

Freedom of Speech & External Engagement Policy

INFORMATION

Title	Freedom of Speech and External Engagement Policy
Document number	2023/PO-025
Purpose	The purpose of Freedom of Speech policy is to safeguard individuals' rights to express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions within a common framework that protects the rights and entitlements of other members of the community and in alignment with the national and organisational values and principles.
Audience	Staff; Students; Public
Category	Operations
Subcategory	- Facilities Management
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Oryx Universal College (OUC) in Qatar upholds freedom of speech and expression within legal bounds, valuing independent thought, questioning norms, and championing leadership over conformity.
- 1.2. The Freedom of Speech - External Engagement Policy is designed to uphold the fundamental right of individuals to express their thoughts and ideas openly, while also outlining guidelines for engaging with external entities in compliance to the laws, regulations, and cultural values of the State of Qatar.

2.0 Aims and objectives

- 2.1. To foster an environment where diverse perspectives can be shared and debated openly with mutual respect to differences of opinions, perspectives, and cultural values.
- 2.2. To ensure individuals' rights to express opinions, ideas, and criticisms freely, within legal boundaries.
- 2.3. To establish guidelines to prevent hate speech, discriminatory behaviour, propagation of extremism that's harmful to the community while upholding free expression.
- 2.4. To facilitate meaningful interactions with external parties, fostering constructive collaborations and partnerships.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1. This Policy on Freedom of Speech sets out the rights and obligations inherent within the principles of freedom of speech and expression and academic freedom.
- 3.2. The Policy's scope encompasses:
 - OUC, including its members of the Board of Trustees and shareholders.
 - All OUC staff members and those officially representing OUC.
 - Duly enrolled full or part-time OUC students.
 - Students studying at OUC under agreements with partner organizations (e.g., schools, colleges, employers) regardless of OUC enrolment status.
 - Approved student bodies, associated buildings, including societies, clubs, & associations on OUC premises.
 - Invited individuals as Speakers or participating in events on OUC premises in alignment with this Policy's provisions.
 - Individuals renting space within the OUC campus.

4.0 Policy statement

4.1. Freedom of Speech within the Law

- OUC holds the duty to uphold order within its premises, encompassing the authority to regulate and potentially impose terms, conditions, or limitations on activities like meetings, gatherings and events conducted or planned to use OUC's identity or reflecting its administration. All activities that are conducted under the name or patronage of OUC must conform to this Policy.
- In determining whether the holding of an event on OUC premises might reasonably be refused, consideration should be given to:
 - the safety of persons attending the event and persons on OUC premises who might foreseeably be put at risk;
 - the security of OUC premises; and
 - the good name and reputation of OUC.

The Head of Academic Registry will have final decision-making authority to ensure compliance following consultation with other senior staff as appropriate.

4.2. Procedures

4.2.1. At the earliest possible stage, the organisers of any activity which may reasonably be regarded as falling within the terms of this Policy shall appoint a Principal Organiser.

In accordance with this policy, an application is mandatory in all circumstances. In the case of Schools and Faculties, the Faculty / School Head will oversee a list that needs to be submitted to the Office of the Head of Academic Registry, or an assigned representative, on a monthly schedule. For student bodies or societies, an application is necessary for events featuring external speakers (refer to the provided Application Process).

4.2.2. The Principal Organiser shall make the application in writing to the Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, The application should be submitted to the Head of Academic Registry not less than 7 calendar days before the proposed date of the event and contain the following information:

- i). the nature of the activity
- ii). the names of any visiting speakers and the organisations which they represent
- iii). the proposed venue for the activity

- iv). the date of the proposed event
- v). the estimated times of arrival and departure of any visiting speakers
- vi). the proposed means of access to and egress from the venue for any visiting speakers
- vii). any other relevant information

No such activity shall be advertised inside or outside OUC without the prior written approval of the Head of Academic Registry, or nominee.

4.2.3. The Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, shall, as soon as practicable and, if necessary, following further consultation with the Principal Organiser and any other interested parties, proceed as follows:

- i) notify the Principal Organiser in writing that permission for the event to be held on OUC premises or to use OUC identity or to represent OUC, is granted and that it either will or will not be regarded as a designated activity, *or*
- ii) notify the Principal Organiser in writing giving reasons for his/her decision that permission for the event to be held on OUC premises or to use OUC identity or to represent OUC is withheld on the grounds that reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech with due commitments to shared rights and shared obligations within the law of the State of Qatar cannot be implemented owing to the particular circumstances pertaining to that activity, *or*
- iii) take such other course of action as may seem to him/her to be appropriate having regard to all the circumstances. Academic Registry may take up to 3 working days to process an application.

