UCEN MANCHESTER
FIND YOUR FUTURE

# Student Guide:
# Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

**Updated September 2026**



This student guide explains what freedom of speech and academic freedom mean at UCEN Manchester.

It helps you understand your rights, responsibilities, and what to expect when attending or organising events as part of your studies or student life.



## What Is Freedom of Speech?

Freedom of speech means you have the right to express your opinions, listen to others, and take part in respectful debate even when the ideas are controversial or challenging.

It must always stay within the law and be respectful of others.

## What Is Academic Freedom?

Academic freedom means staff and students can explore, share, and discuss a wide range of ideas as part of teaching, learning, and independent research.

You're encouraged to question, challenge, and evaluate ideas using evidence and critical thinking.



## How UCEN Manchester Supports These Freedoms

We are committed to:

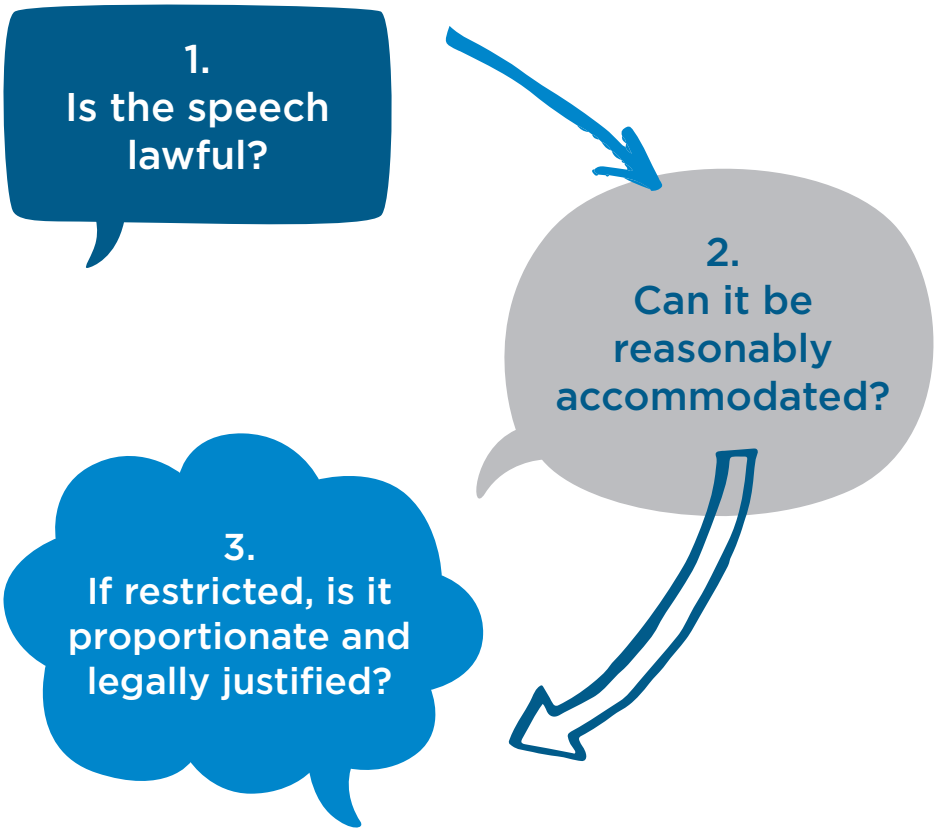


## Events and Guest Speakers

If you're planning an event or inviting a guest speaker, you must follow UCEN Manchester's External Speaker, Organisation, Event and Literature Procedure.

This helps us ensure all events meet our legal duties and keep our community safe.

Referencing guidance from the Office for Students can be found here:
(OfS freedom of speech guidance - three-step framework),
We use a 3-step approach to review speaker events:



## What Might Be Restricted?

Events or speech may be restricted if there's a risk of:

- inciting violence or hate;
- breaching safeguarding or health and safety rules;
- breaking the law.

In these cases, we may apply conditions (e.g., ticketing, appointing a chair, staff presence) or cancel the event if risks cannot be safely managed.




## Your Rights and Responsibilities

As a student, you have the right to:

- express your views within the law;
- attend and organise events with diverse opinions;
- expect fair treatment if you raise concerns.

And the responsibility to:

- respect others' right to speak and be heard;
- follow the Code of Conduct and event procedures;
- help create a safe, respectful, inclusive environment for debate.





## Raising Concerns

If you think your freedom of speech has been restricted unfairly or you're concerned about an event or speaker, you can raise the issue through your Personal Tutor, contact the Head of Student Advice, Support and Wellbeing, or utilise UCEN Manchester's complaints procedure by contacting **feedback@ucenmanchester.ac.uk.**

All concerns will be reviewed fairly.

## Where to Find More Information

- Speak to your tutor;
- Contact the Future U Student Support Team,
- Check your student handbook or induction materials.