

Evidence-based recommendations to consider in planning for academic year 2024-5

In this document [the ICPG](#) suggests a set of specific, evidence-based, recommendations for universities to consider when planning for the coming academic year 2024-5. In particular, we aim to support universities in ensuring that Freshers' Week / Welcome Week is a safe and enjoyable experience for all students, and specifically Jewish students.

Emerging findings from a recent survey of about 500 students at over 50 UK universities, designed and administered by the ICPG in June 2024, show that many Jewish students feel unsafe on campus, with some avoiding campus attendance when not necessary:

- In response to the question "On campus, how comfortable have you felt being open about your Jewish identity since 7th October?" **70% replied somewhat or very uncomfortable**
- In response to the question "Have you tried to avoid certain student groups for fear of insult, harassment, or demonisation since 7th October?" **74% said yes**
- In response to the question "Have you tried to avoid certain buildings or campus areas for fear of insult, harassment, or demonisation since 7th October?" **62% said yes**

Given the central role of Freshers' Week in introducing students to university life, the ICPG has investigated how universities might mitigate potential problems and ensure a positive experience for their Jewish student population. While incidents affecting Jewish students during Freshers' Week are not new, our consultations with stakeholders suggest this may be a central concern for universities in the coming year. Below, we outline recommendations to address these issues.

1. **Establish Clear Guidelines:** Communicate expectations regarding codes of in-person and online behaviour during Freshers' Week to the wider university community in advance, outlining how the university will respond to violations.
 - Our research shows that universities with clear guidelines and prompt responses to violations are more successful in preventing disturbances.
 - Ensure that students adhere to the university's code of conduct on university-moderated groups like residence hall WhatsApp chats. Clearly communicate expectations regarding online behaviour on all university-related social media outlets.
2. **Liaise and Communicate:** Maintain open communication channels with the Jewish Society and stakeholders directly involved in the university's Jewish community, such as Chaplains. Proactively seek their input regarding Freshers' Week needs.
 - Our research indicates that universities with established communication channels with key stakeholders have been more successful in preventing issues and addressing situations in real-time.
3. **Inform Students About Support:** Provide comprehensive information about support services, contacts and reporting systems in advance. In addition to university contacts,

we recommend including external support contacts such as the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and Community Security Trust (CST).

- Our findings suggest some students are reluctant to use university reporting systems, making alternative support sources crucial. Please find the following contact details to include in your communications about external support available:
 - UJS Welfare Hotline: 020 7424 3288
 - CST: In an emergency call the National Emergency Number (24-hour) 0800 032 3263. In a non-emergency call CST on 020 8457 9999 (south) or 0161 792 6666 (north)
- 4. **Safeguard On-Campus Events:** Ensure adequate security presence during Freshers' Week, with personnel briefed on the concerns and sensitivities of Jewish students.
 - For off-campus events organized by Jewish societies, liaise with relevant organizers regarding safety measures.
 - Be mindful that relocating or rescheduling activities related to Jewish students may inadvertently place them in an uncomfortable or disadvantaged position.
- 5. **Implement Rapid Response Protocols:** Develop mechanisms for quick reactions to incidents during Freshers' Week. A swift response is crucial in deterring future disruptions.
 - Consider establishing a dedicated hotline for students to report incidents in real-time, integrated with university security services.
- 6. **Consider Jewish Holidays and Key Dates in Scheduling:** Be aware that some [Jewish holidays](#) may coincide with Freshers' Week. Some students may be unable to attend important events due to religious observances. Relevant dates for this year are:
 - **Rosh Hashanah:** Wednesday, 2 October 2024 at sunset until nightfall of Friday, 4 October 2024.
 - **Yom Kippur:** Friday, 11 October 2024 at sunset until nightfall of Saturday, 12 October 2024.
 - **Be prepared for events around the one-year anniversary of the 7th October Hamas attack on Israel:** Monday, 7 October 2024 and the preceding weekend.
 - **Further holidays in October:**
 - **Sukkot:** Wednesday, 16 October 2024 at sunset until nightfall of Friday, 18 October 2024.
 - **Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah:** Wednesday, 23 October 2024 at sunset until nightfall of Friday, 25 October 2024.

Implementing these recommendations will help universities to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for Jewish students during Freshers' Week and beyond.

For any questions or to arrange a meeting, please contact ICPG: icpg@icpg.org.uk