



DOWNING COLLEGE

POLICY ON CAMPAIGNS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY

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| Policy/guidance owner | Senior Bursar, Senior Tutor |
| Approving committee | 1. College HR Committee 2. General Purposes Committee 3. Governing Body |
| Administrator | College Secretary |
| Scope | Trustees, staff and students |
| Last reviewed | 5 May 2023 |
| Next review date | 5 May 2026 |
| This document may only be modified with the ratification of the approving committees. Please contact the administrator with any queries. | |

Definition

The Charity Commission requires all charities to have a policy on campaigns and political activity. The Commission uses the term 'political activity' to describe activities or campaigning to change or influence policies or decisions taken by:

- national, devolved, local or overseas government
- public bodies including international organisations such as the UN and World Bank, and national or local organisations such as regulators or NHS Trusts

Charities can take part in political activity that supports their purpose and is in their best interests. Political activity, however, must not become the reason for the charity's existence. Charities must remain independent and must not give their support to a political party. Charities can support a policy that is supported by a political party or candidate and can work with political parties or candidates to influence their decisions, provided this supports the charity's purpose and the charity remains independent.

Scope

This policy covers all activities relating to the College undertaken by trustees, staff and students. It does not cover activities relating to personal beliefs outside College.

Policy on how the College manages its political independence

The College will operate in line with its Statement of Freedom of Speech and will not prevent access to any democratic process. Where appropriate, and within the College's charitable purpose, the College may choose to engage in political dialogue. It will not endorse or renounce political parties and will not align itself (or otherwise) with the opinions held by visiting speakers. It will not promote a particular candidate or political party, and it will not provide money or other resources to anyone who is standing as a candidate.

Campaigning activities on the Domus

The College is a place for study and students should not be harried by political campaigning. The following must be observed on the Domus:

- The distribution of leaflets by political parties will be permitted in the Porters' Lodge, under the Porters' supervision. Leaflets will not be delivered to pigeonholes.
- People are not permitted to come onto the Domus to campaign.
- Normal rules apply on prohibiting posters in windows.

Freedom of speech

The College supports the following University guidance:

Any member, student or employee of the University engaged in campaigning for a registered political party or any other body may, as an expression of [lawful free speech](#), distribute leaflets and campaign on University premises (sites or buildings) to which they have normal and legitimate access. They should make clear that they are acting in a private capacity and not on behalf of the University.

They may not fly-post and, in distributing leaflets and otherwise campaigning, they should behave reasonably and must not break any criminal or civil laws or infringe any disciplinary regulation applicable to them. In particular, they should not harass, threaten or intimidate others, disrupt University business or damage University property.

Further guidance

Charity Commission information and guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities-cc9>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities-cc9/charities-elections-and-referendums>

Policy review

This policy should be reviewed every three years.

Policy agreed by:

General Purposes Committee 24 April 2023

College HR Committee 11 April 2023

Governing Body 5 May 2023