4.2.4. The Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, shall have authority to withdraw permission for the holding of a designated activity if in his/her opinion such changes in circumstances have occurred since the original granting of permission as to make it likely that good order cannot be maintained. Such action shall only be taken in exceptional circumstances and wherever possible after consultation with the Principal Organiser.

4.2.5. The Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, shall also have authority to take action as described in 4.2.4. above in relation to any activity that is brought to his/her attention other than through the procedures described in 4.2.3. above. The organisers of such an activity shall be regarded as being in breach of this Code and liable for possible disciplinary action.

4.2.6. Where an activity is designated, the Principal Organiser shall consider what measures, if any, might need to be taken in order to safeguard freedom of speech and advise the Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, as appropriate.

4.2.7. The Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, may, at his/her sole discretion, vary the measures proposed by the Principal Organiser or require additional measures to be taken. Such measures may include the following:

- i). the determination of the date, time, approximate length, and venue of the activity.
- ii). the determination of the method of access and egress of participants and any visiting speakers.
- iii). any stewarding arrangements that may be necessary.
- iv). In consultation with relevant staff agree the attendance as necessary of support & security staff.
- v). eligibility for admission to the activity.
- vi). arrangements for admission by ticket only.
- vii). the admission of representatives of the press, radio, and television.
- viii). the completion of any necessary forms and the prompt provision of information as required.
- ix). any other conditions which appear to the Head of Academic Registry to be reasonable in the circumstances.

4.2.8. The Principal Organiser shall ensure strict observance of OUC's Fire, Health and Safety and any other relevant rules and regulations in relation to the organisation and conduct of the activity.

4.2.9. The Principal Organiser shall ensure that all external speakers have agreed to abide by OUC's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion statement. A signed copy of the statement will be stored by the Principal Organiser and produced as required by the Head of Academic Registry, or nominee. Appendix 4 contains the relevant statement.

4.2.10. The Principal Organiser shall supply the Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, with a list of the names of all stewards engaged for a designated activity. Where a proposed steward is not a member of staff or student of OUC his/her address and occupation shall also be supplied. The Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, may require the suggested number of stewards to be varied and may require any he/she considers unsuitable to be replaced. All stewards will be briefed by OUC Security Service or his/her nominee before the activity takes place.

4.2.11. OUC will normally supply and manage relaying the speeches to an additional hall for remote audience via an appropriate digital system if the Head of Academic Registry deems this to be necessary in relation to a designated activity.

4.2.12. The Principal Organiser and the other organisers have a duty to ensure that nothing in the preparations or conduct of a meeting or other activity, whether designated or otherwise, infringes the law, for example, by conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace or incitement to illegal acts.

4.2.13. The organisation of meetings, activities and events which are not designated will not be allowed and the organisers of such unauthorized meetings, events or activities shall be formally legally held responsible for breach of this policy and misconduct.

4.2.14. The existence of this Code of Practice shall be brought to the attention of hirers of OUC premises, any party who may have the intention to use OUC's identity; who shall, where appropriate, consult with the Responsible Officer regarding its implementation.

4.2.15. Designated and other activities taking place in licensed OUC premises shall pay due regard to the legal obligations of the licensee.

4.3. Conduct of Designated Activities

- 4.3.1. Where a designated activity takes the form of a meeting, debate, lecture, or similar event the Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, may require a Chair to be appointed, in consultation with him/her, in advance of the activity.
- 4.3.2. The Chair shall be under a duty as far as possible to secure that both the audience and the speakers act in accordance with the law during the meeting and shall be required to consult as necessary with the Head of Academic Registry or his/her nominee and to familiarise himself/herself with this Code of Practice before the meeting takes place. The audience and the speakers shall be under a duty to comply with the Chair's rulings relating to the conduct of the meeting subject to his/her complying with any Standing Orders that might otherwise govern it.
- 4.3.3. Immediately before the commencement of the activity the Head of Academic Registry or his/her nominee shall inform those present that the meeting is a designated activity within the meaning of this Policy and that reasonable steps will be taken to ensure a fair hearing for the speaker. While sporadic interruptions and heckling might align with the meeting's tone, continuous disruptions, or organized efforts to silence the speaker will, as determined by the Chair, result in the potential removal of those responsible from the meeting if they disregard the Chair's directives to cease.
- 4.3.4. The Chair may suspend or close the meeting if in his/her opinion it can no longer be conducted in an orderly manner or if behaviour is so disruptive that the safety of those present is in jeopardy. Before suspending or closing the meeting the Chair shall take advice from the Head of Academic Registry or his/her nominee unless the situation is so serious that an immediate decision must be made in which case the responsibility shall lie with the Chair or, should he/she fail to act, with the Head of Academic Registry or his/her nominee.

