



## Policy on Political Campaigning & Activity

### Policy Statement

As a registered charity in England and Wales, the College must comply with charity law and Charity Commission guidance on campaigning and political activity. Campaigning and political activity can be legitimate and valuable ways for charities to further their charitable purposes, but the College must remain independent, must not have a political purpose, and must not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

The College is committed to upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom, including the freedom of College members to discuss, debate and express lawful political views in a personal capacity. This policy is not intended to prevent such lawful discourse. Its purpose is to ensure that, where political campaigning or activity is undertaken by or on behalf of the College, it is lawful, proportionate, evidence-based, consistent with the College's charitable purposes, and does not compromise the College's political independence.

This policy should be read alongside the College's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and any other relevant College policies.

### Application & Scope

This policy applies to:

- All activities undertaken by the College as an institution;
- All use of College resources, premises, funding, name, branding, official email accounts, official social media accounts, stationery or other College channels for campaigning or political activity; and
- All College members, staff, officers and trustees when acting, or reasonably appearing to act, for or on behalf of the College.

It does not apply to lawful political activity undertaken by individuals in a personal capacity, provided that they do not use College resources or suggest that they are speaking on behalf of the College. Internal College elections, including elections or appointments to statutory and non-statutory College offices, committees, sub-committees and Common Room (CR) roles, are outside the scope of this policy, save where College resources are used in a way that creates a wider legal, reputational or regulatory risk.

### Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the College adopts the Charity Commission's published definitions of "campaigning" and "political activity" in its guidance, [Campaigning and political activity guidance for charities \(CC9\)](#).

[Campaigning](#) means activity intended to secure, or oppose, a change in policy, practice, public opinion, attitudes or behaviour, provided that it is undertaken in furtherance of the charity's purposes.

[Political activity](#) means activity aimed at securing, or opposing, a change in the law or in the policy or decisions of central government, local authorities or other public bodies, whether in the United Kingdom or overseas. Political activity may include seeking to influence political parties, elected representatives,

candidates, decision-makers, public servants or public opinion in support of a desired change. It does not include party-political support, which is prohibited.

## Legal Principles

The following key legal principles apply to the College and inform the requirements set out in this policy:

1. The College must be established and operated exclusively for charitable purposes for the public benefit. It cannot have a political purpose.
2. Campaigning and political activity may be undertaken only where it supports or furthers the College's charitable purposes, namely to advance education, religion, learning and research in the University; to provide, for that purpose, a College for men and women who are members of the University and who may work for degrees of the University or carry out postgraduate or other special studies at Cambridge; and to promote and facilitate contributions from the Catholic Church and from members of the Catholic Church in carrying out those objects. Political activity must not become the College's continuing and sole activity, or the reason for its existence.
3. The College may campaign for, or against, a change in law, policy or decisions, or seek to ensure that existing laws are observed, where this is a legitimate and reasonable way to further its charitable purposes.
4. The College may support or raise concerns about specific policies advocated by a political party, politician or candidate, but only where the policy itself is relevant to the College's charitable purposes and the College's independence is made clear.
5. The College must not support or oppose any political party or candidate, donate funds or provide resources to any political party or candidate, or allow the College to be used as a vehicle for the personal or party-political views of any individual trustee, officer, employee or member.
6. Any College-level campaigning or political activity must be supported by a clear rationale, proportionate use of resources, and appropriate consideration of legal, regulatory, financial and reputational risks.

## Political Activity by the College

The College, and any person acting for or on its behalf, may undertake political activity only where the activity is:

- Directly connected to, and likely to further, the College's charitable purposes as described above;
- Lawful, proportionate and an appropriate use of College resources;
- Based on accurate information and, where relevant, a well-founded evidence base;
- Politically independent and not party-political;
- Approved through the College's normal governance procedures; and
- Kept under review where the activity is substantial, high-profile, controversial or ongoing.

Examples may include responding to consultations, engaging with public bodies, commenting on proposed legislative or policy changes, providing evidence or briefings on matters affecting higher education or the College's purposes, or supporting sector-wide positions where those positions are relevant to the College's charitable purposes.

Where a proposed activity may be politically sensitive, high-profile, or likely to affect the College's independence or reputation, advice should be sought from the Governance, Risk and Compliance Manager or the Bursar.

### Political Parties, Politicians and Candidates

The College must not demonstrate general support for, or opposition to, any political party, politician or candidate.

