

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

ACADEMIC BOARD

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) A working definition of antisemitism

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1. Summary

The paper seeks the views of the Academic Board regarding the adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism.

2. Request to the Board/Committee

The Academic Board is asked to consider the context in which the University has been urged to adopt the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and to provide a view on the questions outlined below.

3. Equality Impact

The IHRA working definition is designed to better inform the consideration of racial and religious discrimination in the context of antisemitism. The possible adoption of such a definition does not unlawfully discriminate against other protected characteristics

4. Main section

The Secretary of State for Education wrote to all vice-chancellors on 9 October 2020 to urge universities across the UK to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism and all of its examples. In his letter, the Secretary of State noted that he may instruct the Office for Students to take regulatory action against universities that failed to adopt the IHRA definition and examples by the end of December 2020.

The IHRA working definition has now been adopted by a number of organisations, including a number of HEIs. However, concerns have been raised within the sector in regard to its implications for freedom of speech and academic freedom in relation to the politics of the Middle East.

The University of Brighton abhors racism in all its forms, including antisemitism. It is committed to providing a safe environment for its diverse community of students and staff from within the UK and from a range of international backgrounds.

The University would be naturally concerned if non-adoption of the IHRA working definition led to any perception that the University did not place its commitment to fighting antisemitism and other forms of racism at the centre of its mission.

The University, nevertheless, recognises the concerns raised by staff from within the institution and across the sector that some of the examples within the working definition appear to pose them challenges in regard to freedom of speech and academic freedom.

The University notes that, where at least one institution has adopted the working definition, it has done so with reference to caveats recommended by the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2016, namely that:

- **It is not antisemitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest antisemitic intent.**
- **It is not antisemitic to hold the Israeli Government to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli Government's policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest antisemitic intent.**

The University Executive is considering its position in regard to the definition and, prior to discussion at the Board of Governors, seeks the views of the Academic Board on the following questions:

- 1 Should the University adopt the IHRA working definition in full?
- 2 Should the University adopt the IHRA working definition with the additional caveats referenced above?
- 3 If the University adopts the IHRA working definition under either 1 or 2 above, should it also take steps to operationalise its position within formal student and staff disciplinary frameworks?
- 4 If the University adopts the IHRA working definition under either 1 or 2 above, should it also take steps to reiterate its commitments to academic freedom and freedom of speech?
- 5 Should the University take steps to define and adopt definitions of other forms of racism, such as Islamophobia and, if so, how should it go about this?

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