



INTRA-COMMUNAL PROFESSORIAL GROUP

Addressing Antisemitism in Universities

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About this toolkit

This toolkit aims to support universities to address antisemitism among and towards staff and students. It was developed in response to a sharp increase in antisemitism in UK universities and the need for specific guidance to help address it.

Since the attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7th 2023, there has been an almost 34% increase in reports of antisemitic abuse in universities. These have included physical attacks, threats of rape, violence, verbal abuse, harassment, and the use of Nazi imagery. As a result, Jewish students are withdrawing from all aspects of university life, including lecture theatres and seminar rooms, online learning and social offline and online spaces, social activities, and entire areas of campus. Many report being fearful on campus, and uncomfortable being open about their Jewish identity, with profound impacts both on their integration into university life and on their mental and physical health.

The toolkit was developed to provide practical recommendations for universities to create a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for Jewish students and staff, as well as to respond swiftly and appropriately to concerns of antisemitism when they occur. We have consulted and reflected on audits and toolkits for the academic sector that identify other forms of racist, sexist, ideological, and political form of discrimination, including unconscious bias. It is past time to focus on the normalisation of antisemitic conduct and structure

It was produced by the Intra-Communal Professorial Group (ICPG), a network of academics dedicated to researching and combatting antisemitism in UK higher education and improving the environment for Jewish students, academics, professionals, and other staff. We invite enquiries and requests for clarification.

Who is this toolkit for

This toolkit is for:

- Chancellors and Vice Chancellors
- Heads of Departments
- Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs)
- All university staff

Students, prospective students, and their families may also find this toolkit helpful in understanding what universities can do to help address antisemitism.

Understanding antisemitism in universities

What is antisemitism?

Antisemitism means having negative ideas, stereotypes or hatred towards Jewish people just because they are Jewish. Antisemitism can target individuals, groups, or even buildings and places connected to Jewish life, like synagogues or schools. Antisemitism can sometimes be targeted with the aim of hurting or upsetting people, but at the same time, it can sometimes be unintentional and caused by people not considering the needs of Jewish people.

At the most basic level, antisemitism is treating Jews differently to all other people. This may include discrimination, harassment, bullying, or any form of “othering” that views Jews as separate and different from all other people. By extension, treating Israel – the one Jewish homeland – as different to all other countries, “othering” it by holding it to different standards to other states, or denying Jews the same right as all other peoples to self-determination, may be antisemitic.

Antisemitism may take the form of Jew hatred based on their religion, race and/or ethnicity, which can cause difficulties for those seeking to combat and address antisemitism in all of its forms.

The Government has **formally adopted** the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) **Working Definition of Antisemitism** together with the accompanying illustrative examples. This definition has also been recognised by the Royal College of Policing in their guidance to police forces in the UK.

The IHRA definition was formulated as a response to the fact that some crimes committed against Jews in Europe and America were not recognised as antisemitic despite signs that victims were targeted because they were Jewish. This was partly because authorities looking at motivations for the crimes were not paying attention to the way in which victims were targeted. For example, a hatred directed towards a Jew accompanied by abuse referencing Palestine might not be recorded as antisemitic because the language did not explicitly reference the victim's Jewish identity. The IHRA definition seeks to ensure that antisemitic crimes are not disregarded because of the mistaken view that antisemitic discrimination only happens with explicit references to Jewish characteristics.

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism

'Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities'.

This definition is guidance, not law, and not all UK universities have adopted it. It offers an accepted standard to define antisemitism and respond to concerns and is endorsed by all representative Jewish organisations engaged in combatting antisemitism.

Key legal duties of universities

Protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits universities from discriminating against, harassing, or victimising staff or students based on ‘protected characteristics’. These include race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and philosophical belief. Discrimination can be direct or indirect and it can take many forms. Jewish religion and belief is protected under both the race and religion categories, and Israeli nationality under “race.” Staff and students are also protected from harassment, which is defined as unwanted conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment or victimisation. The legal duty also includes addressing any incidents of antisemitism that are witnessed or reported.

