



Community Guidelines on Protest

Guidance on demonstrations or protests at the University

At the University of Exeter, we actively promote free discussion and interrogation of challenging and sometimes controversial ideas. We promote a culture of debate within the law, built on the principle of tolerance of different views and beliefs.

The right to protest in England and Wales is protected under the European Convention of Human Rights. It is important to note that this legal right to protest only applies to peaceful demonstrations and does not extend to any acts of violence or damage caused during a protest. The right to protest is conditional and can be limited in certain circumstances.

We strongly believe that all students and colleagues deserve to feel safe and belong at our university. This guidance has been developed to support both protestors and other students and colleagues to be able to legally express their rights while also respecting everyone in our university community.

If you are organising a protest, attending a protest, or are just curious, please read this guidance in full so you are aware of how to hold a safe and legal protest.

If you want to highlight an issue, there are other effective options you may want to consider – your Students' Guild and Students' Union in Cornwall want to hear from you and there is more information on webpages [here](#) and [here](#) on how you can seek support from them or get involved.

You may also want to read the following University policies and guidance documents:

- [Freedom of Speech Policy](#) – Co-signed by University, Students' Guild and Students' Union
- [Dignity and Respect and EDI Policies](#)
- External Speaker Policy and Risk Assessment Guidance: [Exeter](#) and [Cornwall](#)

Key Contacts:

- University contacts for support can be found on [this circulation list](#)
- Reach out to Exeter Students Guild at Campaigns@ExeterGuild.com
- For Cornwall Campuses, please reach out to [the SU](#) or the [FXPlus colleagues](#)

Our Responsibilities and Approach

The University, in order to achieve its duty of protecting Freedom of Speech for all, must exercise a degree of neutrality. Individuals and groups within the University community are free to express lawful views on any issue. However, as a diverse community with many viewpoints, the University will not typically issue statements about any matters not directly related to our core activities.

Meanwhile, as a university, our primary role is to ensure the safety of our students and colleagues, and to safeguard the freedom of speech and

expression and academic freedom* for all members of our community.

In this regard we listen carefully to all concerns and suggestions raised by our academic colleagues, students, and other members of our community.

The rights to lawful protest and free expression are not without constraints and must be balanced with the rights of all members of our community to go about their business safely, unimpeded, and free from intimidation, discrimination, or harassment. The University reserves the right to alter the manner, location, or timing of the protest if this is likely to impact the core functions of the University.

Our responsibilities are limited to the students, colleagues and partners of the University and protest activity led by external parties will not be allowed on our campuses.

The University of Exeter has a good working relationship with the Police who attend campus regularly. We have not and do not engage the Police in supporting protests on campus unless there is illegal activity, safety concerns or an increased risk of violence, or harm.

*** Please note that academic freedom protections only apply for academic colleagues and students in their relevant academic areas and is not without bounds. For more information, please see our [Academic Freedom webpages](#)**

Protests on Campus: Expectations

The following guidance is intended to ensure that on-campus protests can be conducted safely for all members of the University community, avoiding risk or fear of intimidation, to reduce the likelihood of protesters breaching University regulations and becoming subject to disciplinary action.

When arranging and taking part in a protest, **it is your responsibility to:**

- **Give notice of the protest** to the University, the Exeter Students' Guild or Students' Union (SU) and secure the necessary permissions for the protest to take place. The Guild or SU might notify relevant University colleagues where appropriate.
- **Seek in advance and follow any safety, security, location, and other advice given to you** by the University and the Exeter Students' Guild or Students' Union colleagues or their representatives.
- Protests will take place outside university buildings and not inside, unless explicitly agreed with the University. This is to enable maintenance of normal university operations for all.
- **Communicate information about the protest to the participants**, including any relevant University guidance and risk assessments.
- Understand that when taking part in a public protest, other participants, passers-by, or members of the community might take pictures of the demonstrations. For more information about Photos and Filming, please see our webpages about Community Guidelines on Protests.
- **When due process is followed** to notify the University, Guild or FXPlus of a protest, a **Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)** from the Guild/SU, University or FXPlus will support in risk assessment of the protest and often will attend to support the protest.
- **The SRO will identify themselves to the organiser** and observe the protest. In most protests, this point of contact will not intervene but rather might periodically connect with the organisers in case any conditions set out in the risk assessment are about to be or have been breached or if a change in circumstances poses

an increased risk to the protestors or other students, colleagues, or visitors.

- Our [posters and leaflets policy](#) can be found online. Please note that **any materials (posters, leaflets) from third parties must be approved in advance**. Unauthorised posters placed in university frames or leaflets left on university property will be removed.
- When conditions agreed or parameters set are breached and distress and harm is caused to students or colleagues, disciplinary action may be taken. Further information on this is included on our webpages about Community Guidelines on Protests.
- We trust our students and colleagues to consider the impact of their actions on others, but it may be helpful to note how protests especially those with loud chanting can make particular student groups feel vulnerable despite that not being the intention – please do take your impact into consideration.

Please note that the SRO may trigger a protest stop procedure if participants or organisers:

- Continue to break agreed conditions, after being reminded of these.
- Seek to disrupt other events taking place on university premises by preventing speakers from talking, people from attending, or creating other Health and Safety risks
- Undertake any other activities that could be considered in breach of UK law.
- Do not provide appropriate notice or a completed risk assessment.

Reporting and Seeking Support

We understand that protests can be alarming and concerning for many who may not have engaged or taken part in these before. **If you need any support, our Wellbeing services remain available to you** and

if you witness or experience any inappropriate behaviours on campus, we encourage you to report these through our [Exeter Speaks Out and Falmouth and Exeter Speak Out reporting tools](#).

FAQs and further information are available on our [webpages here](#).

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