

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
PROTEST GUIDELINES FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

Protests on campus

The University recognises that staff and students may wish to take part in protests on campus, and their legal right to do so. The University is committed to protecting freedom of speech and freedom of assembly for everyone, within the law.

This means that protests on campus are permitted and staff and students should feel safe and confident in doing so, provided they do not breach relevant University policies or any applicable laws.

However, as noted in the University’s [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), “*while protestors may criticise and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, or challenge the decision to invite such speakers in the first place, their protest should not be such as to obstruct the freedom of others to express the views that they reject.*” This reflects the fact that the University has a duty to ensure that protests do not unduly disrupt or prevent the lawful exercise of the rights of other students, staff or visitors on campus.

Guidelines for protests

To make it clear to staff and students what is acceptable and unacceptable conduct when protesting on campus, the University has set out some (non-exhaustive) guidelines below. These are to help us all to enable respectful freedom of expression, including freedom to protest speakers and events.

| DO | DON'T |
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| Remember that we all have a right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and that the right to exchange information, debate ideas and express opinions is a core aspect of our individual freedom and our collective good. | Deny the freedom of others to assemble and express opinions or beliefs different to your own. |
| Attend events and respectfully engage at appropriate times, for example by raising points and asking questions at the allocated times during the event, and remember at all times to comply with the University’s Dignity and Respect Policy . Be mindful of how your actions may be perceived and ensure they do not make others attending a protest, or a protested event, reasonably fearful for their safety. | Break the law or endanger the health and safety of others. |
| Follow booking processes for events in University buildings such as the Policy on Speakers and Events or through Edinburgh University Students' Association bookings guidance . | Fail to follow the booking process, or seek to subvert booking systems to prevent attendees from obtaining a place at any event. |

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| Follow instructions given by University staff and any security/law enforcement in attendance. | Block access to events or buildings in which events are taking place or obstruct people passing by. |
| Organise or attend alternative events at the same time as an event that you wish to protest at a different location on campus, following the processes noted above. | <p>Disrupt any University events e.g. preventing speakers from talking or from being heard (e.g. by making noise to drown out a speaker), or taking action aimed at preventing an event commencing or continuing.</p> <p>Cause any damage to property (including flyposting or stickering), or environment (including smoke canisters).</p> |
| Speak outside an event, leaflet or use signs in support or opposition of a person or an event (avoiding disrespectful, harassing or intimidating language targeted at individuals). | Intimidate or disrespect others, either in person or on social media/online. |

What if I choose not to follow the protest guidelines?

Failure to follow the guidelines above, which support lawful, safe and peaceful protest, may constitute misconduct under the Code of Student Conduct (in the case of students) or the Disciplinary Policy (in the case of staff), and the discipline procedures under those policies could be followed. Where staff or students invite third-party groups or individuals to join a protest on University premises, those staff or students will be responsible for ensuring compliance by those groups or individuals with these guidelines.

Any allegation of a criminal offence committed by a student or staff member may be reported by the University to the police (or, if the police are in attendance to ensure public safety, the police may take direct action in the event of a suspected criminal offence). In some cases, the University may also appoint Sheriff Officers to enforce court orders.