PSA policy on free speech and conduct at meetings

An increasing number of events jointly or singly organized by the PSA are open to the general public. These include lectures/discussions, specialist group event, student & teacher focused events, public events, media briefings, public lectures as well as the PSA annual conference, etc.

The Political Studies Association has in place a code of conduct and anti-harassment policy for its members. However, this policy does not explicitly cover situations where attendees may wish to demonstrate or carry out a protest. These policies will apply to all attendees.

Expectations of all event participants

These expectations include:

- Not interrupting or heckling or verbally abusing invited speakers or contributors from the audience
- Respecting the authority of the event chair who will try to allow as many people to participate as possible
- Not recording in audio and/or visual form any PSA event without the express prior permission of the PSA.
- Continued non-compliance following a warning may lead to PSA staff, trustees or venue security staff asking the individual(s) concerned to leave the premises

The PSA will make clear to all those participating that civility and courtesy is expected from them at all times. The chair, convenor or host of the event will deal with any breaches of these expectations and will have the full support of the PSA in doing so.

Freedom of expression

In February 2019 the Equality and Human Rights Commission produced 'Freedom of expression: a guide for higher education providers and students' unions in England and Wales'. https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/freedom-of-expression-guide-for-higher-education-providers-and-students-unions-england-and-wales.pdf

While this only applies to England and Wales and to activities taking place within higher education institutions, the PSA will, where appropriate, make reference to this guidance in relation to its own position on free speech at PSA events.

Protests and demonstrations

Disruptive behaviour includes, but is not limited to, purposely blocking the view of others at an event; noise or action that disrupts the ability of the audience to hear; or disrupting essential operations at the event.

Political Studies Association

Anyone who wishes to stage a demonstration or protest at any PSA event should contact the PSA office in advance for approval and to discuss any operational and safety issues. The PSA will use its professional judgement, taking into account all relevant circumstances and the need for a range of opinions to be heard, in deciding whether to allow a demonstration or protest to proceed.