEP thus dramatically increases the likelihood that:

- the HEP itself will take action in breach of its legal obligations relating to free speech, such as having policies which unlawfully suppress free speech, for instance by creating a "chilling effect" on the expression of dissenting views;
- employees of the HEP will think that it is acceptable to act against people with dissenting views, leading them to commit discrimination and harassment, for which the HEP will be liable; and
- in extreme cases, the non-neutral position adopted by the HEP may itself constitute discrimination or harassment.

Conversely, adopting and maintaining institutional neutrality will significantly reduce the risk of such compliance failures. Thus, although they are not subject to a direct legal obligation to do so, **there is a strong compliance need for HEPs to maintain institutional neutrality.** The OfS has recognised the importance of institutional neutrality.

Case studies

*The Phoenix case***.** In a lengthy judgment in January 2024,[7] an Employment Tribunal found the Open University liable for various acts of harassment and discrimination against Professor Jo Phoenix for her gender critical beliefs, in what was a financial and reputational catastrophe for it.

The Open University failed to prevent this harassment and discrimination, because it was "fearful of outwardly being seen in any way to support [Professor Phoenix] in case it was seen as support for gender critical beliefs".[8] The Open University was not similarly fearful of being seen to support the contrary views of those who harassed and discriminated against Phoenix. The Open University's fear of treating/failure to treat the dispute relating to Professor Phoenix's beliefs neutrally thus contributed significantly to its legal failures.

Had the Open University maintained institutional neutrality, it is considerably less likely that it would have been found to be liable and suffered the attendant reputational and financial damage.

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[7] https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Joanna-Phoenix-v-The-Open-University-Employment-Tribunal-Reserved-Judgment.pdf

[8] See: Judgment at paragraph 263.

Consistent with this, the subsequent Dandridge Review, commissioned by the Open University in light of the Tribunal's decision, included institutional neutrality in its recommendations.

The Sussex case: Sussex University's catastrophic failures to support Professor Kathleen Stock when under pressure from militant trans-activist students and some of her own colleagues for her gender critical views (which eventually succeeded in driving her out of the University) led to a reputedly hugely expensive settlement of her subsequent legal claim under the Equality Act. Had Sussex been institutionally neutral, the pressure on Professor Stock would have been less and the University would have understood, and perhaps even fulfilled, its legal obligations to her. In addition to the costs of settling Professor Stock's legal claim, the OfS fined Sussex £585,000 for breaches of conditions of registration upholding the public interest governance principles relating to securing freedom of speech and academic freedom[9]. The compliance failures at Sussex were caused by its uncritical adoption of a template provided by an external activist organisation promoting views on the trans debate at odds with those held by Professor Stock. Had Sussex remained neutral on what is a contested subject, it would have been much more likely to have ensured that its policy was compliant with its registration conditions, and it would have avoided this fine and accompanying reputational damage.

The Meade case: In the *Meade* case,[10] in July 2023 an Employment Tribunal held that a regulator wrongly subjected a social worker to fitness to practice proceedings for her gender-critical views, in a way found to be "indicative of a lack of rigour in the investigation, and an apparent willingness to accept a complaint from one side of the gender self-identification/gender critical debate". Although arising in a sector other than Higher Education, the regulator's (and Ms Meade's employer's own) legal liability in this case well illustrates one way in which a lack of institutional neutrality can easily lead to compliance failures.

Bangor University: Bangor University provides a recent example of the value of adopting institutional neutrality. Senior figures within the political party Reform UK accused Bangor of having "banned Reform" and threatened that a Reform UK government would cut all funding to Bangor, after a student society at the HEP condemned the party and announced that, for political reasons, it had declined to host two Reform UK speakers. In response, Bangor stated: "The views expressed by societies are their own and do not reflect University policy. Bangor University remains politically neutral and supports freedom of speech."[11] Adopting an institutionally neutral position appears to have underlain Bangor being in apparent compliance with its freedom of speech obligations, contrary to what has been asserted by

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[9] The fine has recently been overruled on judicial review, for a number of reasons. We anticipate that this will be the subject of an appeal from the OfS

[10] *Meade v Westminster City Council and Social Work England*, Judgment available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64b948692059dc000d5d26e3/R_Meade_v_Westmister_City_Council_and_SW_England.pdf

[11] See: statement made by a Bangor University spokesperson, as reported by ITV news: https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2026-02-10/reform-uk-threatens-to-scrap-30m-of-bangor-university-funding-if-elected

some public figures. We would, though, urge Bangor University to make a public formal commitment to institutional neutrality if it has not already done so. Such a commitment would reduce the University's compliance risks and strengthen its ability to defend itself from accusations of bias.[12]

Regulatory and sector guidance

Professor Arif Ahmed, Director of Freedom of Speech at the OfS, has recently stated that: "we think there is a lot of value in universities adopting an approach of institutional neutrality" because institutional political statements: "may be something that has a chilling effect on academics and students within their institutions, particularly those who are in more vulnerable positions such as academics on short-term contracts".[13]

Professor Ahmed has also stressed that it may be helpful for a university, if it is to be compliant with its obligations, to understand itself to be a "civil association", as distinguished from an "enterprise association" by the political philosopher Michael Oakeshott.[14] This means that the university is not an organisation with its own particular political agenda, views, or objectives. It is rather "an association of scholars". In short, it is an organisation that is (needs to be) institutionally neutral.