Universities are also bound by the **Public Sector Equality Duty** under Section 149 of the Act to consider how their policies and practices impact upon people with protected characteristics. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance on the PSED for universities, advises that universities ‘have a legal responsibility to think about how they can promote equality and minimise tension and prejudice within different groups on campus’.

Freedom of expression

Universities in the UK are legally obliged to protect and promote freedom of expression (or free speech) on campus. At a general level, the right to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience/belief and religion is protected by both the **European Convention of Human Rights** (Articles 9 and 10), and the **Human Rights Act 1998** (Articles 9 and 10). With specific regard to universities, Section 43 of the **Education (no. 2) Act 1986** obliges universities to 'secure' freedom of speech 'within the law... for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers. The laws regulating conscience, thought and belief treat the holding of a belief as an absolute right, which cannot be lawfully interfered with in any way.

The expression of a belief, however, is generally regarded as a qualified right. This means that, while the starting presumption should be that speech is permitted, the right to expression may be subject to certain legal limitations. The ECHR, for example, acknowledges that limitations can be imposed on expression in order to protect national security, health or public morals, or to prevent disorder and crime. Nor can the right to free expression be used to limit the right to free expression of others. UK criminal law limits the right to free expression by prohibiting racially or religiously aggravated speech; threats to kill; endeavours to break up a public meeting; speech that seeks to provoke violence, or cause intentional harassment, alarm or distress; speech that intends or is likely to stir up hatred; that incites the committing of acts of terrorism overseas; that invites or encourages support for proscribed organisations; and which encourages or glorifies terrorism.

Academic freedom

Academic freedom is related to but distinct from free speech at a general level. In the UK, the right to academic freedom was formally established in **clause (202)** of the **1988 Education Reform Act**. Academic freedom is the right of academics to pursue their research free from political, social, or economic pressures that are external to the intellectual demands imposed by the discipline itself. The aim of academic freedom is that scholars should be able to challenge orthodox thinking and practice in order to further the pursuit of collective inquiry and knowledge, without fear of political, economic, or social reprisals. Unlike the general right to free expression, the right of academic freedom is coupled with an obligation that academic expression adheres to the professional standards and competence expected within a given discipline. This includes taking into account opposing views and making a sincere effort to understand the basis of the arguments that support them.

These responsibilities may mean that universities are legally justified in proscribing expression on campus that constitutes discrimination or harassment of a person or a group with a protected characteristic. Moreover, **according to the EHRC**, universities should recognise that some students may feel ‘vilified or marginalised by the views expressed’ within certain divisive debates, and ‘think about how to ensure those students feel included and welcome within the university environment.’

Illustrative examples of antisemitism in universities

- Holding Jewish people responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group.
- Demanding that a Jewish individual or group take a position on Israel or Zionism.
- Discriminating against Jewish people or treating them less favourably.
- Bullying, harassing, or excluding people because of their Jewish identity, beliefs, or views on Israel.
- Making or sharing (or failing to prevent the sharing of) statements or images of antisemitic tropes.
- Failing to adequately respond to concerns related to antisemitism.
- Penalising people for raising concerns related to antisemitism.
- Implementing policies and decision-making that exclude or disadvantage Jewish people, such as holding exams on Jewish religious festivals, or work activities on a Friday afternoon or Saturday that would preclude Jewish people from participating.
- Failing to understand and assess the risks of radicalisation and extremism, including when online and to put adequate measures in place to protect people from these risks.

Creating a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment in your university

The following audit tool can be used to help leaders address antisemitism in their policies and procedures. This includes reporting, monitoring and response processes, staff training, promoting freedom of expression and academic freedom, and supporting Jewish staff and students. The audit tool includes references to both legal obligations and best practice, which in combination will help to ensure safer environments for all.



