



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Joint Committee on Human Rights

Oral evidence: [Freedom of Speech in Universities](#)
HC 589

Wednesday 10 January 2018

Written evidence from witnesses:

- Professor Sir Timothy O’Shea, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, [University of Edinburgh](#)
- Patrick Kilduff, President, [Edinburgh University Students’ Association](#)

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Members present: Members present: Ms Harriet Harman (Chair); Fiona Bruce; Ms Karen Buck; Alex Burghart; Joanna Cherry; Baroness Hamwee; Jeremy Lefroy; Baroness Prosser; Lord Trimble; Lord Woolf.

Questions 36–47

Witness[es]: **Professor Sir Timothy O’Shea**, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of Edinburgh; **Patrick Kilduff**, President, Edinburgh University Students’ Association; **Professor Adam Tickell**, Vice-Chancellor, University of Sussex; **Frida Gustafsson**, President, Students’ Union, University of Sussex; **Baroness Amos CH**, Director, SOAS, University of London

Q36 **Chair:** Happy new year to you and thank you for coming along to help us with our inquiry on free speech in universities. As you know, we are the Joint Committee on Human Rights, which is half Lords and half Commons. We are very grateful to you for coming to give evidence to us.

I will put the first question and, as you answer it, please say for the record who you are. This question is to the university authorities rather than to the students first off. I have looked through the free speech codes of practice for Edinburgh, Sussex and SOAS. What I have seen are application forms, appeals processes, external speakers panels, prior notice time limits, risk assessments, standard

checklists, high-level checklists and three-stage assessment levels—a whole panoply of processes. It seems to me that it starts with one sentence such as “We are in favour of free speech” and then moves on to pages and pages of bureaucracy, inhibitions and suchlike. It looks to me as though these free speech codes of practice are like a machinery for restricting free speech rather than promoting it. Why do you need all this stuff? Can you not just have a simple process for students to be able to book rooms and then just make sure that you are not breaking any of the laws that apply to you? It seems to me that unless you do that you are breaking the law, which requires you to promote free speech.

Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea: I am principal of the University of Edinburgh. You seem to be overstating it a bit. We had to introduce extra process in response to Prevent legislation, so we did that. We currently have about four or five speaker-led events a day, so about 1,300 a year. As far as I can see, there has been no reduction in the number. Of those 1,300 proposed speaker-led events in the last year, in terms of our process we looked closely at 10. Seven went straightforwardly. For two we established an extra level of oversight to ensure that a responsible university officer was there so that, if the discussion went off piste in some way, there could be an intervention, but in neither case did it prove necessary for there to be an intervention. In the 10th case, the organisers were a bit disorganised, so the event never happened. There are some 1,300 events a year, which seems very respectable. It is not less than the University of Edinburgh used to have. Like all universities, we felt an obligation to respond to the Prevent legislation and we had discussions with the Students' Association about that. It does not seem to me to have been particularly onerous.

Professor Adam Tickell: I am vice-chancellor of the University of Sussex. Thank you for having read our documentation. Our code of practice on free speech is just over two pages long. It is very clear that it is a permissive policy. We say explicitly that there is no right to be offended. It is very clear in the university's approach that we do everything that we can to ensure that events go ahead. We have to be mindful of four duties on us. One is the Education (No. 2) Act and the requirement on us to promote and support free speech. I am utterly committed to that as the foundational principle. As the Committee knows, there are three countervailing requirements on us: public order legislation; the public sector equalities duty; and the Prevent legislation. We have ensured that things that are likely or that might fall foul of those three duties on me and the institution go through a degree of scrutiny so that we do not fall foul of those other aspects of the law.

As with Edinburgh, in effect this is a very permissive approach. We ask our staff to do a self-assessment as to whether they think that any of those three areas will be found problematic. Clearly, the overwhelming majority are not. A seminar in history or in engineering is highly unlikely to be so, so staff will do a very light-touch self-assessment and it will go no further. If they think that there may be cause for concern, they will take it first to their line manager and, if their line manager thinks that there is a concern, it will come to our governance office. Over the last 12 months, 14 such cases have come to the governance office. Eleven were looked at by governance and it was clear that none of them needed any further thought. The other three went ahead with minor mitigation actions, which included, for example, having an independent chair. Although the approach looks difficult, the truth is that I can see no evidence that there is an inhibition of any real event.

Chair: In addition to your page and a half, you also have some other pages, including this marvellous diagram about how to find your way through. It ought to be a board game, Free Speech: "At the end, move your counter further forward". That is part of it, isn't it?

Professor Adam Tickell: That is part of the process.

Chair: To help them go through the process to get to free speech.

Professor Adam Tickell: It is. But unlike with Snakes and Ladders, people get to the top of the ladder straightaway without worrying too much. It is only in a very small number of cases that you will go down the snake.

Baroness Amos: I am director of SOAS. I will take a slightly different approach. I think that, as universities, we have become obsessed with process, which is due to the environment in which we are working. Yes, I think that universities are committed to free speech. SOAS is very much a place of critical inquiry. The nature of the robust and controversial discussions that we have had at SOAS has made us a place that has been the subject of the equivalent of fake news from certain newspapers. We were called out by the Prime Minister of the day, David Cameron, with respect to Prevent legislation. There is an environment that is contradictory, where you have legislation that says that universities should be promoting free speech but you have a regulatory environment that means that universities have to put in place all these processes to demonstrate that we are meeting the requirements of those different kinds of legislation to enable us to promote free speech. I think that it is a problem.

Chair: Professor O'Shea might have answered this, but if you have a long continuum with, on the one hand, a meeting that is going to incite violence and terrorism and, on the other hand, a bog-standard, ordinary meeting that is not controversial in any way, shape or form and has an external speaker, how much of your free speech policy is focused on the necessity to avoid the problem in what I think Professor O'Shea identified as 1%? Is this 1% of tail wagging the 99% of dog?

Baroness Amos: In the case of SOAS, I would say no. As a university authority we have worked with our student body on this kind of controversial discussion. We are a place that focuses on Asia, Africa and the Middle East and in our teaching there are very diverse views. We are a very diverse campus, but we also want to be an inclusive campus. Our students care about the world; they care about the issues affecting it. We want people to be able to talk about those things.

