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Dear Professor Pratt and Dr Turner,

Thank you for your letter of 26 February 2026.

We take questions of academic freedom extremely seriously and welcome the opportunity to clarify the position.

The Open University has not prohibited, nor decided to cease using, the term “Ancient Palestine” in its teaching materials. Academic colleagues remain free to use the terminology they judge to be academically appropriate, in line with disciplinary conventions and their professional expertise. This has already been communicated to those within relevant disciplines and to the wider university.

The correspondence to which you refer related to a specific inquiry about one case study within a particular Level 1 module (A111), which is scheduled for replacement as part of routine curriculum renewal and hence will no longer exist. The response addressed that case study alone. Whilst we except that the final paragraph could be misinterpreted, if taken out of context, the letter set out very clearly at the outset that colleagues felt the use of the term “Ancient Palestine” was appropriate and that it would continue to be used within the current module. This message has been reinforced within the university.

At no point has there been institutional discussion about prohibiting the use of the term, nor have staff been instructed to frame their teaching in accordance with the views of any external organisation. Decisions about curriculum content remain matters for academic teams.

We remain fully committed to our obligations under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and to the protection of academic freedom within the law.

Yours sincerely,  
Professor David Phoenix



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