*I have never felt less protected as a Jew
and more alone¹*

Addressing antisemitism in policies and procedures

1. How do your policies set out your commitment to addressing antisemitism?
2. Do your policies and procedures contain a clear and consistent definition of antisemitism and antisemitic behaviours?
3. How does the university make it clear that they will refer incidents involving antisemitism to external agencies where required and fully co-operate in any associated multi-agency work?
4. How do you ensure and check your staff's understanding of policy and procedures, (including the Code of Conduct, Safeguarding, Prevent, and other relevant policies) related to antisemitism?
5. What measures does your university have in place to prevent and respond appropriately to concerns about antisemitism?
6. How does your university's Code of Conduct for staff and students make it clear that antisemitism is unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action?
7. Are incident management files stored and recorded in such a way that allows the prompt identification of trends and patterns as well as individual incidents of antisemitism?
8. Does your university conduct regular audits of your policy, procedures and practice to help ensure that antisemitism across all functions (recruitment, staff management and development, teaching, research, events, and communications) is addressed?
9. What measures does your university have in place to prevent and respond appropriately to concerns about online antisemitic abuse?
10. How does your university proactively identify risks related to antisemitism and put measures (such as increased security and monitoring, training and information sharing,) in place to prevent and mitigate them? How often are these risks assessed?

1 "I have never felt less protected as a Jew": antisemitism at UK universities since 7th October 2023." (2024). Available [here](#).

11. How are the risks of radicalisation and extremism identified, mitigated and reviewed in line with the Prevent Duty?
12. How are staff made aware of their responsibility to report concerns of radicalisation and extremism?
13. What measures does your university have in place to meet its duty to protect people from radicalisation and extremism (such as supporting proscribed organisations or encouraging or glorifying terrorism) in line with the Prevent Duty?
14. How does your university vet speakers, activities and events to ensure they do not promote extremist views?
15. Does the external speaker policy and process directly address antisemitism?
16. To what extent are your university's policies available for consultation by your staff, students, and members of the public?
17. Does your university invite comments and discussion of its antisemitism policies that respects participant's rights to data protection?

A public post was made about me accusing me (by name) of supporting genocide, killing children and supporting an Israeli occupation. None of which were true. This post has been shared multiple times. It has led to me receiving threats that I would be physically hurt if I am seen at campus. I have not attended the medical school campus and am taking a year out for my safety.²

2 "I have never felt less protected as a Jew": antisemitism at UK universities since 7th October 2023." (2024). Available [here](#).

I reported it via the student discipline process 1.5 months ago but have not had a response, even after sending multiple follow up emails asking for updates.³

Reporting and responding

1. Does your university have safe and anonymous mechanisms for reporting antisemitism?
2. What systems does your university have in place to ensure that staff and students know how to raise concerns about antisemitism and feel supported in doing so?
3. Does your university accept reports from third parties such as Community SecurityTrust and the Union of Jewish Students?
4. How do leaders know that the barriers to disclosing antisemitism are minimised?
5. How does your complaints/reporting procedure and Code of Conduct make it clear that all concerns about antisemitism must be reported?
6. Does your procedure for responding to complaints include clear instructions on what to do if a concern about antisemitism is raised? Does this include a requirement to deal with complaints in a timely manner?
7. Does your whistleblowing policy and procedures set out the steps you will take if concerns about antisemitism are reported?
8. What measures do you have in place to protect and support whistleblowers?
9. How do leaders ensure that Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and other case management decision-makers and investigators understand antisemitism, and that their decisions and actions are free from antisemitic bias?
10. What measures are in place to support staff and students (eg. counselling, mental health support, and welfare services) who have been affected by antisemitism?
11. How are staff and students helped to understand that the university has a zero tolerance approach to incidents of antisemitism and helped to understand what this means in practice?

