

Toby Young
General Secretary
The Free Speech Union
85 Great Portland Street
London
W1W 7LT

10 November 2020

Dear Mr Young

I write in response to your letter, dated 22nd October 2020.

I would repeat the clarification I made in my letter to you, dated 13th October, which is that Mr Williamson has not been no-platformed by the Students' Union. As a consequence many of the questions and concerns you raise are not relevant, however I will endeavor to provide a response as far as possible.

As you may know, Royal Holloway Students' Union is not a public authority and is independent of Royal Holloway University. As such, we do not have the same legal requirements in relation to freedom of expression and we are not directly required to comply with article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 or section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986 (the s.43 duty).

We are required to follow Royal Holloway's s.43 Code of Practice and I can confirm that the only breach of this code is in relation to paragraph 20 which states, "In the case of speakers invited by students acting independently of their academic department, speakers must come at the invitation of the Students' Union. Speakers may not be invited by a student or students acting individually." As I indicated to you in my original response, Mr Williamson had not been invited by the Students' Union; the Debating Society had not followed due process and had not submitted an event proposal or risk assessment to make the Students' Union aware of the event and ensure approval. We are currently investigating the circumstances around this breach of the Union's policies and the University's s.43 Code of Practice and can comment no further whilst this investigation is ongoing.

I cannot confirm one way or another whether Mr Williamson's alleged comments would constitute 'hate speech' as defined by the Students' Union. I would repeat that the Students' Union has not received an event proposal from the Debating Society and therefore has not been able to carry out any internal processes to make a judgement or decision regarding this. I have recently been in touch with the Debating Society to remind them that if they wish to invite Mr Williamson, or any other speaker, to speak, they must go through the Students' Union's guest speaker and event procedure where a determination would be given.

Yours sincerely



Kate Roberts
Royal Holloway Students' Union President & Chair of the Board of Trustees