There are on average about 50 events per week at SOAS. I have no sense that, as a result of the policies that we put in place, people have not been invited to speak at those events. However, I am aware of a sense among a lot of our students that they are operating in an environment where they feel under particular scrutiny. Students who may be Muslim or come from an ethnic minority or have a particular political view feel under additional scrutiny as a result of that. I see our responsibility—as I think our board of trustees and others do—as being about helping to mitigate the sense that they are not able to be open and free in expressing their views. We have had very few instances in which speakers have been sent up the chain.

Baroness Hamwee: I printed off the SOAS chart. Although it looked rather intimidating, when I began to follow it through it was perfectly straightforward. I am prompted by Val's reference to students being affected by the environment. When I was at university, the most controversial speakers were our own lecturers, and I wonder how much of this applies now. We have been talking just about external speakers, but is there a much wider impact?

Baroness Amos: In relation to the issues to do with Prevent, there has been a lot of concern at SOAS in student societies but also in some of our faculty that they would fall foul of the legislation. One of my concerns, which we have raised with HEFCE and the Department for Education, is that we have legislation but we also have guidance that goes further than the legislation and which we are constantly told is statutory. We have very clear legal advice that it is not, yet we are being judged against what we are told is statutory guidance. This is just one area of concern that I have.

Professor Adam Tickell: My experience at the University of Sussex differs from the position that Baroness Amos describes, because HEFCE—which, as you know, is our current regulator—asks us to interpret Prevent in our own particular context. We have to satisfy the funding council that the approach we are taking is appropriate for our own institutions. The approach that we have taken is to ask our staff to be aware of and understand the law and to take responsibility for ensuring that we stay within it. I do not believe that the elements of the Prevent duty which relate to free speech have affected anybody in the classroom. There are other elements that concern people more, which are to do with the kind of material that some students might approach and how that will be seen by police authorities. That is where we have to work closely with our Prevent teams to ensure that staff and students do not fall foul of misunderstandings.

Q37 Ms Karen Buck: Perhaps I may turn to Patrick and Frida for their response, in particular to what Baroness Amos has just said. You have your own code of practice. I am interested in how familiar you are with the universities' code of practice and how you see the two interacting. Are they the same? Are the processes the same? Do you find it necessary in some cases to match up two different processes, even if their underlying principles are the same?

Patrick Kilduff: I am president of the Edinburgh University Students' Association. For external speakers, we follow a very similar process. We have a 14-day notice period wherein we are notified by our students of an external speaker. The process then followed is that our commercial director, who is employed full time, makes a decision as to what the risk factor is deemed to be. If the risk factor is high enough, it is referred to the university's compliance group, which assesses whether further action—as Tim has described—is necessary. The fact is that last year we held 5,462 events in the students' association building's rooms. None of them was stopped by virtue of these processes. However, we know that many students, especially those from BME backgrounds and minorities, are concerned about the impact and implications of the Prevent policy due to the grey areas and to what it could do to the whole virtue of being a higher education student.

Ms Karen Buck: People will probably want to drill down a little further into Prevent specifically, so let us come back to that. So there were some 5,000 events. How many times would you have referred those up to compliance?

Patrick Kilduff: I believe that in the past 24 months we have referred 14 cases to the compliance unit. It has deemed to take forward about seven

of those for further analysis. I am unaware as to which ones were then taken further.

Ms Karen Buck: Do you feel that that process is fully embedded within the individual student societies and that they understand it? Setting aside Prevent for the moment, to which we might come back, is there a sense within the societies that this is clear, transparent and not leading to self-censorship before the invitation process starts?

Patrick Kilduff: Essentially, it is like any business or corporate entity having external speakers: you require people to fill out a form so that you know what the requirements of the meeting are. Since they are using our spaces, we need to know the requirements. By virtue of them booking the room, they then tick a box that says, "We have an external speaker". They then have to describe who the speaker is and what they will be talking about. That case goes through and then an assessment is made. It is transparent.

Frida Gustafsson: I am the president of the University of Sussex Students' Union. The situation at Sussex is fairly similar to that at Edinburgh. To be honest, there is bureaucracy in dealing with procedures for external speakers. That has come from guidance from the Charity Commission, the regulator, which tells us that trustees have to make sure that we have rigid procedures in place to mitigate any risk connected with external speakers. We have tried our best to make this as clear as possible for students and specifically student groups if they want to put on an event with an external speaker. It is worth making it clear that very few of the events that our students put on have external speakers; most of them are debates just among students about anything from sci-fi and make-up to Brexit and the death penalty. Most of those are alive and well. Again, there is a procedure for external speakers. You have to fill in a form 10 working days before the event. It is sent to one of our staff members, who looks through it. If anything is flagged against what the Charity Commission has told us we should assess as risks, we put a panel of trustees together to try to mitigate those risks to make sure that the event goes ahead. There is bureaucracy, but having procedures in place that apply to everything has allowed our students' union to change the way in which we talk about events with external speakers. It is no longer about, "Oh, a society put on something and oh my God, we do not know what is happening, how do we ban that thing?" It is now: "In 10 days, there's an event. We might not agree with that person. However, we have procedures in place to say that not agreeing with someone does not mean that they should not speak. If that speaker is going to put us at risk of not following what we as a charity should do, we should mitigate those risks with the intention of making it going ahead".

Ms Karen Buck: Again, as Patrick said, do you have a sense of the number of occasions on which queries were referred up to the university?

Frida Gustafsson: Actually, we do not refer queries to the university; we deal with that internally. If an event is flagged as being of medium to high risk, we tend to notify the university because that makes a lot of sense. With 200 student societies, you can imagine that we have had quite a few events each week over the past year. We have had 43 external speaker forms submitted, three of which were flagged as medium to high risk. All three went ahead apart from one, which was cancelled by the speaker.

Alex Burghart: Very quickly, could you bring the bureaucratic processes to light for us? Can you each give us an example of high-risk cases that were escalated and examined?

Frida Gustafsson: One example is the recent event with Bill Etheridge, a UKIP Member of Parliament who wanted to come and speak on campus. As with any event, the society that organised it had to submit a speaker's form. When that form comes in, we have a staff member who goes to check whether this person has said anything in the past—and whether it is likely that they might say something similar—that was specifically against our charitable objectives and purposes, which are quite strict. As Bill has in the past encouraged UKIP's young activists to consider the presentational skills of Adolf Hitler and claimed that multiculturalism would lead to rivers of blood, we sensed that there might be a risk of that happening again. The purpose of us mitigating those risks and putting in place the panel that we then did was not to make the event not happen; it was to make sure that we as a charity were providing a platform and an event that was not just a place for someone to shout out harassment or racism, or to glorify fascist dictators. In that example, we put forward that if there was to be a debate we wanted an independent chair and someone with another opinion to debate Bill Etheridge. If there was to be a Q&A with Bill, we wanted to know what was going to be spoken about—again to ensure that he would not be glorifying fascist dictators without being questioned.