In this context, we also refer HEPs to the recent guidance published by Advance HE ("**AHE**"), *Embedding Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* and the comments that AFFS made on the guidance in our document, *AHE guidance on Embedding Freedom of Speech in EDI, Comments from AFFS*. The AHE Guidance recognises the importance of what it refers to as 'institutional impartiality'.[15]

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[12] Because Bangor's *Freedom of Speech: Code of Practice* does not appear to be publicly available, AFFS has been unable to determine whether the university has made a formal commitment to institutional neutrality.

[13] See: Professor Ahmed's March 2026 speech to the Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference: *Next steps for freedom of speech in higher education institutions in England*. In his address, Professor Ahmed also relatedly confirmed the OfS' official guidance that job descriptions should not include requirements that applicants endorse certain beliefs endorsed by universities' EDI departments e.g. "having some kind of ideological test where it says you cannot be, for instance, a lecturer in maths unless you sign up to our equality values, or you cannot be a postdoctoral assistant in biology unless you believe in our sort of values on equality, diversity, and inclusion."

[14] In his keynote speech to the Committee for Academic Freedom's 'Navigating academic freedom: perils and prospects' conference on 15 October 2025.

[15] AHE does not explain why it uses this somewhat opaque form of words rather than the more recognised and widely understood phrase "institutional neutrality". Nonetheless, AFFS acknowledges that its use is a considerable advance on any previous public statement by AHE. If, however, by its use of "impartiality" rather than "neutrality" AHE intends to suggest that, while an HEP need not to join/take sides in public debates on contested issues, it can otherwise still adopt, favour, or enforce certain views, through official statements, policies, practices, or other means, without compromising its support for, and protection of, free speech or increasing its legal and compliance risks, AFFS believes

Adopting positions beyond what is required to secure compliance with positive legal obligations under the Equality Act to avoid discrimination and harassment, for instance, in misplaced purported compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, creates severe compliance risks.

Consistent with this, the guidance published by AHE acknowledges that "HEIs should also be mindful of the chilling effect that strong positions on inclusion may create for staff or students who hold different views".[16]

Our research process

Research process

The dataset for this study was compiled through a structured review of 175 UK universities'[17] publicly available policies. For each university, the university's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and any separate policies relating to freedom of speech were examined in the first instance. Where these documents did not themselves refer to or describe institutional neutrality, the university's other policy and governing documents were examined.

Where institutional neutrality was referenced or described, the relevant statements were recorded. This process identified 32 universities with explicit commitments to institutional neutrality. All documents were accessed via providers' official websites, primarily through policy libraries, governance or compliance sections, and related institutional policy pages. Only material publicly available at the time of review was included.

In this report, AFFS regards a university as having a formal commitment to institutional neutrality if it has a stated commitment to maintaining institutional neutrality in its policy documents, governing documents, or other formal documents, or a commitment to that effect. If so, AFFS has concluded that it is the official policy of the university to maintain institutional neutrality. We refer to such a commitment as a university's "institutional neutrality policy".

In some cases (e.g. Aston University), the university has a policy document devoted solely to institutional neutrality. Generally, however, a university's institutional neutrality policy is

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that this is wrong both in principle and from the point of view of securing legal and regulatory compliance.

[16] See: section 2.2. We would also note, however, that AFFS believes that AHE's statement (at section 2.2) that "strict 'neutrality' is not a statutory or practical requirement" is incorrect. Institutional neutrality is required in order to minimise risks of liability for discrimination against and harassment of people for their views as a result of having taken sides in contested societal debates. Institutional neutrality plays a very important practical role in securing compliance with an HEP's statutory obligations under both the Equality Act and HERA.

[17] Our research extended to all UK bodies with the right to award degrees themselves, excepting a small number of further education colleges. This includes all UK universities, art schools and conservatoires. In this report, for convenience, we refer to all such institutions as universities. We have not yet extended the survey to other UK HEPs.

part of the university's "Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech", or freedom of speech policy (or similar).

We should note that it is possible that we have not been able to find all universities' institutional neutrality policies/statements, as they can be hard for an outsider to find. If any university or other HEP has such a policy/statement, we welcome their making contact so we can update our database for future reference.

The ideal institutional neutrality policy

In our view (as jointly formulated with various free speech campaigns), the ideal policy would be consistent with the following.

"A commitment to institutional neutrality means that universities should formally adopt, in their governing documents or core policies, a statement that they will remain neutral on political, social and moral issues, except where legally required or necessary for their core functions. Pursuant to this, they would, as institutions, refrain from doing the following, and would make this known to their staff and students in their statement of neutrality or in supplemental or implementing policies or other documents.

