《大学应该开放思想，而不是禁锢它们》

部长乔·约翰逊认为大学应该是言论自由的地方。

Universities must be places that “open minds, not close them”, Jo Johnson is to warn as he argues that students must be able to challenge controversial opinions.

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The universities minister will add that there are dangers to shielding students from differing views under the banner of “no-platforming” in British institutions.

???????????“no-platforming”????????????????????

During a Boxing Day speech at the Limmud Festival in Birmingham – a celebration of Jewish learning and culture – Mr Johnson will say: “Universities should be place that open minds, not close them, where ideas can be freely challenged”.

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It comes after the minister unveiled proposals earlier this year that mean universities could face fines for failing to uphold free speech under a new higher education regulator – the Office for Students (OfS).

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The proposals – currently open for consultation – could also see universities facing action including suspension and deregulation.

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Mr Johnson will add: “In universities in America and, worryingly, in the UK, we have seen examples of groups seeking to stifle those who do not agree with them.

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“We must not allow this to happen. Young people should have the residence and confidence to challenge controversial opinions and take part in open, frank and rigorous discussions. That is why the new regulator, the Office for Students, will go even further to ensure that universities promote freedom of speech within the law.”

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His comments come amid an ongoing debate about free speech at universities, and a number of reports of speakers, debates, literature and organisations being opposed or criticised, often by student unions, societies or particular groups of students.

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Mr Johnson will also say that institutions must ensure there is no place for hatred, discrimination, extremism or racism.

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“A racist or antisemitic environment is by definition an illiberal one that is completely in opposition the liberal tradition of our universities,” he will tell the festival.

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Alistair Jarvis, chief executive of Universities UK, said: “Universities are absolutely committed to promoting and securing free speech and will not allow legitimate speech to be stifled. There is already a legal duty on the higher education sector to secure free speech within the law and universities take these responsibilities very seriously.

?????????Alistair Jarvis??“??

“They have a duty, not only to secure freedom of speech, but also to protect the safety of students and staff. This is not always easy to balance, but universities are becoming increasingly experienced in this area and have policies in place.

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“It is important that universities do not become discussion-free zones. They must continue to be places where difficult topics are discussed and where people, however controversial their views, should be allowed to speak within the law, and their views challenged openly.”

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简答网 —jiandongshicai.cn—