³ "I have never felt less protected as a Jew": antisemitism at UK universities since 7th October 2023." (2024). Available [here](#).

There's no one on campus that feels safe to speak to about the issue of antisemitism. It feels as if there is a universal culture of Jew hatred amongst staff.⁴

Training and awareness-raising

1. How have leaders made a clear public commitment externally and internally to address antisemitism?
2. What measures does your university have in place to ensure that all staff and students know and understand their own role and responsibilities regarding addressing antisemitism?
3. How does your university ensure all staff receive mandatory regular and high-quality training on addressing antisemitism? Including:
 - a. recognising and understanding antisemitism in universities
 - b. how to respond to concerns
 - c. their responsibility to protect and promote freedom of expression and academic freedom in university life
 - d. conflict resolution including respectful dialogue and non-violent communication
 - e. their role in identifying and acting on concerns related to radicalisation and extremism.
4. Are Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and other case management decision-makers provided with enhanced training and decision-making tools including on how antisemitism can influence practice?
5. How do leaders ensure your university is a safe environment for staff to discuss and report antisemitism without harassment or victimisation?

4 "I have never felt less protected as a Jew": antisemitism at UK universities since 7th October 2023." (2024). Available [here](#).

I'm terrified. People are violent and lacking empathy or critical thinking. I'm hearing people state blood libel as fact. I never thought this could happen again. I've heard people state 'Jews aren't human'. And there is nothing that can be done about it.⁵

Support for Jewish students and staff

1. What steps does the university take to actively create a welcoming environment for Jewish students and staff on campus and remove any barriers to inclusion and participation?
2. What measures does the university take to protect and promote freedom of expression and academic freedom for Jewish staff?
3. What measures does the university take to protect and promote freedom of expression for Jewish students?
4. How are Jewish students and staff given information about their right to be treated equally and protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation?
5. How are Jewish students and staff given information on how to report concerns of antisemitism?
6. How do leaders ensure that Jewish students' and staff views and experiences of antisemitism are heard, taken seriously and acted on?
7. How do leaders ensure that Jewish students and staff are confident that concerns of antisemitism will be listened to and responded to appropriately and that these concerns can be raised easily and anonymously?
8. How do leaders ensure Jewish students and staff understand how reported concerns will be dealt with? Is there a clear flow diagram?
9. How does your university support peer-led initiatives and networks (such as university societies) that help support Jewish students and staff with concerns about antisemitism, without harassment or victimisation and ensure their voice is heard?
10. How does your university include Jewish students and staff in identifying risks related to antisemitism as well as designing and evaluating measures to address them?

5 "I have never felt less protected as a Jew": antisemitism at UK universities since 7th October 2023." (2024). Available [here](#).

It is made abundantly clear every single day that as a Jewish person who supports Israel's right to exist, I am not welcome on campus.⁶

Promoting and protecting academic freedom

1. How have leaders made a clear public commitment externally and internally to protect and promote free expression and academic freedom in university life, including in teaching, meetings, research and events ?
2. What policies and procedures does the university have in place to implement their obligations in respect to freedom of expression and academic freedom in university life?
3. How are staff and students given information about their rights and responsibilities regarding freedom of expression and academic freedom in university life?
4. How does your university ensure that the diversity of opinion within a discipline/field is properly reflected in a department/unit/centre and foster a climate of critical inquiry and respect for diverse views?
5. What measures does your university have in place to ensure protests and political activities do not contribute to harassment and/or direct or indirect indiscrimination against people with protected characteristics?
6. How does your university ensure that meetings, events and external speakers contribute to, and do not threaten, academic freedom and freedom of expression?
7. How does your university ensure that meetings, events and external speakers contribute to, and do not threaten, academic freedom and freedom of expression?external speakers contribute to, and do not threaten, academic freedom and freedom of expression?

6 "I have never felt less protected as a Jew": antisemitism at UK universities since 7th October 2023." (2024). Available [here](#).



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