- *Adopting or enforcing particular political, social, moral or ideological viewpoints or agendas ("**Relevant Agendas**") unless doing so is legally or regulatorily required of them or necessary for the purposes of their core functions.*
- *Issuing statements on political, social, cultural, religious and moral issues that do not directly affect their core functions or institutional operations.*
- *Requiring or pressuring staff or students to promote or support particular Relevant Agendas, unless legally required of them.*
- *Adopting political symbols or flying flags that signal alignment with specific Relevant Agendas or political or social movements.*
- *Endorsing or (to the extent that doing so would be contrary to their institutional neutrality) affiliating with external organisations promoting particular Relevant Agendas, except as legally or regulatorily required of them.*

*For these purposes, the **core functions** of a university comprise education, research, and the pursuit of its charitable objects as defined in its charter. The above principles apply to the university and its component parts and to any person or body authorised or purporting to speak on behalf of the university or any of its component parts.*

*In sum: institutional neutrality means that, if a higher education institution is not required to adopt a position in order to fulfil its mission of education and research, it is required not to adopt a position. However, institutional neutrality **does not:***

- *Restrict individual academics, including those in senior positions, from expressing their own views on social and political issues—provided they do not do so on behalf of the institution.*
- *Mean neutrality on the university's fundamental commitment to free inquiry, which is integral to its core functions.*

- *Stop universities from stating a position on issues directly relevant to institutional operations (including financial decisions).*

It simply ensures that the university itself, as an institution, does not take sides on the contested political and moral issues of the day that do not directly affect its core functions, precisely in order to make space for scholars and students to weigh in on those issues as individuals.

Rating metrics

AFFS believes that adopting institutional neutrality is a crucial step for an HEP to take in order to prevent compliance failures and will significantly increase the likelihood of an HEP complying with its free speech duties. For that reason, we award a rating of 4 to any university which has adopted a clear, explicit statement that the university will not take positions on any matters that do not directly affect its core functions of education, research, and the pursuit of its charitable objectives as defined in its constitutional documents.

Where a university adopts a statement of institutional neutrality that has additional strengths, we have increased its rating to 5. Such additional strengths include having a policy which is especially comprehensive and detailed, and which sets out how the university will maintain institutional neutrality in practice, for example, by not pressuring staff to adhere to particular viewpoints, or not affiliating with organisations where this would require the university to adopt a position on contested matters.

For institutional neutrality statements with material or serious flaws, we award ratings of 3 and 2 respectively. Flaws in institutional neutrality statements include exceptions which allow the university to adopt positions on contested matters outside of the university's core functions.

Where a university has not adopted an institutional neutrality policy, we have awarded a rating of zero. Where universities have not adopted an institutional neutrality policy or statement, but there is some special mitigating reason against awarding such a rating (for instance, that the university's public statements indicate that it maintains institutional neutrality or its policies or documents contain an aspiration to adopt institutional neutrality), we have awarded a rating of 1. Thus, we have awarded Bangor University a rating of 1, for its public statement, as described above, that the University remains politically neutral. If any other HEPs have stated a commitment to, or intend to adopt institutional neutrality, we welcome their making contact so we can appropriately adjust their ranking.

Where a university's institutional neutrality policy contains lesser strengths or has flaws, points were awarded or subtracted so as to reflect these nuances. There are various examples of this discussed below and in the Appendix.

Where a policy contains both strengths and flaws, the overall rating will reflect the balance of these.

The table below summarises the rating metrics:

Rating	Description	Explanation

0	No institutional neutrality statement.	The university has no public, identifiable institutional neutrality statement, either as a standalone policy or within its free speech policy.
1	No institutional neutrality statement, but mitigating factors.	The university has no public, identifiable institutional neutrality statement, but there are mitigating factors, for example that the university's public statements affirm a commitment to institutional neutrality, which justify a rating higher than zero.
2	Seriously flawed institutional neutrality statement.	The university's institutional neutrality statement contains serious flaws, which might, for instance, permit the university to adopt institutional positions on contested matters in a wide range of cases.
3	Materially flawed institutional neutrality statement.	The university's institutional neutrality statement contains material flaws, which might, for instance, permit the university to adopt institutional positions on contested matters in some more limited cases.
4	Good institutional neutrality statement.	The university has adopted a clear and explicit institutional neutrality statement which does not make exceptions which might inappropriately permit the university to adopt an institutional position on matters outside of its core functions, though it may lack detail or robustness in places.
5	Excellent institutional neutrality statement.	The university either: has a strong, clearly articulated and comprehensive institutional neutrality statement; or has a good, clear statement with additional features which merit upward adjustment.

Findings: commentary on various institutional neutrality policies

AFFS reviewed 175 universities and identified **32 (18.3%) that have institutional neutrality policies**; 143 (81.7%) appear not to. Of those that have adopted institutional neutrality, **27 have policies that AFFS would describe as 'good' or 'excellent'**, with a rating of 4 or higher. Only 5 of those universities have ratings lower than 4. These findings demonstrate that it is eminently possible for an HEP, when it has decided to adopt institutional neutrality, to make an effective, comprehensive commitment.

In January 2024, a study of Russell Group universities, conducted by the Committee for Academic Freedom, found that only three – Queen Mary University of London, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the University of Edinburgh – had made a formal commitment to institutional neutrality. Our results show that, **two years later, this number has more than doubled** to seven, an increase from 12.5% to 29.2% of those universities.

