



Code of Practice – Freedom of Speech

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Moorlands College recognises that freedom of speech and expression within the law has fundamental importance within the Higher Education sector. We recognise the need to ensure that academic staff members have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial and unpopular opinions without placing themselves at risk of losing their jobs or any associated privileges they may have at the College.
- 1.2** This Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech sets out the rights and obligations inherent within the principles of freedom of speech and expression and academic freedom. The Code shall be construed and applied in the spirit of upholding those principles wherever reasonably practicable within the law. The Code is directly connected with Moorlands College Ethical Foundation, Ethos and Values as set out in our Strategic Plan Document (2018-2024).
- 1.3** The Code's rights and obligations shall apply to:
- Moorlands College as an institution, including members of the Board of Trustees;
 - All members of Moorlands staff and those working on behalf of the College in all our centres;
 - All duly enrolled students of the College (whether full or part time);
 - The student associations and associated groups which normally meet on Moorlands premises; and,
 - All persons invited to speak, perform or otherwise take part in events to be held on Moorlands premises in accordance with the provisions of this Code.
- 1.4** References in the Code to "Moorlands premises" include premises which are owned and/or controlled by the College, and any premises occupied or used by the College whether or not Moorlands owns or has control of such premises (e.g. premises hired for the operation of centres). In addition, this Code extends to institution branded events taking place off campus.

2. Freedom of Speech and Expression

- 2.1** Moorlands College shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech and expression within the law is secured for every person to whom this Code's rights and obligations apply.
- 2.2** Every person to whom this Code's rights and obligations apply shall assist Moorlands College in upholding this Code of Practice.

- 2.3** Moorlands College will not suppress freedom of thought and expression. However, the College has a duty to ensure, wherever practical, that such thoughts and expressions do not constitute incitement to riot, insurrection, racial hatred, religious hatred, sexual harassment or other activities (beyond the right of peaceful protest) which are likely to cause a breach of the peace or public disorder or otherwise be unlawful. Equally, the Code expects religion or belief to be upheld as a protected characteristic as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.4** The College, as a Registered Charity with religious objectives, maintains the right to adhere to its published Statement of Faith, which Trustees and teaching staff annually commit themselves to uphold. The College also maintains the right to teach and express the Christian faith within the biblical, historic tradition as expressed in the Nicene and Apostles' creeds.
- 2.5** Moorlands College shall ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, that the use of College premises is consistent with our charitable objectives, ethos and values.¹
- 2.6** Every person to whom this Code's rights and obligations apply shall refrain from organising or engaging in or otherwise being associated with any conduct (other than by lawful, reasonable and peaceful persuasion) intended to prevent enjoyment of rights under this Code.
- 2.7** Moorlands College shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable (including, where appropriate and following proper investigation, invoking disciplinary measures) to secure that the obligations under this Code are complied with.

3. Events and Teaching

- 3.1** Moorlands College has the responsibility to maintain good order on its premises. It has the right and the power to regulate and, if necessary, to impose conditions or restrictions upon activities such as teaching, performances, meetings and demonstrations held or proposed to be held on its premises. Any such events must comply with this Code.
- 3.2 Visiting Lecturers and External Speakers:** Moorlands College has a number of visiting lecturers giving one-off classes as well as visiting speakers for Chapel services and related activities. It is assumed these visits will be directly connected with teaching on topics relevant to the main activities of the College. If there is any doubt as to the proposed content of any talk or lecture, the host should discuss the proposed visit with the designated Prevent Lead on behalf of the Executive Leadership Team. The Prevent Lead will review the proposed activity, highlight any issues which have the potential to incur risks requiring due diligence, and decide whether the risks are acceptable or can be mitigated or whether the proposed activity cannot go ahead. Where permission is not granted, the rationale for the decision will be noted and reported to the Executive Leadership Team and included for future reference in the minutes of the relevant meeting. Where a discussion is required concerning the teaching content of a proposed event, no advertising should be issued until permission for the event has been granted.

¹ Our Core Values are set out on the College website; <https://www.moorlands.ac.uk/about/our-background/our-core-values/>

