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The Language Gallery (TLG) Freedom of Speech Policy

1. Introduction

The Language Gallery (TLG) is committed to upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. This policy outlines the principles and procedures that ensures that all members of the TLG community can engage in open discourse without fear of censorship or reprisal. It aligns with the guidance provided by the Office for Students (OfS) and relevant UK legislation.

This policy applies to all TLG students, staff, faculty, members, partners, and visiting speakers involved in any TLG activities, whether conducted in person or digitally.

2. Principles of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

2.1 Freedom of Speech

TLG supports the right of individuals to express opinions and ideas without interference, provided such expression complies with UK laws. This includes the right to discuss, debate, and challenge different ideas and beliefs.

2.2 Academic Freedom

TLG upholds the freedom of academic staff to question, and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves provided this complies with UK laws.

3. Legal Framework

TLG acknowledges its obligations under UK law to balance the promotion of free speech with the need to maintain public order and safety. Relevant legislation includes:

- **The Education Act 1986:** Mandates that universities and colleges take reasonably practicable steps to ensure freedom of speech within the law for members, students, employees, and visiting speakers.
- **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023:** Requires higher education institutions to protect and promote freedom of speech and academic freedom.
- **Public Order Act 1986:** Prohibits the use of threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour, intended to stir up racial hatred.

- **Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006:** Extends protections against incitement to include religious hatred.
- **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015:** Places a duty on specified bodies, including universities, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, whilst also considering the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 TLG

Ensures that premises are available for use by students, staff, and external speakers without discrimination, and that the expression of controversial or unpopular viewpoints is not suppressed.

4.2 Students and Staff

Expected to engage respectfully in discourse, tolerate differing opinions, and adhere to this policy and related procedures.

4.3 External speakers

Must comply with this policy and relevant legal obligations when participating in TLG events. All external speakers must be approved by TLG in advance of attending campus to speak with students.

5. Procedures for Organising Events / Guest speakers

5.1 Approval Process

Prior to an event, any guest speakers need to be approved via the completion of the guest speaker form.

This form is reviewed by the registrar for approval. The form includes details of the event and the speaker/s and focused questions to ensure appropriateness and ultimately, the safety of all TLG students.

5.2 Risk Assessment

TLG will conduct a risk assessment to identify and mitigate potential issues related to safety, legality, and compliance with this policy.

5.3 Conditions for approval

TLG may impose conditions to ensure compliance with legal obligations and this policy, such as requiring additional security measures or adjustments to the event format.

6. Handling Complaints and Raising Concerns

TLG has established procedures to address complaints and concerns related to freedom of speech:

6.1 Informal Resolution

Individuals are encouraged to resolve concerns informally by discussing them directly with the parties involved, where safe and appropriate to do so, or seeking guidance from relevant TLG staff.

6.2 Formal complaint process

Complaints should be submitted in writing to complaints@thelanguagegallery.com within 30 days of the incident. The complaint must detail the nature of the concern, relevant dates, and any supporting evidence.

TLG will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days and inform the complainant of the next steps.

An impartial investigator will be appointed to examine the complaint. The investigation may involve interviews, review of evidence, and consultation with relevant parties.

The complainant will receive a written response detailing the findings and any actions to be taken within 20 working days of the investigation's commencement.

If dissatisfied with the outcome, the complainant may request a review by submitting a written appeal within 10 working days of receiving the outcome. The appeal will be considered by a senior member of the TLG team not previously involved in the case.

This appeal process will also include the awarding partner of the qualification to ensure that all stages and outcomes adhere to their code of practice and policies relating to freedom of speech.

7. External Avenues for Complaints

If internal procedures do not resolve the issue, individuals may consider the following external options:

- **Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA):** Students may escalate complaints to the OIA, an independent body that reviews student complaints about higher education providers.
- **Office for Students (OfS):** Individuals can raise notifications with the OfS if they believe TLG is not meeting its obligations related to freedom of speech.

8. Training and Awareness

TLG is committed to promoting awareness and understanding of this policy through:

Introducing new students and staff to the principles of freedom of speech and this policy during induction sessions and throughout their programme of study.

9. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with current legal standards and OfS guidance. Feedback from the TLG community will be considered in making improvements to the policy and its implementation.