

Gonville & Caius

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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Trinity Street,
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Lord Young
The Free Speech Union
167-169 Great Portland Street
London
W1W 5PF

Wednesday 7 October, 2026

Dear Lord Young,

Thank you for your letter, dated October 1, 2026, and requesting a reply by October 7, 2026. I am happy to provide important context to the inclusivity sessions.

We recognise that the use of the terms ‘mandatory’ and ‘training’ were incorrect and should not have been used in communications about the sessions. We also recognise that the communication about this event did not make clear to our students, especially first-year undergraduates, that there would be no sanctions for not attending sessions. The central purpose of the sessions was to emphasise that inclusion and freedom of expression are mutually important, and that inclusion does not require students to agree with one another. The College’s expectation is that all students tolerate both differing opinions and diverse identities.

At Caius there are no sanctions for non-attendance at these sessions. There are many reasons why a student may not have been able to, or may not wish to, attend. No student was required to provide an explanation for non-attendance. This information is being further communicated to students via their pastoral Tutors. Students have many avenues for support if they wish to raise concerns, including their pastoral Tutor, Director of Studies, the Senior Tutor, the Dean, myself or members of staff.

The content of the facilitated discussion sessions was wide-ranging and not determined by, or limited to, an incident earlier this year that led to the sessions. We note the points that you have made about information on Stop Hate UK’s website. A number of providers were considered for the sessions. Stop Hate UK were chosen because they were willing to work with the College on genuinely bespoke sessions, crafted very specifically around the College’s [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech \(on the College website\)](#). Meetings were held to ensure the content was accurate, compatible with Caius’ policies, and appropriate to the College context in which students, staff and Fellows live and work together, often sharing differing views on a range of topics. Some members of College Council, including myself, attended some of the sessions to review the accuracy of content as it related to College policies. We

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also intend to speak to attendees to review their feedback on the facilitated discussion sessions on inclusivity.

The sessions recognised the importance of freedom of speech and encouraged attendees to engage with, discuss, and challenge different views. No student at Caius is required to assent to a prescribed set of views. Exchanges of differing views are welcome and encouraged at Caius. The central message conveyed by the facilitated discussion sessions was that the College should be a community in which people can be different, disagree strongly, challenge one another and still live and work together with dignity and respect.

Thank you for the opportunity to answer your questions.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Richard J. Gilbertson

Master

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cc.

Professor Deborah Prentice, Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge

The Senior Tutor, Gonville & Caius College

The Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, Office for Students