Our results also show that a greater proportion of Russell Group universities have adopted institutional neutrality (29.2%) than non-Russell Group universities (16.6%).

Our research did not investigate the reasons for higher levels of commitment at Russell Group universities. However, one possible reason is that Russell Group universities, being generally

larger institutions, with a higher quality research output and greater reputational prominence, are subject to greater critical attention, regulatory exposure and legal and compliance risk and are thus more proactively taking the steps necessary to reduce their risks of non-compliance with free speech-related duties.

Nonetheless, if the Russell Group universities provide even a rough indication of the overall sector trend, **it would appear that the number of universities which have formally adopted institutional neutrality is increasing rapidly**.

Our own research did not focus on the question of when those universities which have adopted institutional neutrality did so. However, we note that the fact that the dates of adoption or review of many of the institutional neutrality policies, or the documents which contain them, are within the last three years, might suggest that the rapid increase in the adoption of institutional neutrality by the Russell Group universities is a more widespread trend.

In April 2025, various free speech campaigns wrote to HEPs explaining the need for institutional neutrality and urging its adoption. Increased adoption rates appear to reflect advocacy for them to do this, improving general understanding of the need to adopt institutional neutrality, along with the changing legal and regulatory environment.

AFFS will be developing free speech protection rankings in the next couple of years. Institutional neutrality will be one of the criteria we use for these rankings. In addition to the sorts of factors described above, early adoption will be taken as evidence of being serious about free speech protection, whereas laggards will be treated as less serious about it.

We also note that, even though there is no requirement on HEPs to adopt any particular wording, most institutional neutrality statements issued by HEPs are very similar to each other.

It is worth making some comments on particular aspects of some of the statements. Many of these give rise to positive or negative rating adjustments.

- A number of universities specified that their neutrality extended to "social" or "cultural", in addition to "political", matters. This is to reflect the fact that "political" is sometimes used with a narrow scope to refer to party political or electoral matters. A specification that institutional neutrality also extends to cultural or social matters is clearer and more robust. Avoiding any uncertainty is important, as subjects on which HEPs have in recent years taken sides and suffered consequent compliance failures and associated loss may (with exceptions such as Israel/Palestine) be categorised by some as "social" rather than "political". This broader wording is thus vital for securing legal and regulatory compliance. These universities attracted an extra half point on their ratings.
- The University of Birmingham states that the University "will not affiliate with organisations that would require the University to commit to a particular perspective on such matters." This is an important and valuable detail for an institutional policy. A similar commitment is made by the University of Bath.
- Some universities state that their policy does not apply in cases affecting the university's charitable purposes, core mission, and essential functions. This is legitimate providing the university does not misapply or overinterpret these concepts.

- The University of Bristol makes a comparatively limited exception, stating that "The University does not take an institutional position on public matters such as political, cultural or religious debates except [...] (iii) if expressly agreed by the Board of Trustees." This qualification permits the University to make exceptions to its institutional neutrality policy, weakening its efficacy. However, the nature of the exception materially limits the risk that this exception creates.
- A few universities, for example York St John University, state that they will not "normally" or "usually" adopt an institutional position. Similarly to the case of the University of Bristol, this permits these universities to make exceptions to their institutional neutrality policies, weakening their efficacy. Unlike the University of Bristol, however, these policies contain no safeguards for, or otherwise detailed specification of, cases in which the universities will not maintain institutional neutrality, ensuring that the universities are at a comparatively greater risk of compliance failures.
- Falmouth University makes an exception to its policy of maintaining institutional neutrality in cases where taking a position is "necessary to advance its mission, vision, and values, and our charitable purposes". As written, the University's "mission, vision, and values" appear to be distinct from its charitable purposes, and unlike its charitable purposes, limitations to the scope of institutional neutrality on the basis of the University's "mission, vision, and values" will significantly increase the University's risks of compliance failure. We note, however, that these risks are somewhat reduced by the statement that where the University takes a position "it will do so in a way that explicitly affirms the right of staff and students to dissent from, debate, or critique that position without institutional penalty or disapproval." Affirming the right of staff and students to dissent may not, however, be sufficient to prevent, or to ensure that the University does not encourage, a hostile atmosphere towards dissenting staff and students. The exception remains a material flaw in Falmouth University's policy and renders it substantially less effective.
- A number of universities stated that they would maintain neutrality with respect to political, cultural, and other "debates" or "disputes" rather than "topics", "issues" or "matters". While this terminology will not generally cause problems for the universities, it is slightly less effective. "Debates" or "disputes" are narrower terms than "topics", "issues" or "matters" and refer to concrete disagreements or sets of disagreements, rather than to a topic itself. There is therefore a risk that a university may find, when some topic becomes contentious, that it has already adopted a position, on the basis that at the time it was not contentious or the subject of "debate", and that it is consequently at risk of breaching its free speech obligations. Similar considerations apply to the statements of the University of Edinburgh, and Canterbury Christ Church University, to the effect that they will maintain neutrality with respect to "topics that are discussed on our campuses" and "our community's... views".
- Harper Adams University has created its institutional neutrality policy by adopting the London University Council for Academic Freedom's *London Principles for Academic Freedom*. Adopting the *London Principles for Academic Freedom* is a valuable step for

universities to take, and will substantially contribute to securing free speech compliance generally. We commend Harper Adams for adopting the principles.

