

## **Policy on Public Statements by the Rhodes Trust**

**Approved by Rhodes Trustees June 2025**

### **Purpose of this Policy**

This policy provides guidance regarding public statements by the Trust, setting out key assumptions, core principles, and practical guidelines in the context of the Trust's mission and values and legal status as a UK Charity.

### **Key Assumptions**

The Rhodes Trust is a values-based organisation. Rhodes Scholars are selected for qualities including “truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship.” We seek to support and bring together people who are “impatient with the way things are and have the courage to act.”

Our founder wanted the Rhodes Scholarship to help “render war impossible.” In our second century, we are striving to globalise the scholarship and to bring Scholars together across the world's divides, working with them to foster friendship and community in a fractured world.

We are committed to freedom of inquiry, free speech and the right to dissent, and seek to create a culture amongst Scholars of trust, learning, authentic dialogue, and thoughtful debate.

### **The Trust's Role**

The role and mission of the Trust is to support the development of future leaders and influencers who exemplify the qualities we seek -- of truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship. We affirm the right of Scholars to express their views, organise, and engage in critique and peaceful protest.

However, while our Scholars are leaders and activists, the Trust is not an activist organisation. Instead, and in line with the Chicago Principles of Freedom of Expression 2014, we seek to provide “the conditions within which hard thought, and therefore strong disagreement, independent judgement, and the questioning of stubborn assumptions, can flourish in an environment of the greatest freedom”.

### **Guidelines on Public Statements**

The Trust does not comment on political issues or controversies or promote, sponsor, endorse or criticise particular perspectives except in cases where it believes it is advisable in order to sustain the Trust's charitable mission. This is in line with UK government guidance on [political activity and campaigning by charities](#).

We do not make statements demanding, condemning or endorsing specific political or policy outcomes or actions by governments or other organisations except when these outcomes or actions directly impact our own mission and activities. We refrain in all cases from endorsing or supporting any political party.

### **Appropriate Public Statements**

Here are examples of situations where the Trust (or Trust leadership in their official capacity) might take a public stance because doing so aligns with our strategy and sustains our charitable mission:

- Affirm and defend our core values of academic freedom and free intellectual inquiry;
- Publicly oppose restrictive immigration policy proposals that threaten our ability to attract and support students from around the world;
- Contribute to public debates in defence of our commitment, as a merit scholarship, focussed on excellence;
- Contribute to public discussions in the context of the Trust's practical efforts to engage our history.

### **Consultation and Decision Processes**

Any public statement by the Trust shall be approved by the Warden and Chair of Trustees in consultation. They will alert in advance of its release as many additional members of the Board as is practical and appropriate.

### **Prioritising Action**

The Trust seeks to embody our values in what we do, prioritising action over the issuing of statements. We seek to put our values into action in how we operate: how we form selection committees, how we allocate resources, how we incorporate sustainable practices in the operations of Rhodes House, and what programming we sponsor.

### **Being a Platform for Diverse Ideas**

The Trust seeks to be a platform for diverse ideas and important discussions and debates, without endorsing specific positions. This principle is applied across our events, conferences and communications channels in print and online, where we feature thought leadership on a diverse range of topics while making it clear that the views expressed are those of the speaker/writer, and not of the Trust. We feature individual Scholars' achievements on the Trust's public communication channels, including on social media accounts, in ways which reflect the Trust's values and commitment to respectful discourse, academic freedom and intellectual enquiry.