Formal and Meaningful Adoption of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism into LUSU Policy

27/10/2020

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Purpose:

Item(s) for Approval

This paper is public

Recommendations:

That the Committee approve the following:

1. To protect Jewish Lancaster students by cementing the IHRA Definition, in full, of Antisemitism into Union policy by December 2020.
2. To expand Antisemitism training, as offered by UJS, JCR Executive Officers alongside the current offering for Sabbatical and Liberation & Campaigns Officers.
3. To ensure that both present and future Jewish Lancaster students “feel [they] belong” (per the Union’s [Outcomes for Students](https://lancastersu.co.uk/our-vision/outcomes-for-students)) by proactively (and unprompted) acknowledging events in the Jewish calendar, as is done for other religious groups represented within the Lancaster community.
4. A representative (Campaigns Officer or President, JSoc) for Jewish students ought to be included in appropriate bodies, such as Union Council.

That the Committee note the following:

1. Antisemitism is written as one word, as per [IHRA guidance](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/antisemitism/spelling-antisemitism).
2. It is of vital importance that this campaign is recognised as having been led by Lancaster Jewish Society in reaction to members’ experiences at LU and the UJS campaign.
   1. Therefore, this must be made clear that the push to adopt IHRA came from Jewish Society (JSoc) officers, not Union officers and as such must be made clear as such in **any and all external communications.**

Report

1. Background:
   1. “The International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) is the only intergovernmental organization mandated to focus solely on Holocaust-related issues, so with evidence that the scourge of antisemitism is once again on the rise, we resolved to take a leading role in combatting it. IHRA experts determined that in order to begin to address the problem of Antisemitism, there must be clarity about what Antisemitism is.”

“The IHRA’s Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial worked to build international consensus around a working definition of Antisemitism, which was subsequently adopted by the plenary. By doing so, the IHRA set an example of responsible conduct for other international fora and provided an important tool with practical applicability for its Member Countries.” (IHRA, 2018)

* 1. The IHRA Definition of Antisemitism, in full, is as follows:
     1. **“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of Antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”**
     2. To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations:
        1. Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.
        2. Contemporary examples of Antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:
           1. Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
           2. Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
           3. Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
           4. Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
           5. Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
           6. Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
           7. Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
           8. Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
           9. Using the symbols and images associated with classic Antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
           10. Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
           11. Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.
     3. **Antisemitic acts are criminal** when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).
     4. **Criminal acts are antisemitic**when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.
     5. **Antisemitic discrimination** is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.
  2. This Definition has been adopted by British Jewry. We at Lancaster JSoc feel that this should be reason alone for the Definition to be adopted to the full extent.
  3. Why does Antisemitism require a separate definition to other forms of discrimination?

“the Definition has a particular importance in combatting modern antisemitism which, whilst it still involves hatred of Jews, does not always manifest itself as directed expressed against Jews.” [(Wolfson & Brier, 2017).](https://antisemitism.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Opinion-on-the-International-Definition-of-Antisemitism.pdf)

* 1. Why are existing/other definitions of discrimination not sufficient?

“this Definition should be used by public bodies on the basis that it will ensure that the identification of Antisemitism is clear, fair and accurate.” (Wolfson & Brier, 2017).

* 1. Why is JSoc campaigning for IHRA adoption now?
     1. Every year for the last four years, record levels of Antisemitic incidences have been made and broken. We expect this trend to be further eclipsed by the end of the calendar year, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
     2. The Union of Jewish Students (UJS) have [launched a nationwide campaign](https://www.ujs.org.uk/ujs_ihra_statement) calling Universities and Students’ Unions to adopt the Definition.
     3. Further to this, over the summer York University Students’ Union and York University adopted the Definition. Do we want White roses to have one up on us over an easily rectifiable matter?

1. Policy Point 1
   1. We expect the Definition to be clearly implemented into the following Union policies as a minimum: Zero Tolerance policy, Safeguarding policies, definition of Officer/Employee Gross Misconduct, the Trustee Code of Conduct & Contract, and the Election Conduct rules.
   2. We also request a clarification of the Union’s EDI policy regarding IHRA & Antisemitism, grounds for complaint, and the complaints procedure.
2. Policy Point 2
   1. We would also ask that Officers assist the community of Lancaster’s Jewish students in the following areas:
      1. All officers (and staff) – ensure that concerns brought by Jewish students are given the respect they deserve, free from any external bias – to the best of their extent.
      2. VP Education – guiding JSoc as to where IHRA could be adopted into University educational policy, supporting JSoc in lobbying for the Definition to be adopted in relevant academic policy ensure that IHRA guidance would be followed in the event of incidences of academic malpractice and.
      3. VPs Welfare, Union Development and President – supporting JSoc in lobbying UMAG to adopt the Definition as appropriate and working with JSoc to adapt current Union policy and practices.
      4. VPs Societies & Media and Sport – ensuring that societies and sports teams are properly held to account should Antisemitic behaviour occur.
      5. Liberation and Campaigns Officers – to include Jewish voices, where relevant, within campaigns.
3. Conclusion
   1. The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism was written by Jewish groups for Jewish people and has subsequently been adopted by British Jewry at large and groups such as NUS, the British Government, Lancashire County Council and many more.
   2. Fully implementing the Definition into Union policy will enable Jewish Lancastrians to feel secure in the knowledge that their Union would support them if they ever had to face Antisemitism at University.
      1. It is necessary to adapt the Union’s current form of IHRA as the policy (ies) it sits in is/are not fit for purpose.
   3. Given the arguments made in this paper, I call for the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism to be explicitly adopted, in full, into all relevant Union policy going forwards, both existing and new.
   4. Officers ought to lend their support to JSoc in lobbying UMAG to adopt the Definition in full.