



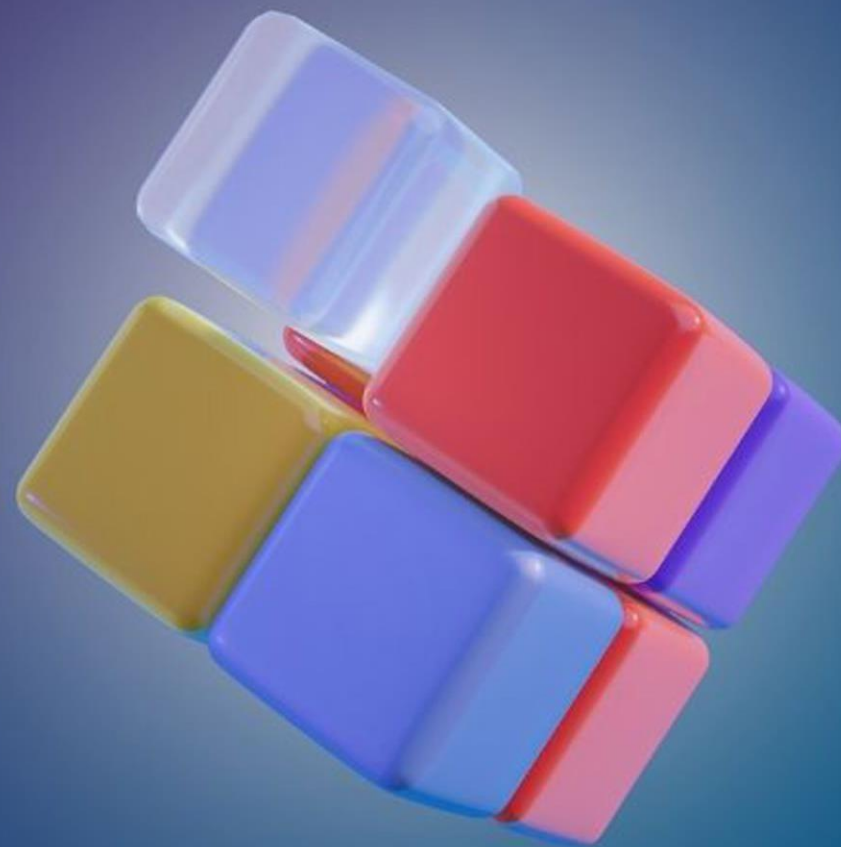
# UHR Conference 2025

Online 13 - 15 May

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## UHR Conference 2025

### Navigating the Challenges of Philosophical Beliefs, Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech in an HR Context

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## Case study – Scenario 1

Colin is a lecturer in the history department. One of his second year students has recently informed the University that they are transitioning from female to male and now wish to be known by the name, Lee. Colin is aware of this but refuses to use the name Lee or the student's chosen pronouns, instead preferring to use gestures when referring to Lee in class. Lee raises this with Colin one day after class, but Colin makes no change to his behaviour and on occasion even uses Lee's previous female name.

A week later, another student requests that Colin use Lee's preferred name and pronouns and, when Colin refuses, makes a complaint to the University. During an initial meeting, Colin states that he would not be prepared to use Lee's preferred name in the future.

The University's Gender Reassignment Policy requires staff to "use the name, title and pronoun by which the person wants to be addressed".



## Case study – Scenario 1

### **Question:**

**You have invited Colin to a disciplinary meeting and are considering whether the University would be able to dismiss him to protect Lee's welfare and to prevent further harm. However, you are concerned about recent case law on gender critical beliefs and discrimination.**

**Do you think disciplinary action or dismissal would be justified in this case?**



## Case study – Scenario 2, part 1

The University receives a complaint that Colin has shared posts in a public group on Facebook, which are critical of same sex marriage and gender fluidity. The University is concerned about the implications for its reputation and suspends Colin pending investigation.

### **Question:**

**What factors should the University be thinking about at this stage?**



## Case study – Scenario 2, part 2

During the investigation, Colin makes further posts on the public group, which one of Colin's colleagues sees. The colleague replies to the post criticising Colin's views and shares the post, resulting in similar comments from others.

Colin then raises a grievance alleging harassment.

### **Question:**

**You have finished the investigation into Colin's behaviour and are now considering what action would be appropriate. Do you think that the University would be justified in dismissing him?**

**Does the grievance change how the University should approach this?**



## Case study – Scenario 3

You decide not to dismiss Colin. Colin then attends a training session aimed at helping staff navigate controversial topics, during which he states that same sex marriage is not a proper marriage and that it is wrong in the eyes of God for people to try to change gender.

At a meeting with his line manager, Colin is adamant that he has done nothing wrong, He says he regularly expresses these sorts of views on social media, he has the right to do so and the University can't stop him. His manager says that some of his views are deeply offensive, can be perceived as hate views and should not be verbalised in a professional environment. Colin becomes aggressive and accuses his manager of being “woke”.



## Case study – Scenario 3

After the meeting, Colin contacts the national press about what happened and, as a result, the University receives abusive messages from the public and from students who were concerned that the University is restricting freedom of speech. The University dismisses Colin for gross misconduct.

**Question:**

**Do you now think the University is justified in dismissing Colin?**



# QUESTIONS





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