Understanding Jewish Experience in Higher Education

Parliamentary Taskforce on Antisemitism in Higher Education

Contents

FOREWORD

The Taskforce on Antisemitism in Higher Education was established by the Government's Independent Adviser on Antisemitism, Lord Mann, with support from members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism in 2022. We involved Members of Parliament from both the Houses of Commons and Lords, led by Dame Margaret Hodge MP and Nicola Richards MP and from across a number of political parties. As part of our inquiry, we have taken evidence from and met with a range of stakeholders in Higher Education and the Jewish community; including 56 universities, stakeholder workshops and 29 separate campus visits. This report constitutes our findings and recommendations from that research.

For every Jewish student and member of staff, the campus experience differs. It is unique. This report does not seek, nor intend, to proscribe the Jewish experience on campus. Rather we have sought to listen to, and engage with, the Jewish community and Higher Education institutions in order to understand what more can be done to provide a safe environment and to ensure our institutions are robust in tackling anti-Jewish racism. We have sought to highlight concerns, conditions, contexts, and good practice to draw lessons and make recommendations for the sector.

For most students, going to university is their first experience of being independent. Our discussions with current and prospective Jewish students show very clearly that choosing which university to apply to and attend is influenced by an institution's reputation for supporting Jewish students or otherwise. Though Jewish students generally have a positive university experience, there has been an increase in the number of reported antisemitic incidents in recent years, including those relating to Zionism or Israel. These can occur within teaching spaces, isolating Jewish students and staff and leaving them feeling vulnerable in their academic studies, or preventing them from identifying as a Jewish person or a Zionist. Issues can and do occur in other contexts too, be they online, in social settings or in trying to enjoy a Jewish way of life. Any dampening of a Jewish individual's confidence in expressing their identity undermines their fundamental freedoms; be that related to speech, religion or simply being comfortable in being themselves, as they choose, all of which are essential to a thriving educational environment. Our findings are that Jewish students are likely to mask their identity at times in order to avoid negativity directed at them purely because of their Jewish identity.

We repeatedly heard that an underlying fear of being targeted for being Jewish or expected to answer questions about Israel can impact how open an individual is about their Jewish identity. We were told it was commonplace for Jewish students to choose not to wear certain clothing or jewellery around campus because it would make them visibly identifiable as Jewish. Some students say that they are sometimes reluctant to attend a seminar or lecture depending on the topic of discussion, for fear of personal interrogation, and others told us that this impacted the modules that they chose. Staff also raised important comparable concerns about negativity surrounding their Jewish identity, and whilst we anticipated the need for confidentiality, we were shocked at how vehement staff were in insisting on this.

We have made recommendations which we anticipate will be adopted widely within the Higher Education sector. We have been pleasantly surprised at how far the sector has come in understanding antisemitism in recent times. Accompanying this report is a 'Good Practice Guide' which, though not exhaustive, features eight simple steps for institutions to follow to help improve campus relations and activity. We trust that universities, Universities UK and other coordinating and support bodies, share our aspirations and will use, develop, and further share others' successes. Our aim is that good practice will continue to develop and evolve and that this report will act as a launching pad for it. We look forward to working with the sector, the Union of Jewish Students, and other stakeholders to turn this report from written word to meaningful action, towards a safe and happy experience for every Jewish student and member of staff on all our campuses across the country.

2. OVERVIEW

2.1 This report examines antisemitism and Jewish staff and student experiences across the Higher Education sector in the UK and should be read together with the Taskforce's 'Good Practice Guide' which consists of eight simple steps that institutions can take to support their Jewish staff and students, supplemented by examples from universities and students' unions. This report includes recommendations to combat antisemitism, support Jewish individuals and create an inclusive environment on campus.

2.2 We aimed to gain a better understanding of the experience of Jewish students and staff within Higher Education (HE) and to examine the trends and issues that are impacting their experience, both positively and negatively.

2.3 The Taskforce held hearings at university campuses across the UK and with students' unions and sectoral bodies, to discuss the work they are doing to combat antisemitism, support their Jewish members and create an inclusive environment. The Taskforce also held focus groups with Jewish students and staff to hear their perspectives and better understand the measures institutions can take to support them.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The research behind this report was gathered over a six-month period. Members of the Taskforce met with 56 universities including all of the top 20 UK universities (according to Times Higher Education rankings, 2023),[1] from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Most of these meetings were conducted in person and included senior representation from each university. Though not exhaustive, the 'Good Practice Guide' consists of examples gathered from these meetings.

3.2 Focus groups with Jewish students were held both in-person and online, with 36 universities and across all UK nations. The Taskforce worked with the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and individual university Jewish societies to publicise an open call for any Jewish student who wanted to join a focus group or submit evidence in an alternative format.

3.3 Focus groups were held with Jewish staff across 12 universities in the UK, both online and in-person. As there is no singular representative body for Jewish staff within Higher Education, the Taskforce worked with universities and Jewish community organisations to engage with Jewish staff who wanted to speak about their experience. All the staff members we spoke to requested total anonymity, out of concern of being reproached for sharing their experiences. We regard this factor as significant in its own right.

3.4 The Taskforce met and received evidence from third-party organisations working within Higher Education and those specifically seeking to combat antisemitism in Higher Education. This included: The Office for Students (OfS), Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Higher Education Funding Council Wales (HEFCW), Universities UK (UUK), the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE), National Union of Students (NUS), GMB, University and Colleges Union (UCU), Community Security Trust (CST), Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and the Antisemitism Policy Trust (APT). These discussions tended to focus on sharing good practice and examining sector-wide trends.

3.5 Examples and evidence in the report are only attributed to an institution where we have highlighted good practice and positive experiences. It is not the Taskforce's intention to shame or amplify concerns specific to any given university and a small number of issues are being followed up on a case-by-case basis.

3.6 The UK Jewish community is diverse and there are several different denominations all represented on campus (an issue examined in further detail in later sections). For the purposes of the report, when examining questions of religiosity and the relationship between religious observance and the campus experience, we relied on guidance produced by the 'Board of Deputies of British Jews'.[2]

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1   https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-uk

2   https://bod.org.uk/

4. The Current State of the Higher Education Sector

4.1 The current situation for universities in the UK is far removed from what it was thirty years ago. The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 brought polytechnics into the same system and sphere as universities. Not only did numbers studying at university increase, but so too did the status and accessibility of various HE institutions. According to the Office for National Statistics,[3] the number of people aged between 18 and 24 in full-time education was 984,000 in May 1992, increasing to 1.87 million in May 2016. Numbers have continued to rise, and a more inter-connected and globalised HE market has seen growth in the international student body, generally creating a more diverse, international, and larger student population.

4.2 Higher Education has been a devolved matter for Scotland and Northern Ireland since 1998,[4] and in Wales since 2006.[5] As a result, there are different approaches to funding and regulation which must be taken into account when considering the issues raised in this report.

4.3 University populations are a microcosm of society and the wider world. They represent a melting pot of cultures and communities, bringing together thousands of individuals. For some people, this is the first time they may have met a Jewish person or interacted with anyone who is not from their own culture or background. Combined with the fact that most students are aged between 18 and 21,[6] an age group that is often still developing their views on the world and their own identities, this presents many challenges and opportunities for universities seeking to build a cohesive, inclusive environment on campus. One of those challenges is the formation of anti-Jewish ways of thinking at an early age, and it is also clear that improving education on antisemitism within schools will positively impact universities and the Jewish student and staff experience. The University College London (UCL) Centre for Holocaust Education is currently developing projects directed at supporting teachers to deepen specific knowledge, understanding and skills to teach about contemporary antisemitism, and to confidently address any incidents where these occur. This work is cited as an international leader in its field, and we endorse that view. These projects also aim to support teachers in helping their students be informed about contemporary antisemitism, mindful of where it can manifest, how it can appear and what its consequences are.

3   How has the student population changed, September 2016, Office for National Statistics, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/articles/howhasthestudentpopulation-changed/2016-09-20

4   Devolution Settlement: Scotland, February 2013, Gov.UK, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/devolution-settlement-scotland;
Devolution Settlement: Northern Ireland, February 2013, Gov.UK https://www.gov.uk/guidance/devolution-settlement-northern-ireland

5   Devolution Settlement: Wales, February 2013, Gov.UK, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/devolution-settlement-wales

6   https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7857/CBP-7857.pdf

5. Understanding the UK Jewish Community

5.1 The Jewish student and staff experience should be considered within the wider context of the UK's Jewish community. According to the 2021 census,[7] the number of people living in England and Wales who identified as Jewish by religion was 271,000. This represents some 0.5% of the total UK population. According to the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), 53% of the UK Jewish community resides in Greater London.[8] There are also active and well-established Jewish communities across the UK, for example in Manchester, Gateshead, Leeds, Brighton, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Cardiff. Though there is not yet data available from the Scotland and Northern Ireland censuses to measure the size of the Jewish communities in these areas, in 2011 there were 5,887 Jewish people recorded in Scotland and 335 in Northern Ireland.

5.2 Analysis of other factors relevant to Jewish life in the UK has been undertaken on: religious denominations; ethnic and cultural identity; gender; sexuality; and political affiliation. JPR examined religious denominations of European Jews and found those within the UK largely identifying as 'Just Jewish' and 'Traditional'.[9] This might be interpreted as those constituting UK Jewry having both cultural and/or religious identities, sometimes overlapping between the two. So too, an individual's Jewish identity can and indeed does intersect with other aspects of identity. The Board of Deputies of British Jews commissioned a Report on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community in 2021,[10] which showed a little under 0.5% of the UK Jewish community were Black Jews. In the 2011 census, 4292 Jews identified as 'Mixed-race'. Furthermore, the 2021 census shows a higher proportion of Jewish people identified as female,[11] and the Antisemitism Policy Trust and Hope Not Hate have undertaken an analysis of the interplay of 'Antisemitism and Misogyny'.[12] Having an overview of what the Jewish community is, and its diversity, helps us understand what Jewish identity can be, and the factors affecting student and staff experiences.

7   Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021, November 2022, Office for National Statistics, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021

8   Jews in Britain in 2021: First Results from the Census of England and Wales, November 2022, Institute for Policy Jewish Research Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021, November 2022, Office for National Statistics, https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/jews-britain-2021-first-results-census-england-and-wales

9   Ibid

10   Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community, April 2021, The Board of Deputies of British Jews, https://bod.org.uk/wp-content/up-

loads/2021/04/Commission-on-Racial-Inclusivity-in-the-Jewish-Community.pdf

11   https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/median-age-of-person-identifying-as-jewish-in-england-and-wales-is-41years-old/

12   https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Antisemitism-and-Misogyny-Overlap-and-Interplay.pdf

6. Antisemitism on Campus

Overview

6.1 The majority of Jewish students and staff have a positive time at university, encountering or witnessing very little antisemitism. However, when antisemitism does occur, the impact each incident has on the small community of Jewish students and staff should not be underestimated.

6.2 According to the CST Campus Antisemitism Report 2023, between 2020 and 2022 there were 150 reported incidents of antisemitism, an increase of 22% from 2018-2020,[13] and the general trend is upwards.[14] CST's Campus Antisemitism Report 2023 provides an analysis of the 150 incidents, including geographical location, categories, and the increase in online incidents. Incidents range from online abuse to abusive behaviour to death threats.