Conclusion

An increasing number of universities are adopting a formal commitment to institutional neutrality, but a majority of universities have not made any such formal commitment and remain at greater risk of free speech compliance failures.

Besides being important in principle and necessary to reduce the risk of compliance failures, institutional neutrality can be crucial to an HEP's reputation. As UK society becomes increasingly polarised, HEPs face the danger of finding themselves as lightning rods for narratives around perceived culpability and institutional partiality which can quickly become a stated fact in the fast-moving media cycle. Adopting institutional neutrality formally allows HEPs to demonstrate and communicate a clear operational compliance posture to push back against any such rush to judgement.

If, as our findings suggest, the number of universities which have adopted institutional neutrality is rapidly increasing, then those which fail to adopt it risk appearing as laggards which are not serious about free speech protection and, from a governance and risk management perspective, to be willingly failing to take a significant step to reduce their risks of compliance failures.

Finally, we suggest that it may be useful for compliance and senior officers at HEPs to ask themselves the following questions:

- Has their HEP made a formal, public commitment to institutional neutrality? If not, why not?
- If their HEP has not made a commitment to institutional neutrality, are the relevant officers and senior leaders aware that their HEP is exposed to significantly greater risks of compliance failure, as in the *Phoenix* and *Meade* cases? How will the HEP mitigate these risks if not through adopting institutional neutrality?
- Is their risk function involved in consideration of risks relating to free speech failures and how to mitigate them? If not, why not?
- If their HEP has not made a commitment to institutional neutrality because it intends not to remain politically neutral, is it aware that this is likely to induce compliance failures, and is contrary to regulatory, sector body, and expert advice?
- Do they want to be seen as laggards in adopting institutional neutrality and thus less serious about protecting free speech than their fellow HEPs?

We are conscious that developments to legislation and the increase in freedom of speech problems have occurred comparatively rapidly within the last decade, and that many institutions are still conducting work to ensure that their policies and governance arrangements in this regard are adequate.

We therefore urge HEPs: now is the time to act and to reduce compliance risks by adopting a formal commitment to institutional neutrality.

We hope that this report will be valuable in helping universities to avoid future freedom of speech compliance failures.

Alumni For Free Speech

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www.affs.uk / info@affs.uk

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Important: This document contains a short summary of complex areas of law and regulation and their implications and does not purport to be complete or definitive. It is not (and may not be relied on as) legal or other advice: HEPs and others should consult their legal and other advisers in respect of all matters relating to free speech in connection with their institution, including those referred to in this document.

Appendix – Survey results

The following table contains information on the institutional neutrality policy, or lack thereof, of those universities surveyed by AFFS.

Name of Institution	Has an institnl n'trality policy?	Policy text	Rating /5	Explanation of rating
Birmingham, University of	Y	"The University will not adopt an official institutional position on sensitive or politically contentious matters, and will not affiliate with organisations that would require the University to commit to a particular perspective on such matters. This does not prevent members of our community from taking stances on such issues: we recognise that staff and students will often have very strong views and are free to express them lawfully."	5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +1 for detail on affiliation with external organisations. "Sensitive and politically contentious" matters is broad and therefore robust, but an explicit reference to "social" or "cultural" matters would further strengthen the policy.
Aston University	Y	"This Institutional Neutrality Policy affirms that, while Aston encourages diverse viewpoints and open debate, the University as a corporate body will remain neutral on matters of political, moral, or social controversy that do not directly relate to its legal obligations, core educational mission, or institutional interests."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters.
Canterbury Christ Church University	Y	"Institutional Neutrality - The University maintains neutrality regarding our community's political, social, and religious views. We uphold our commitment to free speech by ensuring that we hear all viewpoints with respect for the speaker."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "our community's... views" creates some small risk for the University. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
East Anglia, University of	Y	"The University does not take an institutional position on political, cultural and religious debates".	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters.

Essex, University of	Y	"3.3. Except where expressly agreed by the Council in line with advancing the University's charitable objects (as defined in the University Charter), the University does not take an institutional position on political, cultural and religious debates to ensure that individuals are not discouraged from expressing themselves freely within the law. Notwithstanding this the University endeavours to provide a platform to facilitate discourse on contemporary matters by encouraging critical debate, within the law, where the views of all parties are treated with respect."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "debates" creates some small risk for the University. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
Imperial College London	Y	"1.8 Except where expressly agreed by the Council in line with advancing the University's charitable objects (as defined in the University Charter), the University does not take an institutional position on political, cultural and religious debates to ensure that individuals are not discouraged from expressing themselves freely within the law."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "debates" creates some small risk for the University. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
King's College London	Y	"King's has an institutional operating approach of value-based impartiality. The University as a corporate entity does not take institutional positions".	4.5	Base rating of 4 for a strong institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for robustness, specifying that the University will not take positions on any matters. This statement was unusual in format and hard to assess, as we consider that it is a strong statement, but is arguably weakened by not specifying the sorts of areas on which it will not take positions, possibly introducing an element of uncertainty. We note that the statement would be improved by greater detail on what "value-based impartiality" involves.
London Business School	Y	"Like many academic institutions around the world, we do not take an institutional position on social, political or geopolitical issues which are not directly related to our core purpose."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement.