The College may engage with political parties, politicians or candidates where doing so supports its charitable purposes, but such engagement must be politically independent, not party-political, transparent where appropriate, and managed to protect the College's independence.

Where the College invites politicians, candidates or representatives of political parties to events, or participates in events involving them, care must be taken to avoid any actual or perceived party-political endorsement. Where appropriate, the College should consider balance, including whether a range of perspectives should be invited or whether invitations should be limited for objective, lawful and proportionate reasons.

The College may support a specific policy that is also advocated by a political party or politician, but it must explain its own charitable rationale and must not suggest that the College supports the party, politician or candidate more generally.

### Personal Political Activity and Freedom of Speech

Individual College members (including staff, College Officers, Fellows, senior members and students) may express lawful political views in a personal capacity, including support for particular policies, parties, politicians or candidates, provided that they do not act, or create the impression that they are acting, for or on behalf of the College.

Individuals undertaking personal political activity must not use College-branded resources, including official College email addresses, official social media accounts, stationery, letterheads, funding, mailing lists or other official channels.

Personal political activity remains subject to other applicable College policies and procedures, including those relating to conduct, harassment, communications, social media, use of IT, room bookings, accommodation and employment.

College members in senior or public-facing roles should be particularly mindful of the risk that personal political activity may be perceived as being undertaken on behalf of the College, and should take reasonable steps to make the personal nature of their views clear.

### Use of College Facilities

The use of College facilities by external speakers or organisations with political interests may be permitted where arrangements are made in accordance with the College's normal booking procedures, charitable purposes, freedom of speech obligations, Prevent duty, safeguarding and security requirements, and any applicable legal or regulatory requirements.

Any such use must not amount to endorsement by the College of a political party, politician, candidate or party-political campaign.

Where facilities are hired by or for a political party, politician or candidate, the booking should normally be treated as a commercial hire on standard terms, unless there is a clear legal requirement or objectively justified reason for a different approach. Any departure from standard terms must be approved and applied consistently so as not to create a perception of party-political support.

The College may refuse, restrict or impose conditions on a booking where there are lawful and proportionate reasons to do so, including where the booking would create unacceptable legal, safety, security, public order, equality, safeguarding, Prevent, reputational or operational risks.

### Election and Referendum Periods

During election or referendum periods, the College and those acting for or on its behalf must take particular care to maintain political independence and neutrality.

The College must not indicate, directly or indirectly, how members, staff, students, supporters or the public should vote.

College communications during an election period may address issues relevant to the College's charitable purposes, but must not encourage support for, or opposition to, a political party or candidate. Comparisons between parties or candidates must be handled with particular care.

The College must not allow its name, branding, events, premises, images, publications or other resources to be used in a way that suggests endorsement of a party, candidate or referendum campaign.

Where campaigning activity during an election or referendum period may fall within electoral law, advice should be sought before the activity proceeds, including on any registration or spending requirements for non-party campaigners.

### Communications, Publications and Campaign Materials

Any College campaign material or public statement relating to political activity must be accurate, evidence-based, lawful, proportionate and consistent with the College's charitable purposes.

Communications may be robust, direct, passionate or critical of policies or decisions, but should remain focused on the relevant issue and avoid party-political messaging or personal attacks.

Official College communications must not be used to promote the personal or party-political views of any individual.

Staff or members preparing College communications should ensure that approval is obtained through the College's normal communications and governance procedures before publication.

### Electoral Communications & Canvassing

Electoral communications received by post will be dealt with in the same way as any other post received by the College and addressed to its resident members.

Door-to-door delivery of political material, canvassing or campaigning within College residential or operational buildings is not permitted without prior approval from the Bursar. Approval will only be granted

where the activity is lawful, consistent with this policy, and compatible with the privacy, safety, security and wellbeing of College members and staff.

Nothing in this section prevents resident members from receiving electoral communications addressed to them personally, from engaging in lawful political activity in a personal capacity, or from discussing political matters in accordance with the College's freedom of speech framework and other applicable policies.

### Review and Responsibility

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years and whenever there are material changes to Charity Commission guidance, electoral law, or the College's governance framework.

The Governance, Risk and Compliance Manager is responsible for coordinating review of this policy. Any questions about the application of this policy should be referred to the Governance, Risk and Compliance Manager in the first instance.