Freedom of Speech Policy

Version	2.0
Effective date	August 2025
Date for review	August 2026
Policy owner	Chief Executive
Reference points	Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023; BIMM University Freedom of Speech Policy; Office for Students regulatory guidance; Education (No. 2) Act 1986
Audience/handling notes	Academic, Students, Staff, External, Public, Visiting Speakers
Dissemination and implementation plan	This Freedom of Speech Policy, with its guidelines is intended to set out how NHAM complies with legislation, It is an externally facing public statement. This policy sits at Governance level, implemented and overseen by the Governance Committee. Staff will receive training on this guidance and students will receive this guidance on academic integrity and correct referencing conventions in their Student Handbook. Staff and Students will also be directed to where it is published externally. The Chief Executive will be responsible for the dissemination and implementation of this policy.
Linked Policies, Procedures and Forms	Student Handbook, Events Booking Policy, Staff Handbook, Induction, Staff Training
Date approved	August 2025

1 INTRODUCTION

The Notting Hill Academy of Music (NHAM) is committed to upholding the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom, in accordance with the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and BIMM University's institutional policy. NHAM operates as an alternative provider whose programmes are validated by BIMM. Therefore, NHAM students are also BIMM University students, entitled to the same protections and freedoms under this policy.

2 PURPOSE

This policy applies to all NHAM staff, students, visiting speakers, and contractors. Its purpose is to promote a dynamic and inclusive academic environment where ideas are debated openly and respectfully, while ensuring compliance with UK law and BIMM policy.

NHAM, in partnership with BIMM, commits to:
- Enabling staff, students, and visitors to express ideas, including controversial or unpopular ones, provided they are lawful and respectful.
- Ensuring rigorous academic debate and inquiry that challenges existing knowledge and fosters learning.
- Distinguishing clearly between lawful free expression and speech that violates UK law, such as defamation, harassment, incitement to violence, or hate speech.
- Maintaining a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect, drawing from the higher governance role BIMM plays in securing these freedoms

3 RESPONSIBILITIES

NHAM performs the following roles:

- Reinforces BIMM's Freedom of Speech Policy and procedures locally.

- Ensures all speakers and events align with municipal and university policy and legal standards.
- Advises staff and students on rights, responsibilities, and how to address concerns via the Freedom of Speech Complaints Scheme, as administered by BIMM.

Academic Staff and Event Organisers must:
- Promote a culture of open dialogue and rigorous discussion.
- Be aware of the boundaries of lawful expression and ensure that all campus activity complies with relevant legislation and NHAM/BIMM policy.
- Escalate any concerns about potential violations of the policy to the Chief Executive or Academy Manager.

Students are entitled to:
- Engage freely in academic discourse without fear of censorship or ungrounded censorship—or "no-platforming."
- Seek support through NHAM or BIMM if they experience or witness any attempts to stifle lawful expression.

4 LEGAL COMPLIANCE

NHAM adheres to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, which:
- Reinforces protections for speakers whose lawful viewpoints are excluded.
- Empowers both staff and students to raise complaints with statutory backing if free speech is impeded.
- Allows NHAM to refer formal cases to BIMM for resolution under the university's standard complaints process.

Policy Access

NHAM's version of this policy, together with a summary of BIMM's policy and guidance documents, are stored in the Staff Area of Google Drive. All staff and students should familiarise themselves with the full policy.