				+0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters.
Loughborough University	Y	Loughborough University has a particularly detailed institutional neutrality policy which distinguishes between a limited number of carefully-circumscribed cases in which the university will take a position, such as those in which it has "clear standing" such as "higher education funding" and other cases, in which the university will either offer "pastoral support" without taking a position, or take no action. The policy can be viewed at: https://www.lboro.ac.uk/governance/policy-on-public-statements/	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for high level of detail, suggesting that the University has carefully considered the policy, and is particularly serious in its commitment to maintaining institutional neutrality.
London Metropolitan University	Y	"Except where expressly agreed by the Council in line with advancing the University's charitable objects (as defined in the University's Articles of Association), the University does not take an institutional position on political, cultural and religious debates to ensure that individuals are not discouraged from expressing themselves freely within the law."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "debates" creates some small risk for the University. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
Queen Mary University of London	Y	"Except where expressly agreed by the Council in line with advancing the University's charitable objects (as defined in the University Charter), the University does not take an institutional position on political, cultural and religious debates to ensure that individuals are not discouraged from expressing themselves freely within the law."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "debates" creates some small risk for the University. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
Reading, University of	Y	"The University does not take an institutional position on political, cultural and religious debates".	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "debates" creates some small risk for the University. We would

				advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
University of the Built Environment	Y	"Unless expressly agreed by the Board of Trustees, in line with the University's charitable purposes (as defined in the Royal Charter) the University does not take an institutional position on political, cultural and religious debates to ensure that individuals are not discouraged from expressing themselves within the law."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "debates" creates some small risk for the university. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
Winchester, University of	Y	"The University will adopt a position of institutional neutrality and will avoid issuing official statements about public matters unless those matters directly affect the institution's core function of teaching, research, and learning."	4.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for robustness, specifying that the University will not take positions on any matters that do not directly affect its core functions. Follows the language of the Office for Students' guidance: *Regulatory Advice 24*.
Arts University Bournemouth	Y	"The University is committed to the creation of an environment which supports and promotes the exercise of freedom of speech. This does not mean that it endorses any of the views which are expressed. In accordance with charity law, the University remains neutral on all political issues except for those which are in direct support of its charitable aims."	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. The policy could be improved, and the University's risks reduced by adding detail stating that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters.
Bath, University of	Y	"The University will not normally adopt an official institutional position on sensitive or politically contentious matters and will not normally affiliate with organisations that would require the University to commit to a particular perspective on such matters. This does not prevent members of our community from taking stances on such issues."	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +1 for detail on affiliation with external organisations and breadth of "sensitive and politically contentious" matters. -1 for limiting of institutional neutrality to not "normally" taking a position.
BIMM University	Y	"BIMM University does not take a formal position on political or international disputes. Instead, it endeavours to provide a platform to facilitate discourse on contemporary issues by encouraging critical debate, where the views of all parties are exchanged and challenged within the law".	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. The policy could be improved, and the university's risks reduced by adding detail stating

				that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "disputes" creates some small risk for the University. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
Bristol, University of	Y	"Institutional Neutrality. The University does not take an institutional position on public matters such as political, cultural or religious debates except where (i) necessary to advance the University's charitable objects (as defined in the University Charter) or (ii) those matters affect the University's essential functions and/or operations or (iii) if expressly agreed by the Board of Trustees. This is to ensure that critical debate is encouraged and individuals are not discouraged from expressing themselves freely within the law."	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. -0.5 for exception (iii): "expressly agreed by the Board of Trustees" gives too much discretion: if it stated that it would only be in exceptional circumstances and "within the University's charitable purpose" or the like, that would be more appropriate.
Brunel University London	Y	"The University, as an institution, does not take a formal position on political or international disputes. Instead, it endeavours to provide a platform to facilitate discourse on contemporary issues by encouraging critical debate, within the law, where the views of all parties are treated with respect."	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. The policy could be improved, and the University's risks reduced, by adding detail stating that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "disputes" creates some small risk for the University. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".
Edinburgh, University of	Y	"The University is required to take a neutral position on the topics that are discussed on our campuses, and we would not seek to influence the course of such debate."	4	Base rating of 4 for a good institutional neutrality statement. "Topics discussed on our campuses" is broad and therefore generally effective. However, it means that the University can have taken a position on matters which at the time appeared not to be contentious (or were judged or asserted not to be being

