

17 July 2024

Sami Berkoff
President, Union of Jewish Students

Dear Sami,

I am writing to respond to UJS' recent letter to the leaders of the UK's universities. At Universities UK we recognise and deplore the rise in antisemitic incidents in universities and wider society since 7 October 2023. To all Jewish staff and students on our campuses, we want to say that we acknowledge your distress. We are unequivocal – there is no place for antisemitism in our universities.

The last nine months have challenged all of us. At Universities UK we have seen our primary role as being to support our member universities to respond effectively to the challenges they face in protecting their campus communities, including their Jewish students and staff, whilst actively facilitating freedom of speech within the law. As you know, we convene our members regularly to monitor the situation across the sector and share best practice. This has included a consistent focus on tackling antisemitism, and on ensuring the safety and sense of belonging of Jewish staff and students. We have been grateful to you and to your colleagues at UJS and the Community Security Trust for helping to inform these discussions on several occasions. To assist in this, we have also developed a repository of examples of practice to allow universities to learn from each other, including UUK's 2021 [guidance on tackling antisemitism on campus](#) and guidance from UJS on supporting Jewish students.

On the basis of these discussions, we are aware of cases where there have been incidents of clear harassment, hate crime or racism, and where universities have taken direct action against the perpetrators, which has included investigations,

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suspensions and the defunding of certain societies. We are also aware of a number of cases where universities have referred incidents to the police where they believe the action taken to be illegal. Universities have also strengthened their signposting for harassment procedures, aiming to ensure that any student or staff member facing antisemitism feels empowered to report it through official channels. We have also heard from many universities which have increased the pastoral support they offer to all Jewish staff and students - not just those who have experienced antisemitism – since October 2023.

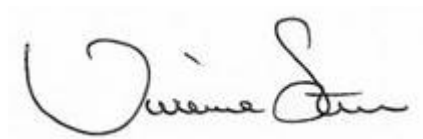
As you are aware, universities have obligations to promote freedom of speech. Ensuring that staff and students are able to express their views within the law is a part of that. However, unlawful antisemitic speech or tropes will not be tolerated, and universities are committed to ensuring staff and students understand this. This may involve setting clear and defined boundaries for what is acceptable behaviour at university events, or providing or undertaking training on what constitutes antisemitism. Indeed, we have promoted UJS's own training on this topic to university leaders.

Many universities have made statements to this effect, highlighting the importance of treating others with respect and of ensuring staff and student safety and belonging. Many universities have also communicated with staff and students about acceptable social media use when discussing the conflict. They have been clear that Hamas is a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK and that signalling support, including moral support, is a criminal offence.

On behalf of the sector, we would like to emphasise that we highly value the constructive relationship that we have with UJS and the engagement that we have had with you, both through UUK and at the individual university level. We hope to further strengthen the sector's relationship with UJS under your term as President and maintain an open dialogue about the issue of antisemitism. We will continue to ensure that the experiences of Jewish students and staff are taken into account as universities work to navigate the circumstances created by the conflict. We would be grateful if you could continue to encourage students who have experienced

antisemitism to report it to their institution, so that universities are able to take action when issues arise.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivienne Stern', enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Vivienne Stern
Chief Executive
Universities UK, on behalf of the university sector