

## Exeter College

### Flag Flying Policy

The College is sometimes asked by its members to show solidarity with a cause, a movement or a recognised expression of progressive, liberal qualities. The expression of solidarity may be through the flying of a flag, the display of posters or the active promotion of relevant collective activities such as lectures and seminars. This policy paper expresses the reasons why the College is willing to be publically associated with certain causes, the basis on which it identifies relevant causes and their associated symbols, and the distinction between collective, collegiate association and freedom of speech where members of the College may freely and safely express alternative, minority, or controversial views.

#### **Flag Flying Days**

The College Flag will be flown to mark the death, funeral or memorial service of a relevant person (namely a current student or member of staff, a GB Fellow, or an Honorary, Supernumerary, Emeritus or Visiting Fellow) or a significant old member, as determined by the Rector or Chaplain.

The College Flag will also be flown when the College is participating in a major intercollegiate competitive events as determined by the Rector or the Finance and Estates Bursar.

Flags will also be flown as follows (precise dates, where applicable, are listed in the Year Book each year).

LGBTQ+ History Month	Progress Flag
Accession of Queen Elizabeth II	Union Flag
Torpids, if held, Wednesday to Saturday	College Flag
The Queen's Birthday	Union Flag
Ascension Day	College Flag
Eights Week – Wednesday to Saturday	College Flag
Pride Month	Progress Flag
Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II	Union Flag
Encaenia	College Flag
Start of Academic Year	College Flag
Remembrance Day	Union Flag
Remembrance Sunday	Union Flag
Trans Awareness Week	Trans Flag
Conferment of Degrees	College Flag
Open Days	College Flag (or Progress Flag if already up)
Gaudies	College Flag

In order to maintain balance, where a flag is to be flown for a short period e.g. for a day or two, this will replace flags that are to be flown for a week or a month. For practical reasons, and to prevent excessive workload on the Porter's Lodge, this may mean that flags that are to be flown for a week or a month may be flown for a shorter period.

#### **Procedure for Additional Flag Flying Days**

Any member of the College or representative group (such as the Junior Common Rooms) may make a request in writing to Governing Body (through the Rector) to permit the display of a symbol or flag associated with a cause relating to equality and diversity. The request must articulate clearly how public support of such cause fits with the College's then-current policies on equality, diversity,

harassment and freedom of speech and demonstrate that there is wide support within the College community for making a public statement in support of that cause. Consideration will be given in a discussion at Governing Body at which Junior Members are present to the national and international recognition of the flag or symbol to be displayed and any connotations it may have beyond the issues which it aims to represent in the petition before Governing Body. The purpose of this is to reduce the risk of trivialising the College's public support of liberal causes and to limit the scope for the College becoming inadvertently associated with a social or political issue that might bring it into inappropriate or harmful controversy.

A request to display a symbol must be received by the Rector sufficiently in advance of the date on which it is to be displayed for the request to be included in a prior, scheduled meeting of the Governing Body and the Rector shall have the discretion to defer a request if it is not received sufficiently in advance for incorporation within the next Governing Body business agenda.

On all occasions when a symbol or flag other than the national flag of the United Kingdom or the College Flag is to be displayed in public, a statement agreed by the Governing Body explaining the College's reasons for displaying the symbol will be published on the College door or in another suitable public place.

## Principles

### *Diversity & Equality*

The College is actively dedicated in all its actions, objectives and procedures to the promotion of diversity and equality. The College's Equality policy currently states that "Under the Equality Act 2010, public bodies have a general duty to have due regard to the need to **eliminate** discrimination, **advance** equality of opportunity and **foster** good relations between different people when carrying out their activities." The emphasis above demonstrates the proactive nature of the policy to tackle prejudice and promote diversity. Further, the Equality Act covers nine 'protected characteristics' which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships (but only in relation to employment), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These then are the primary considerations of any action by the College to promote or defend diversity and equality within its own body and on which it will be willing publicly to promote diversity and equality in the wider community.

"The general duty requires HEIs (such as the College) to have due regard in decision-making to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different protected groups, including:
  - Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
  - Meeting the needs of people with protected characteristics;
  - Encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in areas where their representation is low.
- Foster good relations between people from different protected groups, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding." (Exeter College Equality Policy & Public Sector Equality Duty)

The College recognises that the general promotion of diversity and equality policies cannot compel all its members to agree on any particular issue and that it is possible for individuals who fall under different protected characteristics, or none, to hold differing views on a particular issue. The active promotion of diversity and equality does not entail or require the imposition of normative values on one group by another. The College is legally obliged to promote Freedom of Speech and the Public

Sector Equality Duty, but also has its own commitments to values of equality, diversity and preventing harassment.

#### *Injustice and Political Movements*

The promotion of liberal policies and social attitudes to matters of gender, sexuality, race, age, religion and disability has often required intense political engagement and protest. A liberal and progressive disposition may necessitate political activism and peaceful protest. It will not always be easy to make the distinction between the active promotion of freedom of individual action and political conflict arising from economic, ethnic, social, religious or other differences, and at times members of the Exeter community may be directly affected by such conflicts and look to the College for support. As a matter of principle, the College should seek to avoid becoming embroiled in protests, conflicts or pressure groups which are representative of one particular ethnic, religious, tribal, regional, economic or other self-identifying group that is at variance with another through political or militaristic conflict. The College's stance should generally be one of political neutrality in situations which go beyond the explicit support of the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act.

This will not in any way inhibit the right of members of the College to host seminars and private meetings relating to controversial or political issues which may be divisive. The College's policies on freedom of speech, equality, diversity and harassment will govern what is and is not acceptable in these situations.

By College Order 21/112, this policy was approved by Governing Body on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 with immediate effect, and is to be reviewed by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025, and is approved to be included on the College website.