				discussed) and subsequently come to be at risk of compliance failure when they do become contentious.
Falmouth University	Y	"In order to uphold academic freedom and protect the rights of individuals to express diverse views within the law, the University does not usually adopt institutional positions on contested political, cultural, social, or religious issues. Where the University determines that taking a position is necessary to advance its Mission, Vision and Values, and our charitable purposes, it will do so in a way that explicitly affirms the right of staff and students to dissent from, debate, or critique that position without institutional penalty or disapproval."	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. -1 for limiting of institutional neutrality to not "usually" taking a position. Further, the University's "Mission, Vision, and Values" are distinct from and broader than its charitable purposes. Taking positions on the basis of the University's Mission, Vision, and Values will increase its risk of compliance failures. +0.5 for qualification that where the University takes a position it will affirm the right to dissent.
Goldsmiths, University of London	Y	"It is not the role of the University to take a formal position on political or international issues".	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. The policy could be improved, and the University's risks reduced by adding detail stating that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters.
Harper Adams University	Y	"Institutional Neutrality: Universities should avoid taking substantive positions in political debates to maintain their role as forums for constructive disagreement. Support for individual freedom of conscience should not involve imposing a collective ideology."	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. The policy could be improved, and the University's risks reduced by adding detail stating that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. We note that specifying that neutrality applies to "debates" creates some small risk for the University. We would advise the University instead to refer to "topics" or "matters".

				The detail on not imposing a collective ideology is pithy and effective.
National Film and Television School	Y	"The School will not normally adopt an official institutional position on sensitive or politically contentious matters, and will not normally affiliate with organisations that would require the School to commit to a particular perspective on such matters. This does not prevent members of our community from taking stances on such issues: we recognise that staff and students will often have very strong views and are free to express them lawfully."	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +1 for detail on affiliation with external organisations, and breadth of "sensitive and politically contentious" matters. -1 for limitation of institutional neutrality to not "normally" taking a position.
Surrey, University of	Y	"As an academic institution, we do not take a position on ideas or viewpoints within the law".	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. The statement that the University will not take a position on "ideas or viewpoints within the law" is robust. However, it could be improved by the addition of "values" to "ideas or viewpoints".
The London School of Economics and Political Science	Y	"As an institution, LSE does not take a formal position on political or international issues".	4	Base rating of 4 for clear institutional neutrality statement. The policy could be improved, and the University's risks reduced, by adding detail stating that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters.
Wolverhampton, University of	Y	"The concept of institutional neutrality, for the University of Wolverhampton means that the university refrains from taking official positions on political or moral issues that are not directly related to its core functions or its compliance with the law."	4	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. The policy could be improved, and the University's risks reduced, by adding detail stating that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters.
Roehampton University	Y	"The University would not usually adopt an institutional view on sensitive or politically contentious views, including those relating to cultural, religious or political debates."	3.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. -1 for limiting of institutional neutrality to not "usually" taking a position.

York St John University	Y	"i. The University strives to cultivate an environment where discourse occurs within legal boundaries, promoting inclusivity and respecting diverse viewpoints with tolerance. Whilst the University may make statements that recognise the impact of situations on members of the University community, it will normally refrain from adopting an institutional position on political, cultural, and religious debates."	3.5	Base rating of 4 for good, clear institutional neutrality statement. +0.5 for detail specifying that neutrality extends to social and cultural matters. -1 for limiting of institutional neutrality to not "normally" taking a position.
Sheffield Hallam University	Y	"The University remains neutral, creating an environment that will encourage a range of lawful views to be explored and considered."	3	The statement states a commitment to institutional neutrality, but lacks detail about what the University remaining neutral involves.
De Montfort University	Y	"Institutional independence/political neutrality 5.5.1 As an organisation with charitable status, DMU is required by law to be politically neutral and independent and will not show bias in favour of or against any political party. Therefore, DMU's resources (e.g. staffing resources, facilities, financial resources etc.) should not be used in direct pursuit of any party political activity although such resources may legitimately be used to support students' participation in these activities in line with our educational purpose and objectives, or to support staff and students as appropriate in response to government policy or legislative changes. The use of resources in support of these objectives should be deployed in a politically neutral manner. 5.5.2 You are required to carry out your work in a politically neutral manner and not engage in party political activity during work time or using DMU's resources."	2	The statement addresses institutional political neutrality. However: The statement focuses only on campaigning or political activity, with no focus on the University not taking positions more generally. The statement appears to have a limited understanding of "political" extending to "party political" only. The policy could be improved, and the University's risks reduced by making clear that "political" has a wider sense than merely "party political", and by adding detail stating that neutrality also extends to social and cultural matters.
Derby, University of	Y	"Institutional independence/political neutrality 4.13.1 As a charity, we are required by law to be politically neutral and independent. Therefore, any political campaigning, or political activity undertaken by the institution or by staff in their professional capacity, must be undertaken only in the context of supporting the delivery of our charitable purposes and/or educational objectives. For example, the university might campaign or lobby the government for a change in the law, policy, or decisions (or to ensure existing laws are observed), where this is in support of our charitable purpose."	2	The statement addresses institutional political neutrality. However: The statement focuses only on campaigning or political activity, with no focus on the University not taking positions. The statement appears to have a limited understanding of "political" extending to "party political" only. The policy could be improved, and the

