

68% Yes

IHRA Definition of Antisemitism and the UoM

This branch notes:

1. The union's commitment to opposing antisemitism;
2. The University of Manchester has agreed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism at a meeting of the Planning and Resources Committee on 9 June 2020 with the added clauses from the Home Affairs Select Committee, 2016.
3. Our concerns are two-fold:
 - At the process by which this was adopted. There was no discussion at the Senate and no experts on Israel-Palestine or antisemitism were consulted – the university employs many experts who could have been consulted.
 - How is “antisemitic intent” to be determined, who sits on the committee that decides this, and what would be the procedure for a member of staff accused of this?
4. There is widespread opposition (across the UK, US, Canada and other parts of the world) to the use of the IHRA definition in a university context, especially as a disciplinary tool, including by its author Kenneth Stern, and by the chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Baroness Falkner.

This branch believes that:

1. Manchester University should reject use of the IHRA definition with the added clauses from the Home Affairs Select Committee, 2016.
2. The vote by the UCL Academic Board (AB) shows why wide-ranging and careful debate is essential when considering whether to adopt the IHRA definition with the added clauses from the Home Affairs Select Committee, 2016, and regrets that this did not take place in Manchester where the definition was imposed by a decision of the Planning and Resources Committee;
3. There is a fundamental contradiction between the implementation of the IHRA definition with the added clauses from the Home Affairs Select Committee, 2016 in relation to the University's mission, and its obligation in law to uphold academic freedom. The added clauses from the Home Affairs Select Committee, 2016 agreed by the Planning and Resources Committee do not resolve this contradiction;
4. As it currently stands, the policy does not outline the procedures for deciding what constitutes “antisemitic intent”, i.e., who would sit on the committee, and what processes a member of staff would be able to access to dispute such a judgment.

This branch resolves to:

1. Invite colleagues from UCL UCU to speak about their campaign against adopting the IHRA definition with the aim of building a local campaign to get the University to reverse its adoption of the definition and instead to explore the use of other approaches to defining and combating antisemitism and all forms of racism.
2. Seek clarification from University management on the following:
 - How was IHRA with the added clauses from the Home Affairs Select Committee, 2016 passed, why did it not go to Senate, why were experts not consulted?

- What does “added antisemitic intent” mean? Who defines it, who sits on the committee that decides this, and what is the procedure to oppose accusations of added antisemitic intent?