

Central Film School

2025-26

Central Film School

Freedom of Speech Policy

1. Fundamental Principles

- 1.1. Higher Education Institutions have an important role to play as places of debate and discussion where ideas can be tested without fear of control, where students learn to challenge ideas and think for themselves, and where the pursuit of knowledge is underpinned by rationality.
- 1.2. The role of Higher Education Institutions in ensuring free speech is reinforced in two pieces of legislation:
- 1.3. The 1986 Education Act states that: 'persons concerned in the government of any establishment...shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers.'
- 1.4. Central Film School will not, therefore, as far as is reasonably practicable, deny access to its premises to individuals or bodies on the basis of their beliefs, views or policies.
- 1.5. The Equality Act 2010 covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

- 1.6. The associated public sector equality duty requires High Education Institutions, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

2. Code of Practice

- 2.1. This Code of Practice applies to all staff, students, Board of Director members, student representatives and visiting speakers and all Central Film School premises.
- 2.2. The School expects students, staff, Directors, student representatives and visitors to ensure freedom of speech within the law is assured. Whilst there is no legal prohibition on offending others, the School nevertheless believes that discussion that is open and honest can take place only if offensive or provocative action and language is avoided. Students, staff, Directors, student representatives and visiting speakers are therefore required to demonstrate sensitivity to the diversity of the School community and to show others respect.
- 2.3. An event which creates an environment of fear, harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or violence, particularly as a result of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation is likely to be unlawful.
- 2.4. If students, staff, Directors or the student representatives believe that an event they are organising poses a risk under this Code, they are required to refer the matter in the first instance to the Senior Operations Manager. No advertising of the event is permitted until a decision is reached on its compliance with the Code of Practice.
- 2.5. The Senior Operations Manager may meet with another member of the Senior Management Team to reach a decision or they may refer the matter to the CEO who will make an initial assessment. If they decide the event complies with the School's Code of Practice, it can go ahead. They may, however, require the organisers to put in place safeguards, such as extra security or a strong and well-informed chair with the power to intervene or close the event down if there is a breach of the Code. They will also require the organisers to record the event, so there

is no dispute afterwards about what is said by whom.

- 2.6. A named Organiser should be identified for each event who is responsible for the booking and control arrangements and conduct of the events including stewarding and moderating, chairing, monitoring and entry.
- 2.7. The organisers of the event will be responsible for any extra expense incurred.
- 2.8. If the CEO decides the event poses too great a risk under the Code they will make a recommendation to deny access to School premises.
- 2.9. The CEO may decide to consult with students, staff or other groups before coming to a decision, or take legal advice. The CEO's decision will be final and will not be subject to appeal.
- 2.10. The expression of views that may be controversial, but do not breach the law, will not constitute reasonable grounds for refusal. Reasonable grounds for refusal would include: incitement to commit a criminal act; unlawful expression of views; support for an organisation whose aims are illegal; the creation of an environment likely to give rise to a breach of the peace.
- 2.11. If an event has been advertised, students and staff may still make representations to the CEO if they feel it breaches the School Code of Practice. If the event is allowed to take place, they will be allowed the right to peaceful protest for one hour prior to the event taking place. They will not be permitted to interfere with the running of the event.
- 2.12. Wilful breach of this Code will be dealt with under the School's disciplinary procedures and, if necessary, by recourse to law.
- 2.13. The School will withhold the right to use School premises if it fears there is a likelihood of this Code being breached.
- 2.14. Student representatives actively encourage debate and political activity. As a representative body for all students at the School, we do have an equal opportunities policy to ensure that student-led events are conducted in a safe space for attendees, free from discriminatory activity. All student groups looking to hold an event with external speakers should contact the Registry department for assistance with the event and to ensure all logistical considerations have been factored in. All external speakers must fill in the external speaker form and be signed off from the Prevent lead prior to the event. Ultimately it is the School's decision whether to allow an event to take place on its

premises.

- 2.15. If you are proposing to run an event and are concerned that it may constitute a breach of the Code of Practice, please contact in the first instance the Senior Operations Manager.

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