				University's risks reduced, by making clear that "political" has a wider sense than merely "party political", and by adding detail stating that neutrality also extends to social and cultural matters.
Bangor University	N		1	No institutional neutrality policy, but a stated commitment to institutional neutrality, as described above.
Abertay University	N		0	
Aberystwyth University	N		0	
Anglia Ruskin University	N		0	
Architectural Association School of Architecture	N		0	
Arts University Plymouth	N		0	
ASU London Centre for Advanced Learning	N		0	
Bath Spa University	N		0	
Bedfordshire, University of	N		0	
Birkbeck, University of London	N		0	
Birmingham City University	N		0	
Birmingham Newman University	N		0	
Lincoln Bishop University	N		0	
Bolton, University of	N		0	
Bournemouth University	N		0	

BPP University	N		0	
Bradford, University of	N		0	
Brighton, University of	N		0	
Buckingham, The University of	N		0	
Buckingham shire New University	N		0	
Cambridge, University of	N		0	
Cardiff Metropolitan University	N		0	
Cardiff University	N		0	
Central Lancashire, University of	N		0	
Chester, University of	N		0	
Chichester, University of	N		0	
City St George's, University of London	N		0	
Coventry University	N		0	
Cranfield University	N		0	
Cumbria, University of	N		0	
Durham University	N		0	
East London, University of	N		0	
Edge Hill University	N		0	
Edinburgh Napier University	N		0	
Engineering College of Technology Limited	N		0	

Exeter, University of	N		0	
Glasgow Caledonian University	N		0	
Gloucestershire, University of	N		0	
Greenwich, University of	N		0	
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	N		0	
Hartpury University and Hartpury College	N		0	
Health Sciences University	N		0	
Heriot-Watt University	N		0	
Hertfordshire, University of	N		0	
Huddersfield, University of	N		0	
Hull, University of	N		0	
ICMP Music Schools	N		0	
Keele University	N		0	
Kent, University of	N		0	
Kingston University	N		0	
London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art	N		0	
Lancaster University	N		0	
Leeds Arts University	N		0	

Leeds Beckett University	N		0	
Leeds Conservatoire	N		0	
Leeds Trinity University	N		0	
Leeds, University of	N		0	
Leicester, University of	N		0	
Lincoln, University of	N		0	
Liverpool Hope University	N		0	
Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	N		0	
Liverpool John Moores University	N		0	
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	N		0	
Liverpool, University of	N		0	
London Interdisciplinary School	N		0	
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University of London	N		0	
London South Bank University	N		0	
London, University of	N		0	
Manchester Metropolitan University	N		0	

Manchester, University of	N		0	
Middlesex University	N		0	
Newcastle University	N		0	
Northern School of Contemporary Dance	N		0	
Northumbria University	N		0	
Norwich University of the Arts	N		0	
Nottingham Trent University	N		0	
Nottingham, University of	N		0	
Open University	N		0	
Oxford Brookes University	N		0	
Oxford, University of	N		0	
Plymouth Marjon University	N		0	
Plymouth, University of	N		0	
Point Blank Music School	N		0	
Portsmouth, University of	N		0	
Queen Margaret University	N		0	
Queen's University Belfast	N		0	
Ravensbourne University London	N		0	
Regent's University London	N		0	

Richmond, The American International University in London	N		0	
Robert Gordon University	N		0	
Rose Bruford College	N		0	
Royal College of Art	N		0	
Royal College of Music	N		0	
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	N		0	
Royal Holloway, University of London	N		0	
Royal Northern College of Music	N		0	
Salford, University of	N		0	
School of Advanced Study, University of London	N		0	
Scotland's Rural College	N		0	
Sheffield, University of	N		0	
SOAS, University of London	N		0	
Solent University	N		0	
Southampton, University of	N		0	

St Mary's University, Twickenham	N		0	
S P Jain London School of Management	N		0	
Staffordshire University	N		0	
Suffolk, University of	N		0	
Sunderland, University of	N		0	
Sussex, University of	N		0	
Swansea University	N		0	
Teesside University	N		0	
The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London	N		0	
The Northern School of Art	N		0	
The Royal Agricultural University	N		0	
The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	N		0	
The Royal Veterinary College University of London	N		0	
The University of Law	N		0	
The University of Northampto n	N		0	
Trinity Laban	N		0	

Conservatoire of Music and Dance				
Ulster University	N		0	
Union Theological College	N		0	
University College Birmingham	N		0	
University College London	N		0	
University for the Creative Arts	N		0	
University of Aberdeen	N		0	
University of Dundee	N		0	
University of Glasgow	N		0	
University of South Wales	N		0	
University of St Andrews	N		0	
University of Stirling	N		0	
University of Strathclyde	N		0	
University of the Arts London	N		0	
University of the Highlands and Islands	N		0	
University of the West of Scotland	N		0	
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	N		0	
Walbrook Institute London	N		0	
Warwick, University of	N		0	

West London, University of	N		0	
West of England, University of the	N		0	
Westminster, University of	N		0	
Worcester, University of	N		0	
Wrexham University	N		0	
York, University of	N		0	