

## Introduction

Free speech is fundamental to our society. It is the lifeblood of democracy and the cornerstone of a free and liberal society. Throughout history, free speech has been a constant sword against tyranny, injustice and oppression. Within our society's broader recognition of free speech, academic freedom has rightly enjoyed a special status, with additional protections recognised both in culture and in law. BCC believes that Universities and colleges in UK has a special place that has historically held as centres of enquiry and intellectual debate, defenders of free thought from which new ideas can emerge to challenge society's welcoming consensus.

BCC stands unequivocally on the side of free speech and academic freedom, on the side of liberty, and of the values of the Enlightenment.

## Therefore, our services are based on these key principles:

- a) that BCC students with a diverse range of views feel comfortable, and are actively encouraged, to express, debate and expand their views on campus and online, within the law;
- b) that BCC students are not disadvantaged (or reasonably feel that they might be) if they choose not to align with a certain viewpoint;
- c) that academics within BCC are able to exercise academic freedom without fear of detrimental treatment in terms of recruitment and promotion, in addition to dismissal or other benefits.
- d) that those who feel their speech has been unlawfully restricted in the context of higher education have clearer routes to make complaints and have access to redress.

## Procedure to follow if the above has not been complied with:

1. Staff and students must report any threat of academic freedom to the Academic Dean.
2. The Academic Dean must follow up with investigation and report the outcome to the Snr Management Team.
3. Disciplinary action must follow in consultation with the Board of Trustees where the issue is serious and a breach of the HE free speech and academic freedom is seen to have taken place.

The legal duties on BCC in relation to freedom of speech and academic freedom do not cover unlawful speech. There are a range of circumstances in which speech may be in breach of criminal law, including:

- a) speech causing fear or provocation of violence
- b) acts intended or likely to stir up hatred on grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation
- c) speech amounting to a terrorism related offence and causing a person harassment, alarm, or distress , where this would constitute an offence under the Public Order Act 19869.

There are also circumstances in which speech may be found to be unlawful in respect of civil law, including defamatory speech. This can include defamatory material on social media.