

## Engaging in Political Activity

**Date approved by College Council:** 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**College Committee:** n/a

**Policy owner:** Senior Bursar

**Last reviewed:** First implementation

**Next review date:** Easter term 2026

### Background and definitions

The Charity Commission requires all charities to have a policy on campaigns and political activity. The Commission uses the term ‘political activity’ to describe activities or campaigning to change or influence policies or decisions taken by:

- national, devolved, local or overseas government
- public bodies including international organisations such as the UN and World Bank, and national or local organisations such as regulators or NHS Trusts.

Charities can take part in political activity that supports their purpose and is in their best interests.

Political activity, however, must not become the reason for the charity’s existence. Charities must remain independent and must not give their support to a political party. Charities can support a policy that is supported by a political party or candidate and can work with political parties or candidates to influence their decisions, provided this supports the charity’s purpose and the charity remains independent.

### Scope

This policy covers all activities relating to the College undertaken by Fellows, staff and students. It does not cover activities relating to personal beliefs outside roles undertaken for the College.

### Policy on how the College manages its political independence

The College will operate in line with its Statement of Freedom of Speech and will not prevent access to any democratic process. Where appropriate, and within the College’s charitable purposes, the College may choose to engage in political dialogue. It will not endorse or renounce political parties and will not align itself (or otherwise) with the opinions held by visiting speakers. It will not promote a particular candidate or political party, and it will not provide money or other

resources to anyone who is standing as a candidate in their capacity as candidate or to any College or University society that is affiliated with a political party.

### **Campaigning activities on the College site**

The College is a place of learning, education, religion and research and students should not be harried by political campaigning. The following must be observed on the College's premises:

- The distribution of leaflets by political parties will be permitted in the Porters' Lodge, under the Porters' supervision. Leaflets will not be delivered to pigeonholes.
- People are not permitted to come onto College's premises to campaign or to canvass.
- Normal rules apply in the Student Regulations in relation to exhibiting posters in windows.

### **Freedom of speech**

Nothing in this policy is intended to limit or conflict the College's statement on freedom of speech. Additionally the College supports the following University guidance as it applies in the College context:

- Any fellow, student, other member or employee of the College engaged in campaigning for a registered political party or any other body may, as an expression of lawful free speech, distribute leaflets and campaign on College premises (sites or buildings) to which they have normal and legitimate access. They should make clear that they are acting in a private capacity and not on behalf of the College.
- They may not fly-post and, in distributing leaflets and otherwise campaigning, they should behave reasonably and must not break any criminal or civil laws or infringe any disciplinary regulation applicable to them. In particular, they should not harass, threaten or intimidate others, disrupt College business or damage College property.

### **Further guidance**

Charity Commission information and guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-andpolitical-activity-by-charities-cc9>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-andpolitical-activity-by-charities-cc9/charities-elections-and-referendums>