- 3.3 External Speakers arranged by Student Associations:** Moorlands students may organise events that involve outside speakers. It is assumed these activities will be consistent with the values of the College and relevant to the purpose of the College as a theological training institution. The organising body should discuss the proposed activity with the designated Prevent Lead on behalf of the Executive Leadership Team. The Prevent Lead will review the proposed activity, highlight any issues which have the potential to incur risks requiring due diligence and decide whether such risks are acceptable or can be mitigated or whether the event cannot go ahead. Where permission is not granted, the rationale for the decision will be noted and reported to the Executive Leadership Team and included for future reference in the minutes of the relevant meeting. Where a discussion is required concerning the teaching content of a proposed event, no advertising should be issued until permission for the event has been granted.
- 3.4** Moorlands College will allow their Christchurch campus to be used by churches and outside groups who are willing to adhere to our Lettings Policy. The College reserves the right to refuse a letting that would contravene our charitable objectives as a Christian training institution. Reasonable grounds for refusal would include, but are not limited to, the likelihood of an event to;
- Be inconsistent with the evangelical² Christian tradition upheld by the College, as affirmed in our Statement of Faith and founding documents;
 - Be inconsistent with our ethical foundation, ethos and values;
 - Incite those attending to commit a criminal act;
 - Lead to the unlawful expression of views;
 - Be in direct support of an organisation whose aims and objectives are illegal;
 - Give rise to a breach of the peace.
- 3.5** In determining whether the holding of an event on College premises might reasonably be refused, appropriate consideration should be given to;
- The safety of persons attending the event and people on Moorlands premises that might foreseeably be put at risk;
 - The security of College premises; and,
 - The good name and reputation of Moorlands College as an evangelical Christian training institution.
- 3.6** The Equality and Human Rights Commission sought, in 2014, to provide greater clarity about the circumstances in which segregation according to gender is prohibited under equality and human rights law at events which take place at or under the auspices of Universities and Students' Unions, including those organised by Moorlands College. The guidance notes that segregation is clearly not permitted under equality law in Universities' normal academic, teaching and research activities, and therefore is not permissible for most events covered by this Code of Practice. Gender segregation is, however, permissible during collective religious worship because it is not subject to equality law. The College reserves the right to occasionally hold separate gathering for male and female where matters of student welfare are discussed.

² Moorlands College is a longstanding member of the Evangelical Alliance of the United Kingdom. Founded in 1846, it represents thousands of churches, tens of thousands of individual members and hundreds of organisations. <https://www.eauk.org/about-us>

4. Research

- 4.1** The College recognises the value of appropriate research on or relating to extremism or related sensitive topics and/or which might lead the researcher to access sources (e.g., books, websites) that promote radical causes (in this section, referred to as “sensitive research”)³.
- 4.2** Where sensitive research involves fieldwork, the College’s Research Ethics Policy ensures that necessary matters are appropriately considered before fieldwork is conducted with the involvement of the Prevent Lead.
- 4.3** If an assessment task is specified so that it is likely to lead students to undertake sensitive research, this is discussed at the Assessment Scrutiny Panel and the input of the Prevent Lead is sought.
- 4.4** If an assessment task is specified in such a way that a student may choose to pursue a range of research topics, and a student wishes to undertake sensitive research, the module tutor is required to approve the specific research topic and is required to follow the guidance of the Prevent Lead.
- 4.5** If a member of staff wishes to conduct sensitive research, they are required to seek the approval of the Prevent Lead.
- 4.6** If, after due consideration, a proposal for research is rejected, the rationale for the decision will be noted, reported to the Executive Leadership Team and included for future reference in the minutes of the relevant meeting.

5. Practical Measures

- 5.1** Moorlands College should permit only by organisers of events, whether internal or external, who undertake to comply with all lawful instructions issued by the College in relation to the location, arrangements and conduct of such events, including health and safety requirements, adequate stewarding and moderating, chairing, monitoring , and the provision of adequate control over entry.
- 5.2** In cases where it is reasonable to assume there is the possibility of disruption at an event, Moorlands College may consult with external agencies regarding the security arrangements required.
- 5.3** In all circumstances, a named Main Organiser should be identified who is responsible for the booking and control arrangements for the event, and who will be held responsible for maintaining public order and, as far as possible, securing compliance with this Code.
- 5.4** Organisers of an event held on Moorlands premises shall be responsible for any costs involved in organising and holding such events and for insuring, as far as possible, that nothing in the holding of the event infringes the law or College regulations in any way.

6. Sanctions and Penalties

- 6.1** A student or staff member in breach of this Code may be subject to action being taken against them under the relevant Moorlands College conduct/disciplinary procedures.

³ In the context of this document, “*sensitive research*” refers to any topic that might promote radical extremism in the areas of religious or political beliefs. The College has a robust Research Ethics Policy that covers other areas of study that might be described as sensitive.

6.2 Where those responsible for the breach are students or staff of a partner organisation of the College, the Principal (or their nominee) shall inform the partner organisation with a view to them taking action under its conduct/disciplinary or other relevant procedures.

6.3 Where a breach of this Code takes place at an event on College premises, Moorlands College reserves the right to assist the police in identifying any persons committing offences, with a view to appropriate action being taken against them.

7. Review and Amendment of the Code

7.1 Moorlands College will normally review this Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech every five years, or sooner if legislation dictates.

8. Document History

Approved by Academic Board	13 May 2016
Approved by Board of Trustees	16 May 2016
Revised and Approved by Board of Trustees 16 March 2022.	Various minor changes reflecting developments at College; major revision of section 6 covering procedures for approval of all forms of research; inclusion of Nicene and Apostles' creeds; correction of Basis of Faith to Statement of Faith