

# University of Westminster Independent Panel

## Terms of Reference

---

### Context

At the University of Westminster we are proud of our long record of integrating students from different communities, faiths and backgrounds. Respect and opportunity for all are fundamental to our culture, history and values, and are at the heart of our Student Charter. We cherish the value of freedom of speech under the law and it is at the heart of our university life.

We are an inclusive community; we embrace equality, diversity, and ethical and responsible behaviour. Balancing these aspects in a multi-cultural, fast moving global environment is not easy but we must continue to encourage debate and to provide safe spaces for our people to explore the difficult and challenging issues of our times.

Alongside our commitment to open debate and free speech, we are also subject to a range of other requirements and obligations, some enshrined in the law, such as in relation to equality, human rights, and security. These considerations are vital to ensure the safety and well-being of students, staff and the wider community. In many cases it is precisely by promoting free speech that an individual's rights are best protected. However, there are circumstances when we must navigate a way forward between contradictory positions.

### Terms of Reference

An Independent Panel has been established to review how the University of Westminster manages the promotion of diversity and freedom of speech within the institution, including practice, policies and processes regarding the approval of external speakers. This will include assessing the robustness of the University's engagement with the Prevent agenda.

The key focus of the Independent Panel will be to:

1. Scrutinise the University's current policies and processes, implementation and impact on staff and students.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the University's policies and processes through discussion with staff, students and the Students' Union.
3. Consider further improvements not least in light of new legislation
4. Any wider recommendations regarding government and sector wide implications

### Membership

**Chair:** An external Chair as nominated by the Vice Chancellor

**Members:** Three external panel members as nominated by the Vice Chancellor

**Secretariat:** An Executive Officer of the University of Westminster.

### Quorum

The quorum for the first and the final meeting of the Independent Panel shall be the Chair and all three members. The quorum for all other meetings will be the Chair and at least two members. When necessary and with prior agreement with the Chair, members will be welcome to join meetings via video, or telephone conference call.

### Meetings

Members of the Independent Panel shall meet at least five times before mid-June 2015. Additional meetings may be called by the Chair as deemed necessary.

### Reporting

The Independent Panel will report its findings and recommendations to the University Executive Board for consideration on 30 June 2015 and to the Court of Governors for ratification on 22 July 2015. Following which, the final report, documenting the findings and recommendations of the Independent Panel, will be a public document published by 31 August 2015.