

Freedom of Speech Policy

As stated in paragraph 17 of the Royal Academy of Music's Code of Practice for its Student Union, the Academy recognises its responsibility to provide safeguards to ensure freedom of speech within the law.

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'. The Academy 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.

The Academy expects students, staff and visiting speakers to ensure freedom of speech within the law is assured whilst on Academy premises. Whilst there is no legal prohibition on offending others, the Academy nevertheless believes that discussion that is open and honest can take place only if offensive or provocative action and language is avoided. Therefore, students, staff, governors and visiting speakers are required to demonstrate sensitivity to the diversity of the Academy's community and to show others respect.

If students, staff or governors believe that an event being organised poses a risk under this Code, they are required to refer the matter to the Deputy Principal and Dean. No advertising of the event is permitted until a decision is reached on its compliance with the Code of Practice. The Deputy Principal and Dean will make an initial assessment. If they decide the event complies with the Academy's Code of Practice it can go ahead. The Deputy Principal and Dean 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. The organisers of the event will be responsible for any extra expense incurred.

If the Deputy Principal and Dean decides the event poses too great a risk under the Code, they will consult with the Principal, and may consult other individuals/groups, as appropriate, and/or take legal advice. The decision will be final and will not be subject to appeal.

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 will 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.

If an event has been advertised, students and staff may still make representations to the Deputy Principal and Dean if they feel it breaches this Code. 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.

Wilful breach of this Code will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedures and, if necessary, by recourse to law. The Academy will withhold the right to use its premises if it fears there is a likelihood of the Code being breached.

If you are proposing to run an event and are concerned that it may constitute a breach of the Code of Practice, please contact Mark Racz, the Deputy Principal and Dean, in the first instance.

Approved by the Governing Body 10 June 2013