4.3.5. Security staff shall be instructed to use the minimum force necessary when escorting people from the meeting and to ensure that they are not re-admitted under any circumstances. Such removal shall take place only as a last resort and on the specific instructions of the Chair or the Head of Academic Registry. In the event of severe or sustained disruption the Head of Academic Registry or his/her nominee is authorised to request police assistance.

4.4. Sanctions and Penalties

4.4.1. Conduct in breach of any of the provisions of this Policy will render those responsible liable to disciplinary proceedings as laid down by OUC authorities without prejudice to any action that may be taken in the Courts.

4.4.2. Where a breach of this Code takes place at an event, the OUC may take steps to assist the police in identifying any persons committing offences with a view to appropriate action being taken against them.

4.5. Advice and Information

4.5.1. The OUC Academic Registry Staff are available to advise students on matters such as concerns about usage of such products, harmful effects, etc. Employees should contact People and Culture with their concerns.

4.5.2. Information on this Policy and Procedures is available on the College website at <https://www.oryx.edu.qa/policies/> or by contacting the Academic Registry via telephone numbers +974 4021 0000 or via email at registry@oryx.edu.qa.

4.5.3. Further information and contact details are available on the College website at <https://www.oryx.edu.qa/>

5.0 Roles and responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
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Principal Organiser	<p>The Principal Organiser is defined as the person nominated, by the organisers of any activity and approved by OUC, which in their view might reasonably be expected to be designated, to be responsible for informing the Responsible Officer of the existence of such an activity and for liaising with the Responsible Officer thereafter.</p> <p>In relation to activities organised within OUC premises by the student bodies by <i>bona fide</i> student societies, the President or the leader or the responsible staff member of the Students body shall be deemed to be the Principal Organiser.</p>
Head of Academic Registry	Responsible for authorising, approving, and ensuring compliance with requirements of the university guidelines and providing adequate support in all the events at College's premises.
Responsible Officer	The Responsible Officer is the Head of Academic Registry, or nominee, who is responsible for ensuring compliance, as far as reasonably practicable, with this Policy by all students and employees of OUC, visiting speakers, those hiring University premises and organisers of meetings held on OUC premises.
Associate Dean of Student Wellbeing and Success	Responsible for providing adequate support and guidance to students reported of violating this policy.
All Staff	Responsible for raising awareness and reporting any violations of this policy.

6.0 Definitions

In the context of this policy the college uses the following definitions:

- **OUC premises:** References in the Policy to “OUC premises” include premises which are owned and/or controlled by OUC, and premises occupied or used by OUC’s approved student bodies whether or not OUC owns or has control of such premises.
- **Designated activity:** This is defined as any meeting, **event**, or other activity due to take place on OUC premises or elsewhere using OUC’s identity or representing OUC, whether or not there is a reasonable expectation on the part of the Principal Organiser (see below) or the Responsible Officer (see below) that freedom of speech within the law may be compromised unless appropriate remedial action is taken. Whilst it is not possible to be prescriptive about such activities, they may include visits by public figures especially where their views have aroused controversy in the past or where the subject matter of the activity is likely to be regarded as controversial or objectionable by at least some of the participants. In case of doubt the Senior Management team or the Responsible Officer should always be consulted.