6.3 Examining the reported incidents, CST explains there is a phenomenon, similar to the national trend, that cities with larger Jewish student populations are likely to have a greater number of reported incidents. As previously outlined, most of the UK Jewish community lives in the Greater London region, and CST notes that between 2020 and 2022, London had the largest number of campus-related antisemitic incidents, across ten institutions.[15]

6.4 Of the incidents in the previous two years, 93% (140) recorded were within the category of 'Abusive Behaviour', including both verbal and written abuse. CST highlights that over a quarter of these types of incidents took place in May 2021 (during the Israel-Gaza conflict), named by CST as the 'Month of Hate' due to a 365% increase in total antisemitic incidents.[16] This can be compared to May 2020 which saw one incident recorded, and May 2022 which had two.[17]

6.5 The report shows an increase in online hate across all platforms directed to individual Jewish students and Jewish societies. Out of the 150 total incidents from 2020-22, 81 occurred online, with half of them taking place during May 2021. For example, one student received an image of their face attached to a guillotine, and others faced public, targeted, antisemitic comments on Twitter.[18] Concerns about social media were also raised in focus groups with Jewish students, who expressed concern about this increase and were unsure how to combat it. The Antisemitism Policy Trust and CST have published reports which provide insights into antisemitic trends on Google, Twitter, and Instagram, including recommendations on how to address this.[19]

Defining Antisemitism

6.6 In order to tackle anti-Jewish racism, it is important to understand what it is and how it manifests. Virtually every university is now referencing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism[20] when examining reported incidents of antisemitism and how to understand antisemitism and pre-empt issues. This provides a framework and guide for universities on how to assess and interpret antisemitism.

13   https://cst.org.uk/data/file/4/a/Campus%20Antisemitism%202020-2022.1673886872.pdf

14   https://cst.org.uk/data/file/3/6/Antisemitism%20on%20University%20Campuses.1615558987.pdf

15   CST's Campus Antisemitism report 2023, provides an analysis of the 150 incidents, including geographical location, categories and the increase of online incidents.

16   https://cst.org.uk/data/file/4/a/The_Month_of_Hate.1626263072.pdf

17   https://cst.org.uk/data/file/4/a/Campus%20Antisemitism%202020-2022.1673886872.pdf

18   https://cst.org.uk/data/file/4/a/Campus%20Antisemitism%202020-2022.1673886872.pdf

19   https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Instagram-Report.pdf

20   What is antisemitism? Non-legally binding definition of antisemitism, May 2016, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism

Case Study: University of Derby

The University of Derby was made aware of comments made on social media by a student that were alleged to amount to antisemitism. The comments were in an open forum and appeared to be in relation to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Following panel consideration of the evidence, including the mitigation and narrative put forward by the student, on the balance of probabilities, the panel found the allegation of antisemitism proven and confirmed an outcome of 'termination from the programme of study.' Following the outcome of the panel, and in line with the relevant regulations, the student submitted an appeal. The appeal panel considered the student's submission, which included evidence of reflection (including meeting with and education from a Rabbi). As a result, it found the appeal partially justified and converted the termination to a suspension for a period of 18 months.

6.7 The importance of this definition was made clear in the focus groups we held, with Jewish students, Jewish staff and from the Jewish community representative organisations: the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC), the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and the Board of Deputies of British Jews.[21] UJS told us that at its annual Conference in 2021, a motion to "reaffirm UJS commitment" to the IHRA definition of antisemitism was supported unanimously.[22] It is increasingly being seen as evidence of how seriously universities treat incidents of antisemitism. Upon reading news that particular institutions were not adopting the IHRA definition, as one student remarked it "threw [them] off completely…[and] doesn't feel like a safe space".[23]

6.8 We know that more than 245 Higher Education and Further Education institutions have now adopted and are using the definition as the reference point for understanding antisemitism, including when it comes to complaints processes.[24] Adoption means using the definition and having it written into systems and procedures so that students and staff can themselves reference it, and should include an agreement to consult the definition when assessing any issues of potential antisemitism. Given that regulation of Higher Education institutions is a devolved matter, the role of the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and The Northern Ireland Executive will be essential in encouraging universities across the UK to adopt the IHRA definition. All universities should be public and unequivocal about its implementation so that it can be used as an educational tool for all members of staff and students and can give Jewish students and staff confidence in relevant processes.

6.9 The Taskforce met with 56 universities across the UK and asked about their experience of using the definition, which they had all adopted. None knew of or could provide a single example in which the IHRA definition had in any way restricted freedom of speech or academic research, or where its adoption had chilled academic freedom, research or freedom

21   Jewish community organisations parliamentary hearing, 1st November 2022

22   https://www.ujs.org.uk/ujs_conference_2021

23   Jewish student interview, 2nd February 2023

24   Tackling Antisemitism, November 2021, Office for Students, https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/prevent-and-address-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/tackling-antisemitism/

Case Study: The University of Westminster

The University of Westminster considered the IHRA definition as part of its work to embed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in the everyday life of the institution. It considered public commitments as useful tools but was mindful of the gap between policy and action. In late 2020, some of the University leadership investigated the "desirability, feasibility, and challenges of adoption" of IHRA, and following "healthy discussion" the definition was adopted, as part of what was considered wider action to tackle racism. Though concerns were raised about the definition, the University is clear that this is based on a misreading of it. Events, including those criticising the working definition, have taken place unimpeded, and without special treatment. A Freedom of Expression Working Group set up to consider concerns is yet to receive any complaints about curbs on academic freedom caused by the adoption of the definition. The University is clear that adopting IHRA has helped signal to Jewish students and the wider student body that the university wishes to establish a culture of inclusiveness. It is also clear that IHRA in and of itself is not the sum total of action against antisemitism. For further details, see the 'Good Practice Guide'.

of expression. All these 56 institutions were using the definition and were seen to be listening to the Jewish community about how it experiences antisemitism.

6.10 In the 'Good Practice Guide', there are multiple examples of where institutions have used the IHRA definition as an educative tool in developing training modules about antisemitism e.g., Middlesex University,[25] Manchester Metropolitan University,[26] and the University of Bristol.[27] We asked each university about their everyday experience of using the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and the answers were unequivocal and consistent across universities.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism has neither compromised nor chilled free speech in any of the 56 Universities with which we engaged. This demonstrates that it

is being used appropriately, as any suggestion that it should be a restrictor on academic freedom is to misread or misinterpret the definition. It is a working definition, not a legal definition and that is its strength. Every issue should be looked at in its context, as the definition makes clear. In universities, the most common issues of which we have heard evidence are the misuse of the Holocaust and its language to criticise or attack Jewish or Israeli identity and institutions, and negative attitudes to the actuality or possibility that a Jewish person defines themselves as a Zionist in any way. The definition advises on both.

Recommendation:

Where there are issues or complaints, the IHRA definition should be used as a reference point to understand what contemporary antisemitism is. It should also be used as a reference point for Jewish students and staff (and indeed non-Jewish complainants where relevant), to support them when dealing with issues or submitting complaints. It should be used as a public resource, publicised on a university's website so that Jewish students and staff are able to refer to it. This will also demonstrate that antisemitism is

both understood and is being taken seriously which will help build trust between universities and their Jewish communities. The definition should also be used as an educational tool for the wider campus community to understand contemporary and traditional antisemitism.

Student Experience of Antisemitism

6.11 Antisemitism, similar to other hate crimes, is vastly underreported.[28] Though incident numbers on campuses may be low, research, news coverage and feedback from UJS indicate that antisemitic feelings or discourse can take hold which, whilst not manifested in incidents, can be frightening for Jewish students. UJS suggests that the nature of an incident can determine whether a Jewish student will report it. For example, if a student experiences a microaggression from a peer they are likely to ignore it to prevent jeopardising their friendship.[29] This experience was borne out in the focus groups, in which Jewish students told us that where they experienced antisemitism, it tended to be microaggressions and casual comments, which they mostly ignored. This was normally because the students felt comments were being made out of ignorance, rather than an intent to wilfully hurt or be

antisemitic. However, after a period of time, these ignorant remarks were said to impact and chip away at the confidence and positive experience that Jewish students were having.

6.12 There were examples of microaggressions impacting individuals on campus. One Jewish student shared with us their experience of going out with friends and being told to settle the bill "because they could afford it". Given the comment was made by a friend, they did not seek to report it, but it did make them feel more introverted in the friendship group.[30] Another student told us of a comment directed to them at a freshers' party – "You're too pretty to be Jewish", which they decided to ignore.[31] Both of these comments are offensive and demeaning. Though they were not reported, the impact was to isolate the individuals and normalise anti-Jewish rhetoric. These cases demonstrate how prejudice is normalised without anyone recognising its impact. Those bearing the brunt of such behaviours must be central to discussions about understanding and helping to prevent and respond to it. For antisemitism, this would be through engagement with Jewish societies and UJS. It is beholden on UJS to continue to work closely with Jewish societies to

25   Universities Guidance (8 Simple Steps) Appendix

26   Ibid

27   Ibid

28   Jewish community organisations Parliamentary hearing, 1st November 2022

29   Union of Jewish students written evidence submission, 21st December 2022

30   Jewish Society Focus group, November 2022

31   Ibid

Case Study: University of Glasgow

In October 2022, the University of Glasgow launched a new anti-racism campaign on microaggressions and overt racism, including a Racial Literacy Glossary referencing the IHRA definition of antisemitism. The campaign aimed to build trust in reporting systems so that the staff and student community feel safe and confident when raising issues of hate, racism, and racial injustice.

equip them to deal with issues should they arise, and we think it important to see a bigger resource given to consolidate this vital role.

6.13 We were told in our various focus groups that the wider political landscape of a city or town also impacts Jewish experience. In focus groups in Scotland, Jewish students reported that they felt the number of casual antisemitic comments was greater in St Andrews,[32] Edinburgh,[33] and Glasgow,[34] than the situation relayed to them by their peers in England and Wales. They felt much of this was due to the lack of education in schools about the Jewish community and antisemitism, but also related to the wider political culture. The nuance and impact the wider political discourse can have on a Jewish student is significant and means individual universities and governments must have programmes of education and measures in place to tackle antisemitism more broadly.

6.14 There have been longstanding concerns about the culture within sports teams. Some of this has played out in the media, specifically concerning 'white T-shirt' themed events and other social activities.[35] Issues were raised by individual Jewish students who had experienced ignorance and microaggressions when interacting with sports teams. One Jewish student explained that they encountered trouble with their team when they explained the clash of Friday night training with the Sabbath, for example.[36] Some universities are seeking to establish good practice. Edinburgh University Students' Association, for

example, delivers 'Bystander Training' to all society and sport clubs committee members. The University of Warwick provides training for clubs and societies, under a scheme named 'Report and Support Ready'. There is a role here for the national governing body for university sport in the UK – BUCS – the British Universities & Colleges Sport. The organisation has produced an inclusion strategy and we would encourage specific activity on antisemitism in recognition of the issues raised in this report.[37]

STAFF EXPERIENCE OF ANTISEMITISM

6.15 Antisemitism is also an issue that greatly affects Jewish staff members, and this manifests in several different ways.

6.16 Focus groups laid bare the reticence that numerous Jewish university faculty have about discussing antisemitism. As we have already referenced, unlike the Union of Jewish Students, for Jewish staff, there is no single centralised network to make representations on their behalf about these issues. Many Jewish staff members expressed to us their hesitancy in being openly Jewish at work, and the Board of Deputies of British Jews contended that many do "not want to put their head above the parapet".[38] Various issues were raised when meeting with Jewish staff: one expressed their concern that they might be identified as Jewish;[39] others saw the university as just a place of work and did not feel it necessary to share their concerns or anxieties with colleagues;[40] and many felt that they had received or might receive hostility for doing so. One Jewish staffer described their anxiety about their students knowing they are Jewish.[41]

6.17 The overall academic culture in universities can vary according to the department in which one is employed. In the focus groups and interviews we ran with Jewish staff, those working in humanities subjects expressed greater caution about being openly Jewish.[42] In particular, numerous Jewish staff members across various institutions voiced their reticence to talk about Israel-Palestine or connected issues for fear of possible tensions or antisemitic ramifications.[43]

6.18 The situation can be particularly acute for Israeli academics. In one focus group, a postgraduate researcher based in the UK explained to us that on discovering their Israeli roots, a colleague refused to work with them on a project and began to ignore all of their communication.[44]

6.19 Both for Israeli academics and for non-Israeli Jewish staff, there are concerns about the environment in which they are operating. One Jewish staff member told us that a paradox exists in which groups of academics call for boycotts (both institutional and academic), which are an infringement on free speech and academic freedom, whilst simultaneously calling for the IHRA definition of antisemitism to be revoked as a supposed infringement on academic freedom.[45] Such a contradiction helps to create an uncomfortable and occasionally hostile environment within academic spaces.

ANTISEMITISM WITHIN TRADE UNIONS

6.20 There are a number of different trade unions that support staff members within Higher Education, including the University and College Union (UCU),

GMB, Unison and Unite. These bodies provide representation for their members and allow them to organise in the workplace to address issues such as pay, pensions and working conditions. They all have democratically elected representation on the local and national levels.[46]

6.21 During the course of our interviews with Jewish academics, the UCU was raised on many occasions. Many Jewish academics with whom we spoke are members of UCU and had been for a long time. However, there was a feeling amongst some that the UCU is no longer a place for Jewish people to feel safe and accepted, especially when discussions of the Israel-Palestine conflict arise. A Jewish member of staff who had recently joined their institution told us they would not join UCU, as they had heard about the negative environment that existed for Jews.[47] In another interview, we were told there is a feeling of disappointment, given many staff members wish to join the Union but do not trust UCU to support them on issues related to antisemitism.[48]

6.22 Concerns were also raised about UCU at a national level. In December 2022, UCU published a resource on inclusivity in relation to religion and belief. It gave an example of how to be inclusive with branch social events:

"Example: The branch has an informal meeting every Friday night in the local pub near the workplace. A Muslim activist does not drink and feels uncomfortable in that kind of venue. As a result, the activist never attends any of these informal branch meetings. The branch may want to consider alternative meeting arrangements." [49]

32   St Andrews Jewish Society Focus group, 13th October 2022

33   Edinburgh Jewish Society Focus group, 12th October 2022

34   Glasgow Jewish Society Focus group, 14th October 2022

35   https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/28/exeter-university-investigates-antisemitic-racist-slogans-shirts-freshers-week; https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/coventry-university-sports-club-suspend-t-shirts-antisemitism-jews-swastikas-student-union-a8775316.html

36   Sheffield Hallam University meeting, 13th January 2023

37   https://www.bucs.org.uk/static/7e5b9df7-9392-4866-bad59a57235b4a04/BUCS-Inclusion-Strategy.pdf

38   Jewish community organisations Parliamentary hearing, 1st November 2022

39   Jewish staff interview, 8th November 2022

40   Jewish staff focus group, 12th January 2023

41   Jewish staff interview, 3rd November 2022

42   Jewish staff focus group, January 2023

43   Jewish staff interviews - October, November and December 2022

44   Jewish staff interview, October 2022

45   Jewish staff interview, December 2022

46   https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/i4cKC4z01CYOvDIBq_gl?domain=unison.org.uk,union's%20local%20and%20national%20objectives

47   Jewish staff interview, October 2022

48   Jewish staff interview, October 2022

49   https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/13469/Religion-or-belief-in-the-workplace/

CASE STUDY: MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

Middlesex University hosted a training day on antisemitism for London universities, including workshops delivered by expert Jewish organisations. The event examined historic and contemporary anti-Jewish racism, campus antisemitism and current Jewish life on campus. The event brought together representatives from twelve universities, including Vice-Chancellors and other senior leadership team members. The event is an example of an effective training session which can be delivered across different regions for university leadership teams.

6.23 The failure to include that this type of event is also exclusionary to Jewish staff, as Friday night is the start of the Jewish Sabbath, demonstrates a lack of awareness.

6.24 There are some examples of good practice from other unions working to combat antisemitism in Higher Education. For example, in a focus group, GMB London spoke of the antisemitism awareness training it had held, in conjunction with the Jewish Labour Movement, for GMB London members at their members' Congress;[50] we were told that the Community Security Trust, Union of Jewish Students and Antisemitism Policy Trust have all run similar training. Additionally, in 2018, the General Secretary of GMB openly called for the Labour Party to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism,[51] and in 2018 the General Secretary of Unison wrote an article about 'Why Labour must adopt the full IHRA definition of anti-semitism [sic]'.[52] Their public advocacy for the definition sends a clear message to their members

about their willingness to take steps in tackling antisemitism, furthering confidence from their Jewish members and potential new recruits.

6.25 The role of trade unions within universities is important, and for many staff is highly valued. The concerns raised regarding one union are not a reflection of all unions, however, we cannot ignore the lived experiences of Jewish staff members and there is work to do at UCU in developing an inclusive culture for all members, including all Jewish academics.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. 'Antisemitism Awareness Training', such as that provided by the Union of Jewish Students, should be provided for staff in universities, students' union managers and trade unions. Education about antisemitism should be embedded within wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training structures and all anti-racism training, at all levels of the university.

2. Universities should develop systems to address antisemitism both where it occurs, and where there are opportunities to offer education. This includes:

i. All students and staff found to have engaged in

antisemitic behaviour undertaking a programme of education about antisemitism, for example by requiring them to undergo 'Antisemitism Awareness Training'.

ii. Publishing educational materials, guidance or thought pieces, around antisemitism, using all avenues available to them, including social media, press and students' union campaigns.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

6.26 In relation to lodging formal complaints, Jewish students repeatedly told us that they do not typically report microaggressions. One student said: "I don't feel like [I] need to report microaggressions – as people know it's going to happen and get used to it."[53]

6.27 Across the UK, when Jewish students did wish to report incidents, we were told that they chose to inform other members of the Jewish society or occasionally Jewish community organisations, such as CST, so that they could speak to someone who would understand their experience, and not need them to justify why it was antisemitic. UJS, Jewish students and students' union representatives all raised concerns with us that there was an unfamiliarity with reporting systems, with many students finding these too long or otherwise inaccessible. The result was a decreased likelihood of Jewish students reporting antisemitism. It is, of course, important that a complaints system is victim-centred and focuses on the needs of the complainant. The following section examines how universities are handling antisemitic incidents, and the effectiveness of their complaints procedures.

6.28 Every university with which the Taskforce met has implemented, or is in the process of implementing, an online reporting mechanism which allows for both

anonymous and named submissions to be entered. Most of the universities use a system named 'Report and Support', developed by an organisation called 'Culture Shift'.[54] The platform aims to encourage students and staff to report any discrimination they experience or witness. It accepts reports from all members of the university as either a witness or a victim and, in most institutions, they allow third parties to make an initial report too. Some other institutions the Taskforce met explained that they had created bespoke platforms with similar reporting mechanisms and different, or enhanced, data management, tailored to the individual university. For example, Leeds Beckett University created its own platform named 'Support, Report, Respect', which allows the institution to consistently update and change the reporting system to benefit the staff and student community.[55] Whilst many systems are robust, and there are processes in place to support these, both CST and UJS reported inconsistency, and lack of communication or understanding about how these processes work.[56]

6.29 The four main issues raised with us about complaints processes were: lack of awareness and communication about reporting processes, barriers to reporting within the systems, inconsistency of informal routes for complaints, and availability of resources for further training and education.

6.30 Accessing complaints systems can be difficult for students, especially if they are unsure how to locate them. UJS informed us that there was uncertainty amongst Jewish students about the types of incidents that could be reported and that many Jewish students are unaware of what the

pdf/Religion_belief_guide_Dec22.pdf

50   https://www.gmblondon.org.uk/news/gmb-activists-vow-to-stamp-out-antisemitism-in-the-movement

51   https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/aug/09/labour-antisemitism-row-adopt-standard-definition-and-end-infighting-says-gmb

52   https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2018/08/why-labour-must-adopt-full-ihra-definition-anti-semitism

53   University of Sheffield Taskforce meeting, 16th December 2022

54   https://www.culture-shift.co.uk/

55   Leeds Beckett University Taskforce meeting, 1st December 2022; https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-community/support-report-respect/

56   Jewish community organisations Parliamentary hearing, 1st November 2022

complaints systems are and where to locate them.[57] This concern was corroborated by many universities, who admitted it was a challenge ensuring that all students and staff are aware of available reporting mechanisms and processes.

6.31 Understanding formal complaints processes within a university can be difficult, especially for first-time users, and the specific terminology employed may be inaccessible. Ensuring there are clear guidelines, infographics and other forms of explanation is important in preserving system accessibility.

to know the full outcome of their report. One Jewish student detailed an incident at the Students' Union bar where they worked.[59] The theme for one of the 'sports nights' at the bar was 'army'. A student turned up with a swastika on their arm, and the Jewish student reported it to their manager who barred the offending student. They reported it to the university sports team and explained they did not want the student to be expelled but wanted to know what action would be taken. The university said it was dealing with the case but did not share the outcome and the Jewish student encountered the individual again without any indication of a

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

The University of Southampton Student Discipline Regulations consider what information can and should be shared with a student reporting an incident, and the student responding to it. Historically, students that reported incidents were considered witnesses in student discipline cases and as such, the University did not share the outcomes of cases with them. The introduction of the 'Report and Support' system meant that students who made reports were considered a victim rather than a witness. The University also recognised that students may be disinclined to make a complaint about a serious matter if they became aware that they wouldn't know the outcome of the case. In effect, it seemed that the non-disclosure of the outcome of cases was acting as a deterrent to students reporting in the first instance. All information shared with the reporting and responding students is redacted as required.

6.32 CST has highlighted failings within reporting systems which are said not to match hate-crime reporting good practices.[58] Inadequate transparency throughout the complaints process can damage the trust between the complainant and the university. This is especially true when the complainant is unable

warning having been levelled. In addition, there was no communication from the university regarding any action that would be taken. This lack of transparency over what details can be shared with the complainant can result in frustration and a loss of faith in the relevant processes. Finding a balance between legal restraints and transparency is important, as

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

The University of Derby has been in dialogue with Derbyshire NHS Trusts to develop its leadership capability. It seeks to centre the values of equality and diversity within its leadership programme and has recently reported a culture shift. The university has also shared its online staff development resources with the NHS Trusts. These resources are used to encourage dialogue on race within the workplace. 'Let's Talk About Race' addresses the issues of race, racism, microaggressions and white privilege, and is delivered from the perspective of lived experience.

is expectation management at the onset of any process. The University of Southampton, as detailed below, carefully considers what information can be shared with students involved in disciplinary cases.

6.33 The duration of complaints processes can also be a concern for students and staff, as highlighted by CST in the Campus Antisemitism Report 2023 and by UJS in its evidence to us.[60] Both documents demonstrate Jewish students' experiences of lengthy processes, even lasting beyond their time at university. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) provides a 'Good Practice Framework' for universities explaining that "It normally takes less than 90 calendar days to complete the process, from the start of the formal stage and students are kept informed about progress."[61] According to the OIAHE, a procedure taking longer than 90 days opens the university to further action from the complainant.[62]

6.34 We found there to be inconsistency across institutions over their jurisdiction in complaints handling. For the majority of universities to which

we spoke, their reporting process accepts reports on any incident between members of the university, including visiting lecturers and guests. However, it was raised by some institutions that the capability to report is limited for their students who are on a year abroad, or in a year in industry; there seems to be a policy lacuna in relation to reporting systems and follow-on action in this regard. An example of good practice in addressing these issues is the University of Derby,[63] which is working closely with the local NHS Trusts to implement equality, diversity, and inclusion strategies.

6.35 Another concern is the independence of disciplinary panels or officers, which is said to be a particular issue in relation to students registering complaints about staff members. CST's Campus Antisemitism Report 2023 recommends that panel members for a complaint should not have a "close working and/or personal relationship" with those involved in the complaint, in order to ensure objectivity.[64] In one focus group, Jewish students expressed their concern about registering a complaint, whether formally or otherwise, for fear that it might impact their outcomes and prospects and could add a "magnifying glass" to the student

57   UJS written evidence, 21st December 2022

58   https://cst.org.uk/data/file/4/a/Campus%20Antisemitism%202020-2022.1673886872.pdf

59   Jewish student focus group, November 2022

60   Ibid

61   https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/principles/

62   https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/principles/

63   Universities Guidance (8 Simple Steps) Appendix

64   https://cst.org.uk/data/file/4/a/Campus%20Antisemitism%202020-2022.1673886872.pdf

and the whole Jewish society,[65] especially if the case is being handled within a department.

6.36 Other concerns about complaints processes related to third-party groups. The aforementioned 'Report and Support' tools do allow third-party reporting of an incident to a university, however, they prevent non-victims from taking that complaint forward, in contrast to 'third-party' complaints systems across the wider counter-hate crime community.[66] Some Jewish students and staff are understandably apprehensive about reporting and prefer organisations like CST, as the official reporting body for antisemitic incidents in the country, UJS, as the national representative voice for students or their Jewish society to report on their behalf and manage the complaint with their consent. Such an approach can ensure the process is faster and less burdensome, given its handling by an arms-length body with expertise in addressing incidents.

6.37 In our meetings with universities, most revealed both informal and formal processes for handling complaints, with the broad aim of resolving

matters informally in the first instance. For example, Queen's University Belfast,[67] University of Liverpool,[68] and Nottingham Trent University,[69] take this approach. This method was said to encourage students to speak to their personal tutors, welfare tutors and other members of staff first in order to resolve problems. This does however require consistency and a shared approach, understanding and guidelines for how to address antisemitism. Where individual departments and lecturers differ, it can lead to unfair treatment. Training and education for key staff is therefore crucial, as is a well-advertised and explained route for escalation and support where necessary.

6.38 Well-supported complaints processes tend to lead to improved outcomes for students and staff. We were informed by some universities that, when specialist staff with training in victim support are present, the process of registering a complaint is enhanced. So too, we were told that training has benefitted complaints processes when undertaken by departmental,

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65   Jewish Student Focus group, 12th October 2022

66   Ibid

67   Queen's University Belfast Taskforce meeting, 19th December 2022

68   University of Liverpool Taskforce meeting, 21st November 2022

69   Nottingham Trent University Taskforce meeting, 10th November 2022

CASE STUDY: KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

Kings College London hosted the Union of Jewish Students to deliver a two-day antisemitism awareness training event for a large number of student services staff. Topics covered included historical and modern antisemitism, examples of antisemitism on campus and how best to support Jewish students. There were 4 sessions across 2 days and some 30 people attended each session. The event was open to everyone, but most of the staff were from student services, including equality and diversity leads.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

The University of Leicester's 'Dignity and Respect' policy applies to staff and student conduct on and off the University's premises, whether this is local, national or international and during all University-related activities, including online or digital activities.

The University recognises that staff may use social media in a personal capacity, unrelated to work. In this respect, whilst not acting on behalf of the University, there is still the potential to inadvertently damage its reputation, fellow colleagues or those affiliated with it, and the same conduct must apply. The University's Social Media Guidelines specify that staff must not do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or involve the bullying or harassment of any individual, for example by making offensive or derogatory comments relating to protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or by posting (or linking to) images that are discriminatory and offensive and doing so may breach the University's Dignity and Respect Policy.

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student-facing staff, and for those involved in disciplinary or other relevant panels. An example of good practice is King's College London, which undertook 'Antisemitism Awareness Training', (delivered by UJS) for staff, including those who dealt with complaints about antisemitism.[70]

6.39 Our attention was directed to a particular case linked to Nottingham Trent University from 2019.[71] A prospective student was suspended, and subsequently expelled, after complaints were made to the university about a picture they had posted on a social media dating app next to a sleeping, visibly Orthodox Jewish man, with a Palestinian flag superimposed on his mouth. The personal profile mentioned the University. The matter was referred to a disciplinary panel and the individual was identified, interviewed and action taken, and the university was unequivocal in its condemnation of the behaviour. Whilst the action

taken in this case was robust, the aforementioned nature and extent of online abuse does raise concerns about the way in which institutions are developing, publicising and enforcing guidelines relating to social media, and indeed personal web pages and profiles (as has been raised previously in Parliament by the Union of Jewish Students).[72]

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Universities should actively reach out to Jewish and other minority groups to ensure that they are fully cognisant of reporting processes and feel empowered to use them. They should work on specific awareness-raising campaigns among the most vulnerable students to increase the likelihood of reporting unacceptable behaviour.

2. Institutions should undertake a thorough review of their complaints systems with a particular focus on:

i. Ensuring campus third parties are permitted to

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70   Universities Guidance (8 Simple Steps) Appendix

71   https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-49933913

72   https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cm-haff/165/165we38.htm

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make representation on behalf of students and staff who wish to remain anonymous. Third parties might include, student societies, students' union sabbatical officers, well-being and academic staff, and the Union of Jewish Students.

ii. Ensuring complainants can maintain confidentiality throughout complaints processes, as defined in the OfS statement of expectations to 'Prevent and address harassment and misconduct'.

iii. Limiting the process to an acceptable timeframe, as set out in the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) guidance.

iv. Keeping a complainant informed at all stages of the process and ensuring adequate welfare support is in place, for example, support from a staff member with appropriate cultural competency training.

v. Ensuring that complaints are handled by staff members with no close working or personal relationship with those involved in the complaint, to ensure objectivity.

3. The OfS and OIAHE should jointly produce a report on the state of complaints processes in Higher Education with reference to the OIAHE 'Good Practice Framework' and the OfS statement of expectations to 'Prevent and address harassment and misconduct'.

4. Universities should have guidelines and social media policies for students and staff, clearly determining when they come under the university's jurisdiction. There should be no ambiguity around this, and students and staff should be aware of the disciplinary consequences of posting something harmful from an account associated with the university.

7. Understanding Jewish Student and Staff Experience

Applying to University

7.1 When deciding on where to go to study or work at university, there are a number of different factors to consider – degree subject, cost, location and an institution's reputation, for example. For some Jewish individuals, there are however additional factors including religious observance and proximity to a Jewish community. Jewish students are, of course, not homogenous in their choice of university, how they choose to practice their Judaism or how they live as a Jewish person – if at all, though there are noticeable trends.

7.2 We spoke to students at over thirty campuses about their choice of institution. It became evident that, for students who identified with 'Modern Orthodox', 'Orthodox' or 'Charedi' (as defined by the sign-up form for the focus groups), accessibility to religious facilities was of increased importance. For example, a student studying at Brunel University told us that they had only applied to universities in London because they felt keeping kosher, and other religious observances, would be too difficult if they did not live at home.[73] This was a sentiment shared by other observant Jewish students, who shared with us their perceptions that not all universities are accessible to them.

7.3 There are some universities which have external facilities to support Jewish students. For example, Birmingham,[74] and Leeds,[75] have 'Hillel Houses' which provide private kosher accommodation. According to UJS, both these campuses have over 1000 Jewish society members, making them the two largest Jewish societies. These facilities allow Jewish students to attend university without compromising their religious practices and further enhance the perception that

they are 'good' universities for Jewish students. Other campuses with 'Hillel Houses' do not have as large a Jewish society. Sheffield,[76] for example, has some 60 Jewish students and Liverpool some 75.[77] Whilst religious facilities play a part in furthering accessibility, this is clearly not the single factor influencing campus choice. Such provision is certainly helpful in catering to religiously observant students and, even where a kosher facility is not practicable, institutions would do well to bear in mind what provision they might make for students following a kosher diet, and how they can best advertise such facilities.

7.4 One factor that appears to play a part in campus choice for Jewish students is the presence of an active Jewish society. Just over a third of the Jewish students in the focus groups described themselves as either 'Modern Orthodox', 'Charedi' or 'Orthodox', but in over 80% of the focus groups, Jewish students said that their final decision on choosing a university was influenced by the presence of a Jewish society or knowing there were other Jewish students in the locality. In a focus group with Warwick Jewish students, one said they "Wanted to go to a uni with a JSoc but didn't mind how big it was".[78]

7.5 In the remaining 20% of the focus groups held by the Taskforce, Jewish students explained that even though they chose their place at university based on different factors, once they started their course they had joined (or in some cases started) a Jewish society. For example, a Master's student from the University of Southampton explained that they grew up in London, went to a Jewish school and wanted to go somewhere that was very different, but once they started, they were:

73   Jewish student Focus Group, 14th November 2022

74   https://www.ujs.org.uk/birmingham

75   https://www.ujs.org.uk/leeds

76   https://www.ujs.org.uk/Sheffield

77   https://www.ujs.org.uk/Liverpool

78   University of Warwick Jewish Society Focus group, 14th November 2022

"happy to have a JSoc" and it was "nice to see there was something there."[79]

7.6 The perception of certain campuses being better equipped to support a Jewish social life and being more accessible for religious observance is one that is widespread. Certainly, some of this influence comes from family and friends sharing their fears and experiences. As OfS outlined in an article on campus choice[80]: "71% of prospective students and 58% of current and recent students cite their parents when asked who they turn to for advice on higher education choices.". To give a practical example of this phenomenon, one Jewish student at the University of Oxford explained to us that their mother offered a view on prospective campuses based on which had 'less antisemitism' and said that "when it came to picking [a] university, I was influenced about what I heard".[81]

7.7 This view of universities being known to be 'good' for Jews was also particularly evident amongst current Jewish sixth-form students. For example, staff at Yavneh College, a Jewish Secondary School in North London, noted that out of the 89 graduates attending university from September 2022, 31 went to either the University of Nottingham or Nottingham Trent University. When speaking with current sixth-form students, there was a strong sense that they would apply to institutions where they knew Jewish students had been and had a positive experience, encountering little or no antisemitism.[82] This creates a self-perpetuating cycle whereby universities known to

have large Jewish student populations continue to grow, with word of positive experiences being spread across the wider Jewish community.

7.8 This tendency towards institutions with large and established Jewish support networks is however not fixed and trends do and have shifted in relation to how effectively a university supports its Jewish students. For example, in a focus group with Jewish students from the University of Edinburgh, many explained that in the previous three years, their membership and attendance at a regular Friday Night Dinner (explained further below) had increased from less than 50 participants to over 150.[83] Some of this can be attributed to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and students becoming more active in societies, but the sharing of positive experiences with peers and family also appears to have played a part. One student in the University of Edinburgh focus group explained their choice to study at the institution was owing to the university's adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism (adopted in July 2020).[84] Institutions should be clear that our investigations demonstrated there is enhanced Jewish student confidence in universities that are seen to use the IHRA definition in assessing and addressing incidents of antisemitism, should they occur.

7.9 The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), as part of its equality monitoring, asks prospective students what their religion or belief is. Students have a range of possible replies, including 'No religion or belief' or 'declining to answer', but 'Jewish' is an option. The answers given by applicants, we were told by UCAS, are only shared

with the universities and colleges at the end of the application cycle, and the collection of information matches data collection across the sector and the statutory return (undertaken by HESA, the Higher Education Statistics Agency) which in turn helps to inform analysis of student progression. There are some known data, for example, there is a high application rate from those defining themselves as 'Jewish' (some 0.38% of the total), and in line with other figures referenced in this report, the progression rate for Jewish students is the highest of any religious group at 81%, above those with 'no religion' (79%) and 'Christian' (77%). UCAS has no record of antisemitism having been raised with it, and the organisation told us it was confident that other than a 'name bias' or through details revealed in a personal statement, it would be difficult for an institution to discriminate against a Jewish – or indeed other – student. There is however some merit in UCAS and HESA considering whether religion and belief might be too narrow a definition of Judaism. UCAS does provide information about support available to students and student rights, including providing opportunities for universities to promote their activities in this area. That is an opportunity of which institutions should take full advantage.

RECOMMENDATION:

Universities should have a system for making reasonable adjustments for students and staff with specific religious needs, including dietary requirements. These should be advertised publicly on university websites and prospectuses. Upon registration to a university, there should be options to clarify these requirements so students and staff can be sure that their institutions are providing for them.

DURING UNIVERSITY

7.10 There is a long history of Jewish life and activism on campus, and it continues to thrive. According to the OfS,[85] there are approximately 11,500 Jewish students studying across the UK, with the majority at institutions in England. Jewish student experience overall is very positive, and according to the OfS,[86] Jewish students are the most successful student group, when applying the classifier 'religion or belief', with 96% continuation rate and 92.5% attainment rate. Though not all Jewish students are active in Jewish societies, the role these play on campus is important. A Jewish

85   Student Characteristics data: Student outcomes, November 2022, Office for Students, https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/student-characteristics-data-student-outcomes/

86   Ibid

79   University of Southampton Jewish Society Focus group, 2nd December 2022

80   https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/choice-decisions/

81   University of Oxford Jewish Society – individual interview, 16th January 2023

82   Yavneh College Secondary School, Session with Year 12 students, 6th December 2022

83   University of Edinburgh Jewish Society focus group, 12th October 2022

84   https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/respect/antisemitism

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

The University of Edinburgh hosts a podcast which explores what it is like being a person of particular faith or belief at university, led by the local Chaplain. The aim of the series is to hear students talk about how their faith or beliefs bring them connection and community, exposure to different perspectives, and the grace to negotiate differences. The podcast also explores challenges for these people of faith, including discrimination and micro-aggressions. This is an example of a university publicly celebrating students of different faiths and educating the wider community on different cultures and beliefs.

student from Belfast Jewish Society explained it as akin to their "little family, away from home" and the "closest link" to home, providing a safe and familiar community.[87] A Jewish student from the University of Glasgow talked about their experience and the importance of their Jewish society: "[My] connection to Judaism has been rebirthed, I went to a Jewish primary school but then didn't go to secondary school…coming to JSoc reminded me about being a Jew in the first place… about how open I am and how proud in being Jewish."[88]

7.11 In every focus group with Jewish students, we were told that the most popular and frequent event was a 'Friday Night Dinner'. This event marks the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, which runs from Friday night to Saturday night every week.[89] It begins before nightfall and ends 25 hours later.[90] Depending on individual religious affiliation, 'Friday Night Dinner' can be a religious event with certain practices and prayers, or a cultural and familial occasion. In an interview with a Jewish student studying at the University of Oxford, they explained that going to a 'Friday Night Dinner' was a "nice way to feel homely."[91] The ability to host a 'Friday Night Dinner' on campus was referenced as important in each of the 35 focus groups held under the auspices of the Taskforce. In 13 of these, for Jewish societies described as 'small', 'Friday Night Dinner' at least once a month was said to be their priority,

for example at Belfast Jewish Society,[92] and Loughborough Jewish Society.[93]

7.12 The facility to hold events on campus is important for Jewish students. Focus groups at the University of Warwick[94] and the University of Southampton,[95] among others, relayed to us that such activities helped them to feel part of campus life and provided opportunities to celebrate Jewish occasions with non-Jewish friends. Additionally, the importance of having a dedicated space for activities was highlighted across all interviews with Jewish students. In particular, Edinburgh University Jewish Society,[96] Oxford University Jewish Society,[97] and Cambridge University Jewish Society,[98] highlighted the benefit of having use of their local synagogues and community centres, given these provide kosher meals and space for Jewish society activity and religious observance. This is perhaps even more pertinent for Jewish societies that are distant from a local Jewish community or do not have a large membership. For example, Lancaster University Jewish Society explained that the university and students' union provide a dedicated space in the university chaplaincy with a kosher kitchen that allows the students to put on frequent events.[99] The University of Essex explained that it provides a room on campus for the Jewish Society which is booked in advance for bi-weekly 'Friday Night Dinners'. The university also supports the provision

87   Queen's University Jewish Society – individual interview, 19th January 2023

88   Glasgow Jewish Society Focus group, 14th October 2022

89   https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/633659/jewish/What-Is-Shabbat.htm

90   https://bod.org.uk/resources/resources-publications/ (Jewish Family Life and Customs: A Practical Guide)

91   University of Oxford Jewish- individual interview, 19th January 2023

92   Belfast Jewish society individual interview, 19th January 2023

93   Loughborough Jewish society individual interview, 12th January 2023

94   University of Warwick Taskforce meeting, 14th November 2022

95   University of Southampton Taskforce meeting, 2nd December 2022

96   Edinburgh University Jewish Society focus group, 12th October 2022

97   Oxford University Jewish Society focus group, 31st October 2022

98   Cambridge University Jewish Society focus group, 24th October 2022

99   Lancaster Jewish Society – individual interview, 14th November 2022; https://portal.lancaster.ac.uk/ask/campus/chaplaincy-centre/

CASE STUDY: LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Lancaster University has a dedicated space for the Jewish Society (JSoc), in the chaplaincy, which was one of the first multifaith buildings of its time. The JSoc has a kosher kitchen and a Jewish lounge that in turn enables it to grow the community and deliver Friday Night Dinners for some 40-50 Jewish students. It gives the JSoc the ability to create safe spaces in times of difficulty and to focus its community on aspects that are defined as important to them.

of food from external caterers for the event.[100] Even though Essex is one of the smaller Jewish societies, with some fifteen members, this space enables them to deliver regular events and be an active presence on campus.[101]

7.13 An example of what might be considered model practice can be observed at Lancaster University, at which the university has a dedicated space for the Jewish Society to use, including a kosher kitchen and a Jewish lounge. Institutions might consider where policies can be reasonably adjusted to accommodate religious practices such as these, in line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

7.14 In 15 of the 35 Taskforce focus groups, Jewish students described their Jewish societies as 'small' and expressed their view that it would be too difficult for a religiously observant Jewish student to attend their institution, as they felt their university was not structurally equipped. In some cases, there may well be a failure of institutions to visibly identify the support and policies they have in place to assist religiously observant students. However, we acknowledge that in a number of cases, structural features, like

the provision of a bespoke kitchen, can be more difficult to facilitate.

7.15 During the Sabbath and some Jewish festivals, Orthodox practice restricts the use of any form of electricity, including electric doors and keys.[102] When a Jewish student's accommodation can only be accessed using electronic means, this can be prohibitive, and they may have to find alternative arrangements to get into their homes. Most campuses have automatic doors or require student ID cards to access the buildings. This can lead to difficulties for a Jewish student wanting to access the Chaplaincy building on the Sabbath or other festivals. One issue raised by a student in a focus group was that, when attempting to find alternative ways to enter their college, they were met with hostility: "people don't understand religion being central to someone's life…one of the porters wasn't helpful at all."[103] Simple practices can be put in place, such as providing alternative, non-electronic keys for Jewish students to use. The University of Birmingham employs such a system, and details can be found in the 'Good Practice Guide'.[104]

100   University of Essex Taskforce meeting, 21st October 2022

101   https://www.ujs.org.uk/Essex

102   https://bod.org.uk/resources/resources-publications/ (Jewish Family Life and Customs: A Practical Guide)

103   Jewish society focus group, October 2022

104   Universities Guidance (8 Simple Steps) Appendix

7.16 Access to kosher food or accommodation can be a concern for Jewish students, as outlined earlier. The dietary requirements of kashrut are numerous, including rules and stringencies about what can and cannot be consumed, and how food is to be prepared.[105] A Jewish student keeping strictly kosher is unlikely to be able to live with other students who do not observe kosher food practices. This can lead to students living off-campus in private accommodation, sometimes alone. The aforementioned 'Hillel Houses' can provide student living for those that wish to keep kosher, in a more social setting. In 7 of the 35 focus groups, students said their university provided or supported a form of kosher accommodation, for example, the University of Bristol,[106] and the University of Leeds.[107] (See further details in the 'Good Practice Guide'). In 25 of the sessions, students told us that accessing certified kosher food in the city in which they study, or on campus, was only possible because

the chaplains were bringing it in from a different city. For example, in an interview with a Jewish student from Newcastle University, we were told that the only way to get kosher meat was through their chaplain who brought it from Gateshead.[108] The wider concern about observance was raised by Jewish students studying at the University of Sheffield,[109] the University of Exeter,[110] and the University of East Anglia.[111] We were told that "If you wanted to observe and be religious it's very difficult." This limited access to kosher food and other provisions can affect a student's overall experience and can inhibit the ability of the Jewish society to provide certified kosher food for events.

7.17 In Scotland, there are growing Jewish societies in both Glasgow and Edinburgh, and recently University Jewish Chaplaincy were able to employ an additional Chaplaincy couple to assist Scottish

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105 https://www.kosher.org.uk/category/learn-about-keeping-kosher

106 University of Bristol Jewish society Focus group, 20th October 2022

107 Universities Guidance (8 Simple Steps) Appendix

108 Newcastle University Jewish society Focus group, 8th December 2022

109 University of Sheffield meeting, 16th December 2022

110 University of Exeter Jewish society Focus group, 5th December 2022

111 University of East Anglia meeting, 12th December 2022

Case Study: University of Birmingham

The University of Birmingham supports appropriate adjustments to respect the requirements of those Jewish students seeking kosher accommodation. In addition to placing people who follow the rules of kashrut together in one flat, there are measures which help them observe the Jewish sabbath, for example alternative light switches, separate fridges, freezers and ovens and the option to use a traditional key in place of electronic systems. The institution also provides kosher flats at different price points, acknowledging that there will be issues around affordability for some. This approach enables observant Jewish students to feel welcome and participate fully in student life at Birmingham without compromising their religious values.

Jewish societies.[112] This has significantly helped Jewish students access kosher food and hold more regular events. Jewish students studying at St Andrews University reported that, irrespective of the support from UJC, they felt one cannot be a religious Jewish student there, due to the lack of religious provisions in the community.[113] For Wales, most of the Jewish community is based in Cardiff and Swansea but numbers are diminishing.[114] The UJS sabbatical officer responsible for the Welsh Jewish societies explained that it is difficult to access kosher food nearby.[115] The wider impact this has for observant Jewish students is that they may perceive these campuses as inaccessible, therefore restricting their choice.

7.18 Timetabling has long been a concern for some Jewish students. The problem is particularly acute at the beginning of the academic year when there are major Jewish festivals (Rosh Hashanah - the Jewish New Year,[116] and Yom Kippur - the Jewish Day of Atonement[117]) which typically clash with freshers' week and other introductory events. There are often concerns about lectures clashing with the Sabbath which, in winter months when the sun sets in the afternoon, can begin as early as 3:30pm. When meeting with universities, many explained that there are methods for requesting time off for religious observance, but the feedback from a number of the focus groups was that students were not made aware of any university policies on these matters, and procedures were

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112 University of Edinburgh meeting, 12th October 2022

113 University of St Andrews Jewish student Focus group, 13th October 2022

114 The stark reality facing Wales' Jewish Community, December 2021, Wales Online, https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/stark-reality-facing-wales-jewish-22498201

115 UJS sabbatical officer team focus group, 20th January 2023

116 https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4762/jewish/What-Is-Rosh-Hashanah.htm

117 https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/177886/jewish/What-Is-Yom-Kippur.htm

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not adequately publicised. In a focus group with Jewish community organisations, UJC spoke of a lack of consistency across the UK in how institutions respond to these issues, with many concerns said to be handled on an individual basis rather than through a systemic approach.[118]

7.19 An example offered by UJC concerned support the organisation provided to a medical student requesting time off for religious reasons. The student's tutor questioned their choice of a medical degree and accused them of not being dedicated to their studies.[119] A similar example was offered by a Jewish student studying a physical science course, who explained that they had been concerned about missing 'labs' as attendance contributed to their final grade for the module. When requesting a reasonable adjustment, they were told this would be an 'unauthorised absence', impacting their attendance record.[120] This inconsistency and lack of understanding within institutions, centred on degree programmes, proves difficult for Jewish students and greatly impacts their experience, creating a concern that they may be penalised for taking time off for religious observance.

7.20 An example cited as good practice by both UJC and Jewish students was the University of Birmingham. It has a page on the student intranet specifically dedicated to supporting students needing to have exams or lectures moved owing to religious observance.[121] The University of Leeds also has a centralised system offering support to students needing to move exams or

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118 Jewish community organisations Parliamentary hearing, 1st November 2022

119 Ibid

120 Jewish student focus group, October 2022

121 University of Birmingham Jewish Society Focus Group, 28th October 2022

Case Study: University of Leeds

At the University of Leeds, students are asked to complete a form if scheduled exams or assessments are taking place during a period of religious observance. If teaching is affected, there is no specific protocol, but students are advised to speak with their local Student Education Service team to discuss their needs. If possible, adjustments will be made, or students may have a choice to attend a different seminar/group.

Case Study: University of Greenwich

Since September 2022, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Greenwich initiated regular meetings with colleagues who identify as Jewish and those who have a Jewish background linked to their heritage, culture, and/or religion. During these meetings, considerations were given to the definition of antisemitism that the university should adopt, as well as how the university could support and advise all staff and students in addressing antisemitism.

Case Study: University of Essex

Since 2007, the University of Essex has marked Holocaust Memorial Day with a series of events taking place throughout the week. Each year, the diverse programme of events and activities is designed to engage the campus community and the wider public in the local area and beyond. Events include the 'Procession of Light' and 'Reading of Names' which take place in the centre of campus.

lectures owing to religious observance. There is a clear and consistent approach for any Jewish student at Leeds, positively impacting Jewish student experience.

7.21 In line with the experience of Jewish students, Jewish academics also highlighted issues with timetabling, and their colleagues' lack of understanding of religious observance, impacting feelings of inclusion. This included a lack of understanding or flexibility relating to requests to leave early for the Sabbath.[122] For example, a member of staff explained that they had been compelled to attend training seminars on a Saturday, despite observing the Sabbath.[123] In general, there appeared to be a lack of support and consideration for staff wanting to observe religious practices, and a greater level of understanding and flexibility is needed to ensure staff are supported.

7.22 Across eight focus groups and interviews with Jewish staff, concerns were highlighted about the approaches to Jewish identity at their institutions. Where staff surveys only refer to Judaism as a faith characteristic, rather than an ethnic group, staff felt that their employers were failing to recognise the full expression of Jewish identity.[124] Having amended its staff survey from recording faith to noting cultural heritage group, for example, the University of Warwick has nearly doubled the number of staff identifying as Jewish.

7.23 An issue raised in some of the discussions with staff was that they felt an imbalance of support structures afforded to other groups with protected characteristics. For example, in a focus group with Jewish staff members, they explained that their university's 'Black and Ethnic Minority' (BAME) networks do not include Jews in their remit and that when they expressed their disappointment and frustration with this, they were questioned and told it was not necessary to establish a formal 'Jewish staff network', this despite the potential benefits the networks encompass, including financial or marketing benefits.[125] This feeds a feeling for some staff of being ignored and side-lined by their universities, and that their Jewish identities are not taken seriously or fully understood. At the University of Greenwich, as outlined in the 'Good Practice Guide', the senior leadership team has taken an active role in supporting the development and maintenance of a Jewish staff network.[126] The University of Essex also offers a model of good practice, highlighting Jewish culture and heritage on campus, specifically through its work on 'Holocaust Memorial Week'.

Recommendations:

1. There should be greater conformity across the Higher Education sector for lecture recording arrangements and lecture or examination rescheduling facilities. The Union of Jewish Students (UJS), Universities UK (UUK), University Jewish Chaplaincy (UJC) and the National Union of Students (NUS) should create guidance for institutions on this and aim to publicly report on progress within 2 years. Institutions should follow good practice and share details of their schemes with students and staff to ensure that they are aware of their rescheduling options.

2. Universities, with the support of UJS, UJC and UUK, should create inclusive calendars with an outline of religious festivals and key calendar dates, including the beginning and end of Sabbath times for each week. This should be shared with academic faculty members and student groups at the start of every academic year to ensure university-wide awareness of these dates. It should also be publicly accessible on the university's website.

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122 Jewish staff interview, December 2022

123 Jewish staff interview, November 2022

124 Jewish staff interviews, October, November and December 2022

125 Ibid

126 Universities Guidance (8 Simple Steps) Appendix

8. FREEDOM OF SPEECH

8.1 In our visits, we asked how universities handle the competing issues presented by preserving freedom of speech and ensuring they are delivering in their duty of care to their staff and students, particularly in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty. Almost all of the universities and students' unions to which we spoke were able to evidence robust processes to ensure student societies could invite speakers to address student groups, though there were some inconsistencies. The 'Good Practice Guide' provides examples of case studies from both students' unions and universities of their processes for speaker events, for example for Leeds Beckett Student Union and Newcastle University.[127]

8.2 Delivering carefully collaborated events, and protests to counter them, can be even more challenging when these events are held online, and since the Covid-19 pandemic, the volume of online events has increased. Universities and students' unions must therefore examine their current policies to ensure they are as applicable to online activity as real-life events.

8.3 The Antisemitism Policy Trust highlighted concerns that extremist groups or individuals might abuse the processes established in the Bill, to gain legitimacy under the guise of freedom of expression.[128] We were told that Ministers had referenced the phrase 'reasonably practicable' in relation to the steps institutions must take to ensure freedom of speech, and that this did not require therefore an open platform for all to spread hate on campus. We do however agree that the OfS should clarify its guidance on this.

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127   Universities Guidance (8 Simple Steps) Appendix

128   https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-09-13/debates/c0381d77-f7fa-41e9-a92a-19b94f6c73fb/HigherEducation(FreedomOfSpeech)Bill(-FourthSitting)

CASE STUDY: NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

An example of action to address a concern about a speaker event was provided during a session at Newcastle University. An external speaker event was due to take place during 'Israel Apartheid Week'. The university was made aware of this event through the University Chaplaincy Network. The session involved a presentation on the work of an ecumenical accompaniment programme. It was recognised that, though not deliberate, the timing of the proposed presentation could appear to be insensitive. The university worked to support those involved to address concerns. The event afforded the university opportunities: first and foremost, to increase awareness of the support it offered through its external speaker process, and second to increase awareness of how event timings may impact upon a given community or individuals (both internal and external to the University).

9. ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

9.1 Universities are places of learning, debate and exploration of ideas; however, it is critical that this process of discovery is executed in a respectful way so that anyone can express their views without harassment or discrimination. Freedom of speech and academic research must extend to both students and staff seeking to work with Israeli or Palestinian counterparts. This principle is encouraged by many universities, although in practice it is not always applied. Jewish staff and students reported that they often feel they cannot be fully open or honest about their views on Zionism and Israel, as they are concerned about any backlash they may receive. According to a study in 2015 by City University, 93% of British Jews say, "Israel plays a part in their Jewish identity."[129] This is also made clear by the CST Annual Review 2021, which showed that, when there has been an increase of tension in the Middle East, it impacts on the levels of antisemitism in the UK.[130] However, as the IHRA definition of antisemitism makes clear, there is a distinction between antisemitism and anti-Israel criticism.[131]

9.2 In May 2021, during a period of heightened tension between Gaza and Israel, CST recorded 55 university-related antisemitic incidents. This was the single highest monthly total in the period covered by its most recent report on campus-linked incidents. This number included 5 threats, 3 of which were death threats sent to Jewish students. 13 of the incidents occurred offline and 5 of that number took place during campus-based demonstrations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This underlines both the seriousness of the matters under discussion and their impact on Jewish student communities.

9.3 Too often there is no nuance or complexity around the conflict and its impact on campuses, rather, a simplistic narrative has played out which on occasion has enabled antisemitism or antisemitic activities.

9.4 During the focus groups we held, there was a concern raised that Jewish students and staff were becoming reticent to voice their views on Israel or Zionism out of fear of antisemitism or any other backlash they might receive. Moreover, the fear of being held responsible for Israel's actions can impact how openly Jewish students and staff share their Jewish identity. For example, in a focus group with Jewish students, one explained that they saw people in their seminar with 'Free Palestine' stickers on their laptops so decided to tuck in their necklace displaying Hebrew writing, in order to avoid any judgement or conversation on the topic.[132] Some suggested there was an impact on their academic decisions, with one student explaining they were less inclined to choose a module examining the Middle East, as they felt they would be seen to be responsible for defending Israel when discussing the conflict.[133]

9.5 These situations can also occur outside of the classroom, where students have been verbally abused online when sharing their opinions on Israel, extending an already hostile environment. For example, in an interview with a Jewish student, they explained that in May 2021, a fellow student posted information relating to the Israel-Palestine conflict in a WhatsApp group with other students on their course. The Jewish student responded by offering to speak to anyone

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129   https://www.city.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2015/11/attitudes-of-british-jews-towards-israel-revealed-in-new-study

130   CST Annual Review 2021, March 2022, The Community Security Trust, https://cst.org.uk/data/file/5/9/CST%20Annual%20Review%202022%20ONLINE.1646132484.pdf

131   https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism

132   Nottingham Jewish Society focus group, 10th November 2022

133   Jewish student interview, January 2023

interested in hearing a different perspective. After the message was sent, the student received over four hours of abuse from other students in the group, and an onslaught of calls and texts. When this was reported, the lecturer – in what was a well-judged intervention - asked the class to be 'kind' to one another, quoting the student handbook, albeit no further action was taken.[134] Universities need to do more to support their academics in creating an open and respectful environment for students to share their views without without negative consequences.

JEWISH STUDENT ACTIVITY

9.6 As previously outlined, the relationship Jewish students have with Israel is one that can be very personal and emotional, albeit diverse. Over the past decade, it would have been typical for a Jewish society to deliver activities that might be related to Israel; whether that be commemorating 'Yom Hashoah' (Israel's Holocaust Memorial Day) or inviting speakers to engage in debate and discussion. A few of the

Jewish societies we spoke to, for example, Exeter Jewish Society,[135] and Edinburgh Jewish Society,[136] mentioned in the focus groups that they are moving away from any activity related to Israel. There is a concern amongst Jewish societies that doing any Israeli-related activity might attract unwanted backlash from other students. For example, the University of Warwick Jewish Society explained that when an event is related to Israeli culture, they have to carefully consider how it is advertised, to prevent Jewish students from encountering potential abuse.[137] That any society should have to factor such a concern into the decision-making process is troubling.

STUDENT UNION ACTIVITY

9.7 Concerns were raised with us about the nature and potential obsessive focus of the student movement on Israel, with the implications this has for some Jewish students and staff.

135   Exeter Jewish Society Focus Group, 5th December 2022

136   Edinburgh Jewish Society Focus Group, 12th October 2022

137   University of Warwick Jewish Society focus group, 14th November 2022

134   Jewish student interview, October 2022

CASE STUDY: EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Edinburgh University Students' Association's Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue Society (EUPIDS) offered an alternative to the polarised discussions that often divide campuses by creating a unique space for students and staff to have nuanced and respectful conversations on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In 2021, EUPIDS hosted an International Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue Conference with 500 participants. This conference accepted papers from students worldwide and provided an opportunity for other students to volunteer as peer reviewers, gaining important academic experience. Beyond the event's global nature, emphasis was placed on grounding the conference within the community of the University of Edinburgh, as a collaboration between students and academics in different departments.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

The University of Bristol's 'Global Lounge' is a multicultural hub in the heart of campus, open to all students and staff. The 'Global Lounge' has two main functions: sharing cultures amongst home and international students and supporting new international students during the arrivals period. Events have included drop-in 'tea and a chat' sessions in response to global events and crises. These meetings are mobilised at short notice when the need arises and provide a safe space for staff and students who are affected to connect with others in a friendly and informal setting. The sessions bring together different departments with, for example, the Student Wellbeing Service, to ensure expertise is on hand to support the most vulnerable students and staff. This is especially pertinent during times of conflict in the Middle East, where students have felt isolated and can come together in this space to voice their feelings.

9.8 This sentiment was repeated throughout the focus groups, specifically for Jewish students who have felt hostility within their students' union when 'Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions' (BDS) motions have been brought forward. For example, the University of Liverpool Guild of Students held a debate in April 2022 on BDS in which both 'sides' were given an opportunity to speak. In the speech against the motion, a Jewish student spoke:

"I would just like to start off by saying, I don't consent to my face being put up on anywhere online because as a Jew, a minority in the city, I feel scared, especially to speak out on this issue publicly. I'm not openly Jewish at uni because I fear for my own safety at times. So, I want to start off with that."[138]

9.9 This demonstrates the fear that some Jewish students have about openly discussing the topic of Israel-Palestine, and when further speaking to Jewish students in Liverpool, one expressed that after the debate they received

"threatening messages."[139] Further to this, UJS passed a motion at its annual conference in 2021 to "reaffirm its opposition to BDS."[140] This demonstrates a widely held view amongst Jewish students that they take issue with BDS as a movement and the possible implications it has for Jewish students on campus, such as reduced access to kosher food, and barriers to participation for Jewish and/or Israeli students. The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism of 2015 noted that whilst BDS efforts were not in of themselves antisemitic, those instituting boycotts should be mindful of and risk assess for, potential antisemitic impacts of a boycott.[141]

9.10 The interaction between societies on campus is another area which was highlighted to us as a potential concern. For example, nearly every year

138   https://www.liverpoolguildstudentmedia.co.uk/2022/04/24/the-bds-referendum-debate-report/

139   Liverpool Jewish Society Focus group, 21st November 2022

140   https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ujs/pages/643/attachments/original/1642431106/Policy_2021.pdf?1642431106

141   https://antisemitism.org.uk/publication/the-all-party-parliamentary-inquiry-into-antisemitism-2015/

there is a national campaign named 'Israel Apartheid Week' which consists of protests, events and other activities.[142] A Jewish staff member explained that they "dread going to campus during Israel Apartheid Week" due to their past experiences of aggressive events on campus, such as imitation checkpoints and protests using antisemitic imagery.[143]

9.11 Concerns were raised with us that, when Israeli speakers are brought to campus, there is a fear of how the event might escalate or lead to an unwanted backlash. Having appropriate protocols and ensuring relevant societies are aware of these, particularly at certain peaks in tension in the Middle East, might assist with ensuring good relations on campus. In the 'Good Practice Guide' there are examples of how universities and students' unions have worked to support all students in related scenarios, such as Leeds University Union which has a 'No Surprises Policy'.[144]

RECOMMENDATION:

Universities should develop specific engagement plans around international conflicts (including the Israel-Palestine conflict) impacting campus relations. This should include a comprehensive risk assessment and a preparedness and engagement strategy, including dialogue with relevant student groups.

142   https://www.palestinecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/ISRAELI-APART-HEID-WEEK-2022-GUIDE.pdf

143   Jewish staff member submission, 12th December 2022

144   Ibid

10. WORK WITHIN THE WIDER HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

10.1 We had the opportunity to discuss with key stakeholders in Higher Education the work they had been undertaking in relation to tackling antisemitism and racial harassment.

10.2 In June 2021, Universities UK (UUK) published a practical guidance book entitled 'Tackling antisemitism: practical guidance for universities.'[145] This provided case studies and highlighted three key themes:

1. Limited understanding of antisemitism

2. Under-reporting of antisemitic incidents and issues with complaints processes

3. Online harassment

10.3 In November 2021, the OfS published its 'Tackling Antisemitism'[146] page, which includes an explanation of the IHRA definition and an updated list of the number of providers that have adopted it, as well as numerous resources and case studies to support universities on how to tackle antisemitism.

10.4 The OfS told us that it has been consulting on a change to its conditions of registration for HE institutions, to include action to tackle discrimination. In the first Ministerial guidance the OfS received, it was directed to consider work "to counter harassment and hate crime in higher education."[147] Subsequently, OfS pursued a voluntary albeit strongly encouraged

effort to ensure institutions set out plans to address harassment, through its statement of expectations.[148] A condition of registration related to harassment can be added by OfS and it is clear that having appropriate plans to address harassment should always have been a pre-condition for any institution to secure registration with the OfS. We strongly encourage the regulator to move quickly in confirming this as a statutory requirement.

10.5 Advance HE told us it has a number of workstreams relating to Equality and Diversity, including research and analysis.[149] It maintains details of this work on its website, which incorporates materials from the former Equality Challenge Unit, for example, research into Religion and Belief,[150] and on Good Relations.[151] Some of this work, it told us, assists member organisations in the HE sector to deliver on their duties to foster good relations on campus. The organisation reviews and awards the Race Equality Charter mark which is a data-led, voluntary accreditation framework for addressing Race Equality and could be applied to tackling antisemitism, and there are some examples Advance HE was able to share of where this had taken place, albeit these are not public. The organisation did reference a question raised by one of its members on how to include Judaism as an ethnicity in its data collection for the Charter, which is relevant to the concerns raised in this report. The Welsh Government's 2021 anti-racist action plan includes an

145   Tackling antisemitism: practical guidance for universities, June 2021, Universities UK. https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/tackling-antisemitism-practical-guidance

146   Tackling antisemitism, November 2021, Office for Students, https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/prevent-and-address-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/tackling-antisemitism/

147   https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1111/strategicguidanceto-theofs.pdf

148   https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-well-being-and-protection/prevent-and-address-harassment-and-sexual-miscon-duct/statement-of-expectations/

149   Taskforce meeting with Advance HE, 17 February 2023

150   https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/advance-he/AdvHE_Religion%20and%20be-lief_1606302802.pdf

151   https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/creating-inclusive-environment/promoting-good-relations

expectation that HE institutions achieve the REC mark within three years.[152] The Higher Education Funding Council Wales told us it was working to support that action plan through the funding of HE institutions in Wales.

The National Union of Students (NUS)

10.6 The National Union of Students (NUS) has for a long time played a leading role in setting the culture for the wider student movement. The structure of NUS creates a space in which only a limited number of students can have an active role.[153]

10.7 There is a history of Jewish students taking active roles within the NUS and students' union elected sabbatical roles. There are many examples of Jewish students serving as sabbatical officers, from across the UK, who experience little antisemitism and feel supported as such an officer.[154] When speaking with current Jewish sabbatical officers, for example at Brighton Students' Union,[155] and Lancaster Students' Union,[156] we were told of the importance of being a Jewish sabbatical officer, and the positive impact this has on fellow officers and other staff: in educational terms and ensuring the Jewish student voice is heard alongside other minority student groups.

10.8 The experiences of these officers, and more widely Jewish student experience in NUS, have been considered in detail in the recent 'Independent investigation into allegations of antisemitism within NUS', published January

2023.[157] That report, conducted by Rebecca Tuck KC, highlights a multitude of areas which are cause for concern.

10.9 The NUS report highlights that there is an issue of retaining institutional knowledge about antisemitism, with a failure to implement recommendations from previous inquiries, compounded by the structural elements that limit the breadth of people to gain the knowledge, given the fast turnaround of sabbatical positions. This problem extends to students' unions, as the elected sabbatical officers and student members within the governance structures are elected for limited terms. The 1994 Education Act explains that "a person should not hold sabbatical union office, or paid elected union office, for more than two years in total at the establishment".[158] The result is that the turnover of sabbatical officers is high, leaving little room for knowledge to be retained. For example, in the session we held with London universities, one university reported no issues of antisemitism on campus, only to be told by another participant at the meeting that the same university had previously had issues related to extremist groups securing freshers' stalls at its welcome events. As outlined in the NUS report, there are many recommendations to improve, much of which can also be applied to students' unions.

10.10 There is more that can be done within HE sector organisations, especially those involved in data collection and registration. Universities need to have an understanding of their student and staff community, and one way in which this can be achieved is through encouraging staff and students to fill out identity surveys. Most universities with which the Taskforce met

152   https://www.gov.wales/race-equality-action-plan-anti-racist-wales

153   https://assets.nationbuilder.com/nus/pages/222/attachments/original/1670410719/NUS_UK_Rules_May_2019.pdf?1670410719

154   Lancaster Jewish Society – individual interview, 14th November 2022

155   Brighton Jewish student interview, 2nd February 2023

156   Lancaster Jewish student interview, 14th November 2022

157   https://www.nus.org.uk/independent_investigation_into_antisemitism

158   https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/30/pdfs/ukpga_19940030_en.pdf

explained that they operate such surveys for their staff, however, it is difficult to collect information on students, as many take the data straight from application forms. Additionally, several of the universities mentioned that collecting staff data was out of their control and that it was gathered by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the role of which is to collect and disseminate data about higher education within the UK. As part of this effort, it released data in February 2022 on all staff by their equality characteristics,[159] which failed to include religion, faith and belief as a category, nor did it include Judaism as an ethnicity. The way in which these types of forms are structured and written impact greatly on how a Jewish student or staff member may identify; for example, only having Judaism within the 'faith and religion' category does

159   https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/working-in-he/characteristics

not allow for people to declare their identity as ethnically and culturally Jewish. Changing this can have a large impact on understanding the landscape of the student community, but also demonstrates to the Jewish student or staff member that one understands the diversity of the Jewish community.

Recommendation:

Universities UK should bring in processes to ensure long-term memory of action to tackle discrimination, and specifically in this instance antisemitism, on campus, and work to encourage institutional memory across individual campuses. The Union of Jewish Students and the National Union of Students should do likewise, and work with UUK in promoting this.

The OfS should introduce a condition of registration around tackling discrimination, including antisemitism.

11. Conclusion

The findings of this report are based on a wide range of interviews, evidence sessions and bilateral engagements. They cannot represent the entire Jewish experience on campus, but they highlight some key components. Antisemitism continues to be a threat to Jewish students but there are several relatively straightforward steps institutions can take to ameliorate or challenge its effect and support Jewish staff and students alike.

The recommendations provided in the report address critical issues raised by both Jewish staff and students, and provide measurable, reasonable, and implementable actions for all universities. This, complemented by the 'Good Practice Guide', demonstrates the ability of universities and students' unions to achieve these recommendations, and take

innovative and proactive steps to support their Jewish staff and students.

Jewish staff and students have the right to be themselves in whichever way they choose, free of harassment and intimidation. The onus of responsibility to improve the situation is not on Jewish students, but on the institutions in which they study, or which support their activities. Universities need to improve their institutional approach, culture, and structures to support their staff and students. It is the role of governments to improve education about contemporary antisemitism in schools, and it is the responsibility of every individual to call out anti-Jewish racism, where it is safe to do so, when they see it and to report it.

12. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Where there are issues or complaints, the IHRA definition should be used as a reference point to understand what contemporary antisemitism is. It should also be used as a reference point for Jewish students and staff (and indeed non-Jewish complainants where relevant), to support them when dealing with issues or submitting complaints. It should be used as a public resource, publicised on a university's website so that Jewish students and staff are able to refer to it. This will also demonstrate that antisemitism is both understood and is being taken seriously which will help build trust between universities and their Jewish communities. The definition should also be used as an educational tool for the wider campus community to understand contemporary and traditional antisemitism.

2. 'Antisemitism Awareness Training', such as that provided by the Union of Jewish Students, should be provided for staff in universities, students' union managers and trade unions. Education about antisemitism should be embedded within wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training structures and all anti-racism training, at all levels of the university.

3. Universities should develop systems to address antisemitism both where it occurs, and where there are opportunities to offer education. This includes:

i. All students and staff found to have engaged in antisemitic behaviour undertaking a programme of education about antisemitism, for example by requiring them to undergo 'Antisemitism Awareness Training'.

ii. Publishing educational materials, guidance or thought pieces, around antisemitism, using all avenues available to them, including social media, press and students' union campaigns.

4. Universities should actively reach out to Jewish and other minority groups to ensure that they are fully cognisant of reporting processes and feel empowered to use them. They should work on specific awareness-raising campaigns among the most vulnerable students to increase the likelihood of reporting unacceptable behaviour.

5. Institutions should undertake a thorough review of their complaints systems with a particular focus on:

i. Ensuring campus third parties are permitted to make representation on behalf of students and staff who wish to remain anonymous. Third parties might include, student societies, students' union sabbatical officers, well-being and academic staff, and the Union of Jewish Students.

ii. Ensuring complainants can maintain confidentiality throughout complaints processes, as defined in the OfS statement of expectations to 'Prevent and address harassment and misconduct'.

iii. Limiting the process to an acceptable timeframe, as set out in the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) guidance.

iv. Keeping a complainant informed at all stages of the process and ensuring adequate welfare support is in place, for example, support from a staff member with appropriate cultural competency training.

v. Ensuring that complaints are handled by staff members with no close working or personal relationship with those involved in the complaint, to ensure objectivity.

6. The OfS and OIAHE should jointly produce a report on the state of complaints processes in Higher Education with reference to the OIAHE 'Good Practice Framework' and the OfS statement of expectations to 'Prevent and address harassment and misconduct'.

7. Universities should have guidelines and social media policies for students and staff, clearly determining when they come under the university's jurisdiction. There should be no ambiguity around this, and students and staff should be aware of the disciplinary consequences of posting something harmful from an account associated with the university.

8. Universities should have a system for making reasonable adjustments for students and staff with specific religious needs, including dietary requirements. These should be advertised publicly on university websites and prospectuses. Upon registration to a university, there should be options to clarify these requirements so students and staff can be sure that their institutions are providing for them.

9. There should be greater conformity across the Higher Education sector for lecture recording arrangements and lecture or examination rescheduling facilities. The Union of Jewish Students (UJS), Universities UK (UUK), University Jewish Chaplaincy (UJC) and the National Union of Students (NUS) should create guidance for institutions on this and aim to publicly report on progress within 2 years. Institutions should follow good practice and share details of their schemes with students and staff to ensure that they are aware of their rescheduling options.

10. Universities, with the support of UJS, UJC and UUK, should create inclusive calendars with an outline of religious festivals and key calendar dates, including the beginning and end of Sabbath times for each week. This should be shared with academic faculty members and student groups at the start of every academic year to ensure university-wide awareness of these dates. It should also be publicly accessible on the university's website.

11. Universities should develop specific engagement plans around international conflicts (including the Israel-Palestine conflict) impacting campus relations. This should include a comprehensive risk assessment and a preparedness and engagement strategy, including dialogue with relevant student groups.

12. Universities UK should bring in processes to ensure long-term memory of action to tackle discrimination, and specifically in this instance antisemitism, on campus, and work to encourage institutional memory across individual campuses. The Union of Jewish Students and the National Union of Students should do likewise, and work with UUK in promoting this.

The OfS should introduce a condition of registration around tackling discrimination, including antisemitism.

13. FURTHER INFORMATION

The Taskforce met with and/or received evidence from the following institutions:

1. Cardiff University
2. City, University London
3. Durham University
4. Goldsmiths, University of London
5. Imperial College London
6. Keele University
7. King's College London
8. Lancaster University
9. Leeds Beckett University
10. London Metropolitan University
11. London School of Economics and Political Science
12. London South Bank University
13. Loughborough University
14. Manchester Metropolitan University
15. Middlesex University London
16. Newcastle University
17. Nottingham Trent University
18. Oxford Brookes University
19. Queen Mary University of London
20. Queen's University Belfast
21. Royal Holloway, University of London
22. Sheffield Hallam University
23. SOAS, University of London
24. The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London
25. University College London
26. University of Bath
27. University of Birmingham
28. University of Brighton
29. University of Bristol
30. University of Cambridge
31. University of Derby
32. University of Dundee
33. University of East Anglia
34. University of East London
35. University of Edinburgh
36. University of Essex
37. University of Exeter
38. University of Glasgow
39. University of Greenwich
40. University of Kent
41. University of Leeds
42. University of Leicester
43. University of Liverpool
44. University of Manchester
45. University of Northampton
46. University of Nottingham
47. University of Oxford
48. University of Reading
49. University of Sheffield
50. University of Southampton
51. University of St Andrews
52. University of Sussex
53. University of Warwick
54. University of West London
55. University of Westminster
56. University of York

The Taskforce met with and/or received evidence from Jewish students and staff from the following institutions:

1. Cardiff University
2. Durham University
3. Goldsmiths, University of London
4. King's College London
5. Lancaster University
6. Leeds Beckett University
7. Liverpool John Moores University
8. London School of Economics and Political Science
9. London South Bank University
10. Loughborough University
11. Middlesex University
12. Newcastle University
13. Nottingham Trent University
14. Queen's University Belfast
15. Sheffield Hallam University
16. University of Birmingham
17. University of Brighton
18. University of Bristol
19. University of Cambridge
20. University of East Anglia
21. University of East London
22. University of Edinburgh
23. University of Essex
24. University of Exeter
25. University of Glasgow
26. University of Hertfordshire
27. University of Leeds
28. University of Liverpool
29. University of Manchester
30. University of Nottingham
31. University of Oxford
32. University of Sheffield
33. University of Southampton
34. University of St Andrews
35. University of Sussex
36. University of Warwick
37. University of Westminster

The Taskforce engaged with or took evidence from the following organisations:

1. Advance HE
2. Antisemitism Policy Trust
3. Campaign Against Antisemitism
4. Community Security Trust
5. GMB Union
6. Higher Education Funding Council Wales
7. National Union of Students
8. Office for Students
9. Office of the Independent Adjudicator
10. Scottish Funding Council
11. StandWithUs UK
12. The Board of Deputies of British Jews
13. The Jewish Leadership Council
14. UK Lawyers for Israel
15. Union of Jewish Students
16. Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
17. University College Union
18. University Jewish Chaplaincy
19. Universities UK

Members of Parliament, Mayoral Offices and Devolved Government representatives engaged in the Taskforce work included:

1. Nickie Aiken MP
2. Ben Bradshaw MP
3. Paula Bradshaw MLA
4. Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
5. Dr Lisa Cameron MP
6. Bill Esterson MP
7. Lilian Greenwood MP
8. Fabian Hamilton MP
9. Claire Hanna MP
10. Sir Bernard Jenkin MP
11. Robert Largan MP
12. Pauline Latham MP
13. Steve McCabe MP
14. Catherine McKinnell MP
15. Anna McMorrin MP
16. Alex Norris MP
17. Kirsten Oswald MP
18. Andrew Percy MP
19. Alex Sobel MP
20. Matt Western MP
21. Dr Alan Whitehead MP
22. Nadia Whittome MP
23. Daniel Zeichner MP

The research for this report was undertaken by Amanda Sefton working alongside Lord Mann, Rt Hon Dame Margaret Hodge MP and Nicola Richards MP. Thanks are due to those Members of Parliament who have participated in the Taskforce, and to Danny Stone, Amy Wagner and Nina Freedman for their part in drafting the report.