Alex Burghart: You put those processes in place and then the event went ahead?

Frida Gustafsson: No, that event was cancelled by Bill, who said that in effect we no-platformed him. Interestingly, he said his right to freedom of speech was not upheld because we wanted his opinions to be questioned, not just taken as they were.

Alex Burghart: Patrick, could we have an example from Edinburgh?

Patrick Kilduff: We have one of the oldest political unions in the world, and it was planning to hold a lecture on the Syrian civil war. This example is in the written evidence. It was intending to have a lecture by Skype but managed to secure the person to come and speak in person. This person was a formal volunteer with the International Freedom Battalion people's protection units and a member of the Bob Crow Brigade. It was considered by the university compliance—

Alex Burghart: I am sorry, that is very kind, but we have that in written evidence. In the interests of time, feel free to move on, unless there is anything else you would like to add.

Patrick Kilduff: No.

Chair: Frida, do you think you have an obligation over and above the obligation that is regulated by the police? If those UKIP statements are not prosecuted or regarded as outside the criminal law, do you make your own assessment of whether it is outside the law in order to decide whether you think they are acceptable as speakers? Why do you not accept the fact that, if he has not been prosecuted, whatever he said, however objectionable, cannot be illegal?

Frida Gustafsson: We very much based the procedure that I have just described on guidance given by the Charity Commission, which specifically says that charity trustees need to be aware of and manage activities that may break the law, encourage or glorify terrorism, be outside the charity's objectives or otherwise be inappropriate under charity law. Again, that is very strict. Actually, I would love it if my student union were able to decide that for itself, but the Charity Commission guidance has been very strict about what we should be considering as risk in the context of our external speakers.

Professor Adam Tickell: I should emphasise that at no time did the student union say that Bill Etheridge would not be welcome to speak on campus. It asked that there should be an independent chair. This goes into one of the key tensions: when people are likely to be very controversial, how best can we handle that? One easy way is to say that we will not let an event go ahead under the student union or the university. Another is to encourage the event to go ahead but to encourage genuine debate rather than simple polemicism. The approach that Frida is describing was trying to encourage debate, and that was unacceptable to the speaker.

Chair: Basically, you are in favour of debate but not controversy. Or are you against polemicism?

Professor Adam Tickell: I do not see them as binary. We actively encourage controversial speakers. I do not really want to focus on this particular speaker but he has spoken before about golliwogs and things that meant that, in the context of a university with many students with strong political views, if he came in it could be quite a risky environment for him, and there would be a lot of heat and not very much light. The approach that Frida is describing, and one that I absolutely endorse, is one where we would encourage him not to be outwardly racist but certainly to express very strong views in a way that they could be challenged, and students and anyone else could make up their own mind rather than simply hearing a lecture.

Frida Gustafsson: This individual instance ended up in the news, with a letter saying that we had effectively no-platformed him—which, by the way, is not what a no-platforming policy does. I want to make clear that when cases like this end up in the news, they very much become framed as student unions making the decision to go beyond what the law tells us to do, forgetting that this is very much us following Charity Commission regulations. We could argue about them and discuss how useful they are, but it is important to remember that student unions are not just trying to limit speakers; we are trying to support students to do student things, and we have to do that while considering quite a lot of stakeholders and their regulations and guidance.

Baroness Hamwee: That is absolutely on the point. I am not suggesting that our witnesses take time explaining this now but I wonder if they might send us their objectives. Reference has been made to you having to have regard to your charitable objectives, and it would be very helpful if we could see those on paper.

Chair: Baroness Hamwee, you are going to take this question.

Q38 **Baroness Hamwee:** Am I? Right. Are there some issues that receive more attention and scrutiny than others? Whichever one it was that I printed off goes through everything, from health and safety and all that through to Prevent. How do you balance the different risks against one another in terms of approving an event?

Frida Gustafsson: At Sussex, everything goes through the same scrutiny and the same procedure. If there is an external speaker, it goes through a certain procedure; if there is not, it goes through a risk assessment. So it is not really that anything has more or less scrutiny.

Baroness Hamwee: So all the risks are on a level.

Frida Gustafsson: Yes. Again, this is very much in line with the Charity Commission, which has said that trustees would need to provide sufficient assurance that a decision to allow speakers a platform is in the best interests of the charity.

Patrick Kilduff: At Edinburgh University Students' Association we follow the same processes for every single reference for external speakers that we get. However, particular attention is paid to discussions and topics around terrorism, due to the Prevent duty. Since we do not have Charity Commission guidelines referencing specific freedom of speech issues, we take seriously the Prevent duty on that aspect.

Chair: Fiona, do you think that your question has already been answered?

Fiona Bruce: Yes.

Chair: In which case, you can ask another one, or we can move on to Alex's question.

Fiona Bruce: I would like to ask a question.

Chair: Good.

Q39 **Fiona Bruce:** Some of the evidence that we have had indicates that, because of the procedures that student groups are having to go through, there is what is called "an evident chilling of free speech" on many of our campuses, making the running of student groups too onerous. Do you think these procedures are chilling free speech? I cite the very example that you have given of Bill Etheridge, who ultimately withdrew. You say that he was not effectively banned, but he withdrew so the event did not go ahead. What is your comment about this view that there is a chilling of free speech now?

Frida Gustafsson: I would say—

Fiona Bruce: I am interested in hearing from any panel member.

Professor Adam Tickell: Shall I make a start? I shall address the specific example but also the general point. I do not accept that there has been a chilling of free speech. On the case in question, as Frida explained, Bill Etheridge continued to have an invitation to come and talk. In the last 12 months the university has hosted speakers from UKIP, and we will continue to welcome anyone who is prepared to come and speak within the law. More generally, there is something of a generic misunderstanding

about the nature of what is happening in universities at the moment. I cannot see any systematic evidence that free speech is being inhibited. There is free speech every day in the classrooms and seminar rooms as a matter of course, because that is how universities thrive. Some of the evidence that has been given to this Committee is misleading. I watched and listened to the evidence from, effectively, the *Spiked* contingent. My university has an amber rating from *Spiked* for two reasons. The first is the student union, because *Spiked* misunderstood that our student union asks that posters are checked, basically so they are not outwith student union rules. The other is that the university has a policy on bullying and harassment that says you are not allowed to use derogatory language with reference to women and people of colour. That is enough for *Spiked* to say that we are inhibiting free speech. This is part of a pattern where things that are not relevant to the discussions around free speech are whipped up to create some moral panic that suggests that universities are trying to inhibit very legitimate debate.

I will give you another example. There is talk that universities remove books from library shelves. I checked at the beginning of the week with the executive director of Research Libraries UK, the umbrella body for research libraries that also includes the National Library of Ireland and a bunch of other significant libraries, to see how many of its members had removed books from shelves. The answer was none. Not a single library book has been removed from a single shelf in a single university research library in this country, to the knowledge of any of the librarians. What has happened is that a small number of anti-Semitic books by David Irving have been taken off the open shelves and put on the restricted shelves so that people who are interested in doing research or want to go and read those books can do so, with reference and on request to the librarian. So we hear all sorts of claims about the inhibition and chilling of free speech in British universities, but I would say that the evidence base is anaemically small.

Chair: Obviously those books are objectionable for understandable reasons to a lot of people, but are they illegal?

Professor Adam Tickell: They are legal. There are a very small number of books that are illegal. The *Anarchist's Cookbook*, a terrorist training manual, is not a legal book to have in the UK. I have to say, presumably outwith the restricted section in the British Library, that there will not be any university that has that—and nor should they. Apart from that, I am genuinely not aware, nor is the representative body, of any book that has been restricted.

Chair: So even though it is legal, you put it in a restricted area.

Professor Adam Tickell: There are a very small number of books that you would have in a restricted area because you do not want to cause general offence.

Fiona Bruce: Sorry, Chair, may I just ask whether the members of the panel could answer my question? It is an important question on this issue of the chilling effect.

Baroness Amos: I am happy to come in on that. I think there is confusion here. I would not say that there has been a chilling effect at SOAS with regard to who is invited and who gets to speak there. I do not think that in the last 10 years or so there has been anyone who has been no-platformed at SOAS or anything like that. The reason why I say there is a degree of confusion and contradiction is that you cannot speak about free speech without looking at the connection to other issues. You say that we will come on to Prevent but, certainly at SOAS, Prevent is a big element of that. Given the nature of our student body, and given the concerns about an overall political environment in which our students and a lot of our faculty feel that there is a squeezing of the ability to be open, diverse and inclusive in a whole range of things including how we treat refugees, our visa policy and how Prevent is being implemented—all these things are having an impact on how young people, particularly young people of colour or who are Muslim, feel in terms of being under additional scrutiny. The chilling effect is more about a perception, but also the reality, of the way in which those young people are living in this society.

Fiona Bruce: I will ask Frida and Patrick to comment because I am interested in the students' reply, but Baroness Amos has hit on a pertinent point that is supplementary to my initial question: if this sense that there is an inhibition about speaking freely on subjects is then carried over beyond university and wider society, that is a very grave concern, is it not, for a generation of individuals who are going to play a key role in the leadership of our society—the next generation and beyond?

Baroness Amos: Absolutely.

Fiona Bruce: Thank you.

Patrick Kilduff: Free speech does not exist in a vacuum. Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights outlines that there are certain caveats that include accessibility, inclusivity and so on. The key reason why I would say there has been a slight chilling is, as Baroness Amos pointed out, due to Prevent. If we believe that free speech is so that people can talk truth to power, especially marginalised groups, then this

is stopping marginalised groups—Jews, Muslims and BME students—from being able to voice their concerns and host events. That is what is chilling. Reference has been made to *Spiked*, which raised the point that we made the decision not to play “Blurred Lines” in our venues. That was because we had a democratic policy about not perpetuating lad culture. I read that the deputy editor said he would not even repeat the lyrics because I am sure he understood quite how vile they are, including the phrase “I know you want it”. It is terrible and we decided that it was not in line with our organisational values, by virtue of democratic decisions made, to play that song. Those types of actions are not impinging on people’s freedom of speech or expression in our university and our student association. The real threats are coming from government legislation like Prevent.

Frida Gustafsson: Can I make a slightly different point? The idea that there is a chilling of free speech on campuses is something that is very much reflected in the national news but, taking a step back from the news and into the 18,000 students of Sussex, not really something that I see reflected among the student population. Essentially, there is very little evidence to support the idea that free speech is being stifled on campus. Just last year, HEPI did some research that found that 83% of students feel safe in sharing their political views. There have been three or four cases that have been conflated, shared quite a lot and, in the Bill Etheridge case, quite misinterpreted. From speaking to students, it seems as if the concerns around these cases are more about fuelling certain political former university Ministers’ ideas of what is or is not free speech rather than actual student concerns. I would say that what has created the idea of a chilling of freedom of speech is the news articles themselves, which then make students worried, rather than our policies themselves.

Q40 Fiona Bruce: This is my last specific question, Chair, which is very short. In some evidence we have been told that many societies are requiring not just the name of the speaker but an outline of the speech to be submitted before the process of approval is gone through. Is that something that you think is right?

Frida Gustafsson: Student unions are charities and, according to guidance, need to behave within certain charity regulations. In order for that to happen, we need to ensure that external speakers do not breach those regulations. I can see a point to that. Having lots of bureaucracy and policy is not sexy or very much fun, but having these procedures in place—including, for example, asking for a speech beforehand—means that instead of saying, “No, we can’t have that speaker come because they have said something racist in the past”, we can say, “We aren’t going to judge you on your past. We’re going to judge you on what you want to say here”. Is that something that we as a charity and students’

union can support and give a platform to? In that case, brilliant—welcome.

Fiona Bruce: And then do you allow a debate or discussion afterwards, or questions from the floor? You would not restrict that?

Frida Gustafsson: No.

Fiona Bruce: The logic of approving a speech almost says, “That’s what we are going to agree you can say”, which is inhibitive then of a free-flowing discussion, is it not?

Frida Gustafsson: It is a fair point. If you get the Charity Commission in front of you, I would love for you to ask it that.

Fiona Bruce: We will. No problem.

Q41 **Alex Burghart:** I have one quick question before I move on to the next topic—although often when people say “quick question” they mean quick to ask rather than quick to answer. Adam, if these restrictions on Prevent, public order and equalities that you mentioned were removed by some hypothetical future deregulating Government, would you change your processes—and if so, how?

Professor Adam Tickell: My instinct, and I am sure that it is that of the overwhelming majority of my counterparts in the whole of the United Kingdom, is that we do everything we can to promote vigorous discussion and debate. We keep being promised a specific question about Prevent so that I can talk in more detail, but, for us, this is about making sure that we do not put people at risk. If we think an event is going to give rise to public order problems, we will put security in place; we will not say, “You can’t go ahead”. If the public sector equality duty is taken away, do I think that debates which may harm minority students should go ahead? I would need to think very carefully about that. Whether or not it is a legislative duty, I have a duty of care towards the students in my university. The approach that we take to Prevent is very similar. We need to think about the Prevent legislation as supporting vulnerable people. That is entirely our approach to it: it is about making sure that people who are vulnerable are supported rather than put at risk. Would I want to put vulnerable people at risk without that legislation? Clearly not. What then do we do? The approach is that we continue to make sure that events can go ahead, but in such a way that we do not put people at risk in any way.

Alex Burghart: So that sounds like you do pretty much what you do now.

Professor Adam Tickell: Yes, that is a much shorter way of saying what I have said.

Alex Burghart: Frida, would you like to add anything to that?

Frida Gustafsson: No. It is a very good question. I do not have anything to add.

Alex Burghart: Frida, let me go back to something you mentioned earlier about no-platforming. You said that a UKIP MEP had said that he had been no-platformed and that it was not what your idea of no-platforming was—and it is not mine, either. What is your idea of no-platforming, and are there any examples of it being used in your university and in what way?

Frida Gustafsson: We have never no-platformed a speaker at Sussex. At Sussex we have a no-platforming policy, which means that we will not give our platform to six specific racist, fascist and extremist groups. As Bill is not part of any of those groups, he was not no-platformed.

Alex Burghart: What about you, Patrick? Have there been any instances of no-platforming? What is your no-platforming policy, if you have one?

Patrick Kilduff: It is exactly the same as Frida's. There is the NUS no-platforming list, which has six organisations on it, two to three of which are proscribed terror organisations. Most of them have people in leadership who have been arrested for inciting racial hatred and violence. Our processes have never stopped anyone from coming to speak at our university.

Alex Burghart: Some of the cases that we have seen in the media that have been raised under the banner of inhibiting free speech have actually been cases where student protests have prevented events going ahead. What is the panel's view on this? Is it something that we should be concerned about?

Baroness Amos: Would you like us to talk about specific examples?

Alex Burghart: Yes, if you would like to.

Baroness Amos: For me, universities are places where there will be robust, difficult and sometimes challenging and controversial discussions. It is important that students and others have the right to protest. The most controversial speaker that we have had at SOAS in the past year was the Israeli ambassador, who was invited by the SOAS Jewish

students' society. After the risk assessment was done by the students' union following a request being put to it, it brought it to us because of concerns about safety and security. The event went ahead. It was felt that it was very important that it went ahead, with the opportunity for questioning of the ambassador, but there were significant protests for and against.

Q42 Alex Burghart: This question relates to something that we are going to ask in a minute. As you may be aware, Baroness Deech, a former Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, has told the Committee that universities such as SOAS and the University of Manchester are regarded as having an anti-Semitic environment and this has led to fewer applicants from young people of Jewish backgrounds. Do you think that that is an accurate assessment of your institution?

Baroness Amos: No, I do not. I do not know where she gets those figures from in terms of fewer students from a Jewish background coming to SOAS. There are periodically reports in the press of SOAS being an anti-Semitic institution. Much of this goes back to the fact that there was a poll on BDS at SOAS by the students' union which has been supported by students in some faculties; it is not the school's position. We were also in the press following a report by the then head of the SOAS Jewish Society that Jewish students did not want to wear anything that identified them as Jewish. Through our Centre for Jewish Studies, we talked to a number of Jewish students on campus and there is no evidence that that is the case, but we do have students who feel that when the discussion is around the Middle East, particularly Israel/Palestine, there is not necessarily an understanding of the position of Jewish students in relation to those issues, in particular their support for Israel—if they are supportive, because there is not a uniform view of Israel. I and, I think, many others were concerned about the reports that we had students who felt that they could not openly speak Hebrew and so on. That is not the sense from the debates and discussions that we have had with those students, but we remain very vigilant about it. We are an inclusive campus; we are one of the few places in the country where you can do Israeli studies, where we have a Jewish studies centre and so on. That diversity in what we do is very important for us and we want to be able to continue it.

Alex Burghart: From talking to the Jewish student groups in SOAS, they have given you no sense that they feel inhibited in doing what they want to do as members of the university.

Baroness Amos: As I said, what has come back to me is very much a sense that when the Middle East, particularly Israel/Palestine, is being

discussed, there is a lack of understanding of the position of some of our Jewish students in relation to supporting Israel. We tried, again through our Centre for Jewish Studies, to talk to representatives of the Jewish student union society about some of what was in the press. They did not necessarily want to talk to our faculty or indeed give evidence to back up the claims that had been made. We as a university administration have had discussions with the Board of Deputies, the Union of Jewish Students and others because of our concerns about what has been reported in the press, but I certainly do not feel that those reports about SOAS being anti-Semitic are fair.

Alex Burghart: Thank you very much. I will just go back quickly to the question that Baroness Amos was asked about whether student protest was ever closing down debate and inhibiting free speech, even though all the proper processes up to that point had been followed. Any input from any quarter would be welcome.

Frida Gustafsson: This very much goes to the heart of freedom of speech. On the one hand, we have the right to hold opinions that people disagree with and, on the other, we have the right to hold the opinion that that person should not have that opinion. I am not saying that student unions or universities have the response to that, but it shows that student unions have quite a complex situation to try to deal with. On the one hand, you can let the event go ahead, maybe risking the security of the people there; on the other hand, you have the risk of not letting the event go ahead and inhibiting someone's freedom of speech. It would be really valuable for student unions in universities to have more support in figuring out the best practice for this. It is also worth taking a step back from seeing those instances as students being students. They are politically aware citizens wanting to engage in political topics. It is not just students in universities. This is the exact same thing that we are currently having over whether Trump should be invited to Parliament to speak. Once we figure out as a society how we want to deal with those issues, student unions and universities will be happy to engage with that.

Alex Burghart: Have there been any instances at your university where student protest has prevented a planned event from going ahead?

Frida Gustafsson: Not as far as I am aware.

Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea: It has happened at Edinburgh. Obviously, we liaise closely with the civil authorities. If the civil authorities say that there is a risk to people, we take that seriously. Where that has happened, we have always rescheduled. The Israeli ambassador is a classic example, obviously. You need to be a little careful with the concept of student protest. In a city like Edinburgh, where the university has 550

buildings spread over the city, if there is a protest and, for example, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign is there, clearly there will be student members of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign but also plenty of people who are not students also protesting. Particularly for universities such as SOAS and Edinburgh in an urban environment, a student protest is not a clear-cut thing. There may be a protest that requires the authorities to liaise with the civil authorities. That is not new. I have been the head of the institution for 15 years. You get one or two of those every year. You talk to the police and the police give you their advice. If the police say, "This really needs to be stopped, otherwise somebody is going to end up in hospital", you have to follow their advice.

Baroness Amos: That is a very important point. A number of the events that we have at SOAS are open events, so they are open to members of the public. We have had events disrupted by members of the public. On the whole, these have been events about Palestine disrupted by people who are pro-Israel, for example. We have had two or three of those in the last year.

Q43 **Joanna Cherry:** Sir Timothy, I wonder if I could start with you. You have been principal and vice-chancellor of the University of Edinburgh, which is my alma mater, in the city that I represent, although it is not in my constituency, since 2002, but prior to that you were the master of Birkbeck, provost of Gresham College and pro-vice-chancellor of the University of London. We have heard evidence about Section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, which applies only in England and Wales, not in Scotland or Northern Ireland. It imposes an obligation on university governing bodies to take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured. I wonder whether you, as someone who has been a chancellor north and south of the border, perceive that the existence of that legislation in England and its non-existence in Scotland makes any difference at all to practice.

Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea: Not in my experience. As you say, I have been pro-vice-chancellor of the federal University of London as well as vice-chancellor of the University of Edinburgh. In the case of the University of Edinburgh, the commitment to freedom of speech is very clear. It is in the university ordinances. If one wanted to change it—not that one would—one would have to go to the Privy Council with it. It is unambiguously in our university ordinances and there is an unambiguous commitment to freedom of speech in the contracts of employment that we offer our 15,000 staff. It is very clear there, not only legally but culturally. It is a strong commitment. I would say that the federal University of London is absolutely no different from Edinburgh in that

regard. There is, as you say, a legal commitment but there is also a cultural commitment.

Joanna Cherry: We have seen the written evidence from Edinburgh and you and Patrick have spoken about this. It seems to me that Edinburgh is doing pretty well in the policy that it is operating. Can you identify why that is working so well? In other evidence sessions, we have heard about tension between the students' association and the university authorities. It would be helpful to us if each of you could outline why you think that your policies on freedom of speech are working well at the University of Edinburgh.

Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea: I would signal two things, apart from the cultural context to freedom of speech—it would be very odd for a university not to be committed to freedom of speech, given that we are concerned with advancing knowledge and intellectual challenge. As a consequence of evolving pressure, particularly with regard to social media, and in consultation with the student union officers about six years ago, Edinburgh introduced the dignity and respect policy. That dignity and respect policy was specific in saying to all communities in the university—in the different environments, such as teaching, societies and debates—that the university requires you to show appropriate respect and to behave with appropriate dignity. That was helpful. Subsequently, when we were talking with the student union officers of a few generations before Patrick about how we should best respond to the Prevent legislation, the work that we had previously done together on dignity and respect was a useful starting block. For whatever reason, we in Edinburgh are in the happy position that we have a tradition of strong and positive working between the student officers and the senior officers of the university.

Patrick Kilduff: I echo that. It comes down to having a positive working relationship with the university in terms of the events that we hold in its spaces and helping to ensure that those events can go ahead without incident and with the proper security. It seems like we do well, but if you read the newspapers you would assume that there were issues at the Edinburgh University Students' Association around free speech and that we were censoring, clamping down or stopping people doing various things. The main issue is that people speak of students as if we exist in a vacuum and are not people in the real world and so do not have the same rights to exercise ourselves in public debate and speech as any other citizen. Most of the time, incidents are sensationalised by newspapers and media organisations. The fact is that in most institutions free speech is alive and well and there are many more pressing issues for students in the United Kingdom.

Q44 Joanna Cherry: Perhaps I can move on to ask some questions about the Prevent strategy, particularly focusing on Patrick and Frida as students' association officials. Patrick, you talked about students from BAME and other ethnic minority backgrounds being worried about the Prevent strategy. We have had evidence, including written evidence from the Heriot-Watt University Students' Association in my constituency, expressing serious concerns about the chilling effect of Prevent on university campuses. We have seen what they have said in their written evidence, but I wanted to ask each of you about your experience of the Prevent strategy and whether it has had a chilling effect on freedom of speech—or, indeed, on other activities in universities.

Patrick Kilduff: That is the trouble: we can tell you that we have had 5,462 events in the past year, but I cannot tell you all the events that we have not had. I can only tell you anecdotally that we have a number of students from BME backgrounds, Jewish backgrounds and especially Muslim backgrounds who come to us with concerns about hosting events or taking part in certain things because there are such grey areas around the policy, its implementation, our duty to enforce it and what the ramifications could be in the university and in civil society. For example, a society, which I will not name, wished to host a Q&A session with a Syrian refugee in order to enlighten and enhance students' understanding of the refugee crisis in Syria. They secured the funding and the room to do it but chose to cancel it simply by virtue of the fact that they were so concerned that this could seriously damage their future and their existence in the UK.

Frida Gustafsson: Also, beyond events and student groups, Prevent has come to significantly impede and affect students on campus individually. I know of at least two cases in Sussex where Muslim students participating in an IR seminar were approached by a Prevent officer asking them questions, basically to figure out whether or not they were leaning towards extremism. In fact they were not found to be at any risk of that; they just happened to be Muslim students who also had an opinion that, according to the way that Prevent is currently written, makes you a suspect. This has led to quite a few students coming to me and other officers saying that they are afraid of speaking their mind. They are even afraid of going to the campus prayer room because they have been asked in interviews how many times a day they pray—as if that has anything to do with how likely you are to fall for extremism.

Joanna Cherry: The executive committee of the student union at Heriot-Watt University—which, as you will be aware, has a large number of international students, and campuses in Dubai and Malaysia—has spoken about self-censorship. It says students from Muslim or Middle

Eastern backgrounds are self-censoring as a result of Prevent and that they feel that there is, in the committee's words, a demonstrable lack of visibility of cultural or religious events on campus due to fear. They also feel that what should be transnational campuses are being delocalised. That is very strong wording but it is the view of the executive committee of the student association at one university. Does that fit at all with what you have experienced in your universities?

Frida Gustafsson: I can definitely imagine that that aligns with what individual students feel like.

Patrick Kilduff: That definitely matches up with what we hear from our students: self-censorship and the disproportionate impact that this policy has on marginalised groups, who are already too often the quietest and silenced the most.

Joanna Cherry: Having said all that, do you think it would be possible to balance the Prevent duty with the duty to secure freedom of speech? Are there steps that we could take to ensure that the balance was better so that Prevent existed but did not necessarily have that chilling effect?

Patrick Kilduff: We already have legislation against incitement to violence, racial hatred and terrorism. It seems disproportionate to throw the enhancement of those procedures with the Prevent duty on to student societies and student unions.

Joanna Cherry: If any other panel members want to comment, please do so.

Professor Adam Tickell: For me, there are two key distinctions here. One is that the Prevent duty refers to external speakers. I am not hearing that there is a huge amount of concern about that, but there is clearly some self-censorship. That is a matter of perception. I do not think the reality is that these would fall foul of the approach that we take to Prevent that has been accepted by our regulator—we have had Syrian refugee speakers talking on campus and it has caused no difficulty whatever—but perception really matters. That is where the “chilling” language applies and where we need to be very mindful. The other area of Prevent is where individuals are deemed to be at risk and where the security services, social workers or any of the Prevent team consider people to be at risk. It was only in preparation for this session that I became aware of the cases that Frida was talking about. I am very happy to take them up with the relevant authorities to ensure that there is not a disproportionate effect as a result of discussions that people have in the classroom, or indeed their homes, because that really concerns me—and I

think it would be a concern to our Prevent team in Brighton & Hove as well.

Frida Gustafsson: I would add that, in relation to both Prevent and the Charity Commission guidance and regulations, there is a change that could be made in the character of regulations when it comes to freedom of speech and various other things that need to be balanced by student unions at universities. Right now I feel that quite a lot of the policy and guidance is given out without talking to universities and student unions and asking, "How does your life work? How can we do this best? How can we establish best practice? How can we work with you to ensure that this works as well as possible?". It is more about regulating, putting up hoops and barriers and increasing bureaucracy.

Baroness Amos: There are a couple of things I would like to say. The first I have said already, which is that universities exist in a political and social environment. We have to recognise that. SOAS is a place where 50% of our students are international but we also get a lot of domestic students from diverse backgrounds. There is certainly a sense at SOAS—as a university, and given the nature of the make-up of our student body—that they are under greater scrutiny as a result of the Prevent legislation, which is what then has the chilling effect. As I say, that is about a whole range of issues. Then there are two additional elements. One is about external speakers and what happens in relation to them. The other is that we are frequently asked as a university authority why we have not made any referrals through what is called Channel in respect of the Prevent legislation—that is, indicating to the authorities that there are individuals that we are concerned about. Our view, and I think Adam mentioned this earlier, is that we as a university have a duty of care to all our students, and that our policies outside Prevent are sufficient in helping us to recognise whether there are students who we should be concerned about with respect to that duty of care. So we have not felt that we have had to refer any students through the Channel mechanism. That does not stop us being asked why we have not done so, which I think is interesting.

Q45 **Joanna Cherry:** Can I move on to charity law and guidance? Some of you have mentioned that already, and we have heard evidence that it, too, has a chilling effect, particularly on the activities of the student associations to which it applies. I ask Patrick and Frida: has losing exempt charitable status as a result of the Charity Act 2006 had an effect on freedom of speech for your student union?

Patrick Kilduff: No.

Joanna Cherry: Do you have issues with the way in which the charities legislation and the guidance issued by the Charity Commission impact on decisions that you make about speakers?

Frida Gustafsson: Losing our exempt charity status has affected student unions. It has changed the way that we work and, through having a national regulator, introduced a higher standard of bureaucracy, policies and procedures. On the one hand this has meant that student unions and officers are not as free, however much I would like to, to speak out on political issues or support students in doing political things beyond what is strictly deemed to be within our charitable objectives. On the other hand, having that national regulator and national standard means that student unions now are able to enable free speech more, in that they are not run by individual students who—as much as I love them—every once in a while will have extreme opinions about what should and should not be spoken about. We now have procedures which, although not much fun, mean that in essence all speakers are supposed to be able to come and speak, provided that they fall within our charitable objectives.

Joanna Cherry: Perhaps I could ask you a slightly more specific question. The Committee has received evidence that suggests that the Charity Commission guidance on inviting controversial speakers, which is called *Protecting Charities from Harm*, encourages student unions to take a risk-averse approach when organising events and therefore potentially is inhibiting free speech—a bit like the chilling effect of Prevent, if indeed it has a chilling effect; that is a matter for us to conclude after hearing evidence. What is your view of the Charity Commission's guidance? Do you feel that it encourages student associations to take a risk-averse approach? For example, we have heard that the commission lists the treatment of political prisoners in a foreign country as an issue that student unions should not comment on. I know it was a long time ago but when I was at Edinburgh University, we never stopped commenting on things like that—not just me, other people as well. So I was a bit surprised to find out about that.

Frida Gustafsson: I definitely have problems and issues with the way in which the Charity Commission has come to regulate student unions, in that it seems to think of us as charities. Although we are, we are not like any other charities out there. For example, taking a risk-based approach might be useful in making sure that our platform is not misused by political groups—but its idea of risk is controversial debates, which I would say are the very foundation of our existence. It should be helping us and enabling us to do that well and enabling everyone's free speech and right to feel not discriminated against or harassed, rather than limiting us in doing that.

Professor Adam Tickell: For me, some of the expectations of the Charity Commission miss a really important point, which is that many students get involved in politics in student unions because it is part of their political formation. If you inhibit people's political formation, it is to the detriment of our democracy.

Patrick Kilduff: We are regulated by OSCR in Scotland and it has imparted no specific guidance on what we can and cannot do with speakers. That is to our benefit.

Q46 **Lord Trimble:** I will take a slightly different approach. A lot of the discussion so far has been about visiting speakers, as if this is a hugely important topic, but I would suggest that visiting speakers do not create the atmosphere at a university. The atmosphere at a university is created by the staff and students. So if we put to one side all these issues about procedures for visiting speakers and all the rest of it, and indeed put Prevent to one side as well because that is part of a policy to try to inhibit terrorism, and look just at the staff and the students, who should be creating—and in fact do create—the atmosphere at a university, do you think there is anything you need to do to encourage free speech in that context?

Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea: Looking at Edinburgh, freedom of speech and the ability to express quite divergent opinions and debate them robustly are visibly present. We have the Centre for the Study of Islam in the Modern World. Obviously, it routinely has debates which attract strong commentary. We have the only centre for Japanese/Chinese understanding in the world, where people with extremely strong opinions on the history, particularly in the period before and after the Second World War, express their views. We are the one university that accepted the resources for the Arthur Koestler Chair in Parapsychology. There are people who have extremely strong opinions about parapsychology, in various regards. Obviously, the University of Edinburgh has a tradition which includes people such as Hume, Adam Smith, Ferguson, and Dugald Stewart. That tradition is alive and well and you have very distinguished people, some of whom are our staff and some of whom are not, expressing views which other people find surprising and controversial, on religious, political, scientific and intellectual matters.

Baroness Amos: SOAS prides itself on challenge, controversy and critical inquiry, but it has a very strong political ethos. If you do not share that political ethos, I think it is harder.

Lord Trimble: How would you describe the political ethos?

Baroness Amos: Very left of centre.

Chair: We turn to the final question from Harry.

Q47 **Lord Woolf:** I wonder whether, Chair, with your permission, I might depart just a little from what was intended. The background to my question is the fact that for a period of time—over a decade ago now—I was Chair of the federal University of London and then went on to be chair of University College. I am astonished at the changes that apparently have taken place since I was directly involved. Perhaps you could help me. Do you think that currently you are provided with too much assistance by codes of practice and matters of that sort, and by the Charity Commission, or do you feel a need for more guidance of any sort? If so, who do you feel it should come from?

Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea: That is an extremely witty question, Lord Woolf. Certainly from where I am sitting, if you are looking across the overall business of operating a university, we have an excess of additional governance. I remember with great respect your chairing the council of the University of London—because obviously I was a member of that body as master of Birkbeck and pro-vice-chancellor. One of the things I found refreshing when I moved from England to Scotland was that Scotland in some domains had a relatively lighter touch than England. Since then we have had some interventions from the Scottish Government in terms of the governance of universities that are bureaucratic, are not enhancements and have consumed a certain amount of time. When you look at some of the proposals and the way that the Office for Students is moving along in England, then again you see an increase in bureaucratic intervention and a possible decrease in university autonomy. British universities in both the English and Scottish jurisdictions have relatively high autonomy when they are rated against universities in Europe, but certainly in the period that you are describing, the last 20 years, we have seen an increase in regulation and a decrease in autonomy in both jurisdictions, and in neither case do those decreases strike me as productive.

Professor Adam Tickell: My understanding and my approach is that until April the approach we have had with our regulator has been one of partnership—so, where there are difficulties with the duties that we are under, we can talk with them. Truthfully, I do not see a huge amount of burden. I certainly would not welcome more. The need to understand nuance and the individual institutional context is really important. The danger of having a single approach and a very strict set of guidelines is that you lose the sense of being able to work with a community. Every university is different. Baroness Amos has described very pithily the

culture at her university. It is not very dissimilar at Sussex, but I was at Birmingham before Sussex and the culture there was very different. If you say, "What's right for Birmingham is right for SOAS, Sussex or Oxford", you lose all capacity to manage what are very complex discussions in a way that means that you end up with a good outcome rather than an outcome that is characterised by conflict.

Lord Woolf: At the moment, you each make your own code of practice. So for each university there will be two codes of practice, one a student one and one from the administration. Would you like to see a situation where a model code of practice was published by a suitable independent body?

Professor Adam Tickell: For the reason that I have just articulated, absolutely not. Academics and students all have opinions, and if we cannot work with the grain we will end up having conflict. I am not conflict-averse, but conflict that leads to worse outcomes is bad for public policy.

Baroness Amos: I would say that we have a strong alignment between the codes of practice of our student union and of the administration. Indeed, we work together on producing our events policy. However, I entirely agree that we need recognition of the differences between universities. We need a regulatory environment that is facilitative, and I worry that we are moving into a regulatory environment that is just about regulating the market and that we will lose the supportive element that we currently get from our regulator. We need greater flexibility.

Frida Gustafsson: Can I answer your first question? Is that all right?

Lord Woolf: That is its purpose.

Frida Gustafsson: Starting out, if I were to idealise the guidance and codes of practice that we are given, there would be a lot about the character that I would change. Student unions are just trying to figure out the right balance in a very complex situation, and more guidance in terms of best practice would be really useful. It would also be useful if government policy and Charity Commission policy did not contradict each other, which they literally do in terms of whether or not we should provide a platform to speakers. It is also worth saying that this current concern about freedom of speech on campus, while it has always been an issue, does not really seem to be based on facts or evidence. When I go back to talk to my students, freedom of speech, which the media is focusing on, is not really what they care about. You mentioned the OfS earlier; it would be wonderful if the OfS could be the Office for Students, not the office for what politicians think we should be worrying about. Students care about

the mental health crisis, for example, and it would be worth focusing on that.

Lord Woolf: Just a very quick answer, please. Do I get the impression that, despite the problems, which are not easy, we are all coping with the situation as it is at present?

Professor Adam Tickell: Yes. That is our job.

Baroness Amos: Yes—despite, despite, despite.

Lord Woolf: Absolutely.

Chair: There is a Division in the Lords now, which means that our Lords Members will have to disappear. That is a good juncture at which to thank you very much indeed. Because the Lords Division Bell has rung, I have missed the opportunity to ask my question about what you think about what Jo Johnson said on Boxing Day—but there we are. This public evidence session has concluded, and I thank all of you for helping us with it.