RELATED POLICY DOCUMENTS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

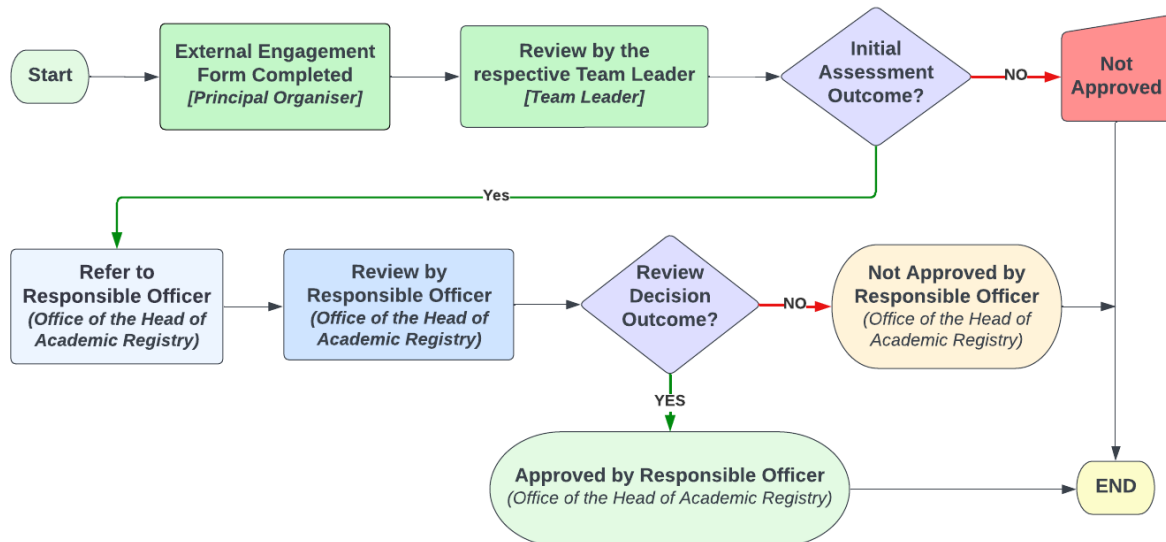
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Law No (8) of 1979 on Publications and Publishing of Qatar.• Law No 13 of 2019 on the establishment of a media city of Qatar.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freedom of Speech External Speakers Policy.• Student Code of Behaviour and Student Disciplinary Procedures.• Ethics Policy Framework.• Equality and Diversity Policy.• Anti-slavery and human trafficking policy.• Anti- Money Laundering & Terrorist Financing Policy.
Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Protection (Fair Processing) Students Procedure
Local protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry of Education and Higher Education Guidelines• Ministry of Public Health• Ministry of Interior
Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• External Engagement Approval Form

7.0 Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1 – Housekeeping

- No food or drink, alcoholic or otherwise, or any receptacles, containers or other implements which could be used as missiles may be taken into a designated activity unless if it is pre-approved by the Head of Academic Registry or nominee. These will be confiscated and any persons carrying them may be refused entry to the meeting.
- Similarly, loudhailers, horns, hooters, or any other implements that could be used to disrupt the meeting will not be permitted. Handheld banners and flags may only be displayed outside the meeting and if brought inside must be furled up and left in the care of an official whilst the meeting is in progress.
- Smoking is not permitted in or immediately outside any buildings on OUC campuses. Separate arrangements may apply in halls of residence in respect of individual study bedrooms designated as smoking rooms, or in any external smoking areas as provided.
- All rooms used for activities, whether designated or otherwise, shall be left in a clean and tidy condition. Organisers will be charged for any additional clearing up that is necessary as well as for any damage or breakages.

7.2. Appendix 2 – Sign offs for external speakers



7.3. Appendix 3 – External Engagement Approval Form

External Engagement Approval Form



Principal Organiser Information	
Name	Name:
Contact Email	Telephone Number:
Nature of Event	
Names of Visiting speaker/s	Name:
Reference ID	<input type="checkbox"/> Credentials <input type="checkbox"/> Card <input type="checkbox"/> CV <input type="checkbox"/> Qatar ID <input type="checkbox"/> Passport
Web link for additional information about the speaker/s:	

Event Information	
Name of Organisation	
Any known affiliations <i>(particularly religious or political)</i>	
Expected Number of Attendees	Level of Study <i>(if applicable)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> L3 <input type="checkbox"/> L4 <input type="checkbox"/> L5 <input type="checkbox"/> L6 <input type="checkbox"/> L7 <input type="checkbox"/> NA
Proposed Venue of Event	
Proposed Event Date	DD/MMM/YYYY, DAY
Proposed Time Slot	
Type of Event	<input type="checkbox"/> Lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Debate <input type="checkbox"/> Training <input type="checkbox"/> Others <i>(please specify)</i>
Audience Access	<input type="checkbox"/> Ticket only <input type="checkbox"/> Invitation only <input type="checkbox"/> Campus only <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted/public

Visiting Speaker / Guest / Reporting External Person Information	
Any known previous controversy <i>(relating to the speaker/s)</i>	
Is this event and speakers likely to attract media interest? If so, why?	
Estimated times of arrival / departure of visiting speaker/s	
Transport Coordinator	Contact No.: Mobile:

External Engagement Approval Form



Field Trip Information			
Anticipated route:		Alternate route:	
Pick-up point:		Drop-Off Point:	
Time:		Time:	
Participants Information	[Full List with contact numbers & liability forms attached]		<input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Students

Additional Requirement / Support Information		
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo Coverage <input type="checkbox"/> Designing	<input type="checkbox"/> IT/ Technical Support <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media Campaigns	<input type="checkbox"/> Video Coverage <input type="checkbox"/> Token of Appreciation
Details:		

Sign-Off / Verified Information			
Principal Organiser:		Signature:	
Programme Coordinator		Signature:	
Dean of Academic Affairs	Signature:	Date sent to the Registry	
Approval / Refusal by Office of the Registry			

Office Use Only		<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Refused
<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Departments informed <input type="checkbox"/> Budget Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Other arrangements (if any)	<input type="checkbox"/> List of Participants <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance Collected <input type="checkbox"/> Liability Forms Filled		
Academic Registry Staff (Name & Signature)		Date:	
Head of Student Experience (Name & Signature)		Date:	
Approver Signature (President)		Date:	

7.4. Appendix 4 – OUC Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement

7.4.1. Consent Statement

- OUC is committed to promoting ethos that safeguards the dignity and wellbeing of everyone and encourages practices that take into account the rights of individuals to be treated with dignity and respect. It recognises that discrimination, harassment, and victimisation may be experienced by all in a number of ways, including day-to-day interaction with colleagues, peers, visitors, and staff.
- In alignment with the policies and laws of the state of Qatar, OUC does not tolerate any form of discrimination which it recognises as unacceptable, discriminatory, and unlawful, and is proactive in ensuring that people are treated fairly. This commitment is consistent with the significant progress that OUC has already made in this area.
- OUC recognises the valuable contribution that can be made by staff and students in terms of qualities of experiences brought to learning, teaching, support services, research, consultancy, enterprise, widening participation, administration, and management.

7.4.2. Zero Tolerance Statement

- At OUC, we promote an environment where everyone is treated equally and with dignity and respect. We operate a policy of zero tolerance towards any form of discrimination and work towards equality, human rights, and social justice. We have an equal opportunities sub-committee who contributes to policy development and raises awareness of equality, diversity, and inclusion activities. In addition, we have the Associate Dean of Student Wellbeing and Success, who consult and assist with embedding equality and diversity across OUC. Our Academic Registry and Student Experience department also work to ensure all students are treated with dignity and respect.
- Whilst OUC recognises the valuable contribution that can be made by staff and students in terms of quality of experience brought to learning, teaching, support services, research, consultancy, enterprise, widening participation, administration, and management. OUC expects these contributions to be made with due regard to equitable treatment regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity or other relevant distinction. In full adherence to the law of the state of Qatar, OUC respects the legal obligations of

OUCs partners with respect to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and we will operate a zero-tolerance stance towards incidents involving equality, diversity, and inclusion related issues.

7.4.3. Bullying and Harassment Statement

- OUC is committed to promoting an ethos that safeguards the dignity and well-being of everyone and encourages practices that take into account the rights of individuals to be treated with dignity and respect. It recognises that discrimination, bullying and harassment may be experienced by all in a number of ways, including day to day interaction with colleagues, peers, visitors, and students.
- OUC seeks to eliminate all forms of bullying and harassment as it recognises that such behaviour is unacceptable, discriminatory and, in certain circumstances, also unlawful.
- Individuals may be unaware of the effect of their behaviour on others and, therefore, everyone should take care to avoid giving unwanted offence.
- OUC expects all staff, students, visitors, and contractors to support the establishment of a pleasant working and learning environment that is free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. If, however, bullying and harassment does occur, there are a number of actions that individuals, or anyone who is aware that bullying and harassment may be occurring, can take.
- Any incidents of bullying or harassment that do occur will be taken seriously and could provide grounds for disciplinary action that may lead to dismissal or expulsion from OUC. Furthermore, individuals who harass or bully may be subject to criminal and/or civil prosecution.
- All line leaders in OUC, as part of their leadership and managerial responsibilities, have a professional as well as legal obligation to eliminate bullying or harassment of which they are, or should be, aware. All individuals will be personally accountable for their behaviour, actions and/or lack of actions, in cases of complaint of harassment or bullying.

For the duration of my event, activity or speaking commitment, I agree to abide by the OUC Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion statement.

Signature:

Print name:

Date: