

## RCA Guide to Student Protest

The following document provides guidance for students who wish to protest at the Royal College of Art (RCA). The guidance covers all of our campuses and external events associated with RCA.

RCA is committed to the provision of a welcoming and safe environment for our community. Students, staff and visitors of the College are required at all times to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner in their day-to-day activities, including in dealings with other students, staff, visitors and external organisations.

As outlined in our [Equality statement](#) we are committed to creating an environment of mutual respect, where differences are valued and respected and where innovation, creativity and diversity can flourish. Positive working relationships – whether between staff and staff, staff and students or students and students – are central to this. Mutual respect is facilitated by the promotion of values of dignity, courtesy and respect, alongside a culture of zero tolerance of bullying and harassment.

Our [Student Charter](#) outlined the shared commitment between the members of our community (students, staff and visitors), underpinned by the RCA values, and provides a framework for the way we work and operate together. Our [Student Misconduct and Disciplinary Policy](#) sets out our expectations of behaviour where students engage in misconduct, as outlined in our policy, they may become subject to disciplinary action.

The RCA, like most universities, is an autonomous institution without any political affiliation and is registered as an 'exempt' charity. As a higher education institution, we are regulated by the Office for Students and are obliged to uphold UK law, including the right to free speech within the law, and to follow the (anti-terrorist) [Prevent legislation](#). As a charity, we are not entitled to engage in political campaigning or any activity which might be construed as being outside the scope of our charitable objectives and our Charter.

RCA supports students to respectfully share, debate and challenge views and positions on a wide range of issues. As part of our legal obligations, we uphold freedom of speech within the law, which may sometimes include allowing individuals or groups to host events or speakers that others don't agree with or wish to demonstrate against.

The guidance below outlines some do's and don'ts around student protests based on

best practices at other institutions. The guidance does not cover all eventualities and does not limit the College from requesting further information or details. Following the guidance will help to ensure that student protests can be best supported to be delivered safely for all members of the RCA community and the general public, and reduce the likelihood of protesters breaching College regulations and becoming subject to disciplinary action.

If in doubt a discussion with the Director of Estates and Head of Student Experience ahead of planned activity is recommended.

When arranging and taking part in a protest at the RCA we recommend that you:

- Where possible, give notice of at least 7 working days of the protest to the College Health and Safety team and Estates team via [health-and-safety@rca.ac.uk](mailto:health-and-safety@rca.ac.uk) and [estates@rca.ac.uk](mailto:estates@rca.ac.uk) (you may choose for RCASU to provide the liaison with the College)
- Seek in advance and follow any safety, security, and location advice given to you by the College and Students' Union staff and representatives
- Complete a risk assessment to ensure the safety of participants. Templates are available via RCASU to be completed at least 5 working days in advance of protest.
- If inviting external speakers, complete the relevant [speaker checks](#), which for speakers booked by student societies are to be approved by RCASU as required by law under the Prevent legislation.
- Clearly communicate information about the protest to the participants, including any relevant College Guidance.
- Ensure you follow the [RCA Poster and Information Display Policy](#), which extends to the use of placards.
- Be aware that by taking part in a protest on campus, your image could be shared in the media, or via social media, this could include anything you share to your personal social media accounts that aren't set to 'private'
- Make sure that you clear away any litter when the protest has ended and leave the area as you found it.

When arranging and taking part in a protest at the RCA we recommend that you do not (some of this may result in disciplinary action):

- Use intimidating, abusive or threatening language via communications, placards, banners, posters, or other means
- Prevent any teaching or College business from taking place including occupying building/places or work and study
- Block main entrances, walkways or fire exits (guidance will be provided by the Health and Safety Team)
- Prevent speakers from talking, people from attending, or doing anything

that is designed to prevent the event from taking place

- Intentionally or carelessly damage any building or other property as part of your protest
- Attach posters or banners to College property without permission from Estates, and RCASU.
- Use fireworks, pepper sprays, spray paint and other such materials.
- Undertake any other activities that break UK law.

In addition:

### **Public order offences**

It is a criminal offence to use threatening or abusive words or behaviour in the presence of someone likely to be caused harassment alarm or distress by them.

### **Intention to March**

If there is any intention to march, the protest or demonstration organiser must also inform the police (<https://www.gov.uk/protests-and-marches-letting-the-police-know>). Please note that this applies even on College premises land where members of the public have right of way.

John Schless

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