

External Speakers Policy & Procedure

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Related policies:	Please see Section 7
Related procedures:	Please see section 7

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Version History

Version	Approved by	Revisions made	Date
1	ARC	n/a – 1 st Version	November 2024

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to set out the University's policy on the engagement of external speakers. In setting out the principles of this policy, due regard has been given to the University's statutory obligations as set out in the University's Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom as well as the University's Prevent Policy.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
- staff members.
 - students.
 - trustees and co-opted members.
 - the Students Union, including its societies, clubs and associations.
 - visiting speakers and all other persons invited or otherwise lawfully on the premises.

3. Legislative Context

- 3.1 The policy is informed by a collection of legislation and guidance, including:
- Section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 – sets out that the University is required to take such steps as are **reasonably practicable** to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for its students, employees, and for visiting speakers.
 - Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom are underpinned by the Human Rights Act 1998, which brings the European Convention on Human Rights into effect. Article 10 of the Convention protects an individual's right to hold opinions and to express them freely without interference. However, the University, may restrict this right if lawful, necessary and proportionate to do so.
 - Under the Equality Act 2010, staff and students must not be subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or threats of violence on the grounds of race, sex, age, religion or philosophical belief, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, or pregnancy or maternity. However, the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 are not to be interpreted to undermine freedom of speech and academic freedom. As a result, students' learning experience and the working environment of staff may include exposure to research, course material, discussion or speakers' views that they find offensive, contentious or unacceptable, but are nonetheless within the law, and unlikely to be considered unlawful harassment or discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.
 - Section 26 (l) of The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 imposes a duty (the Prevent Duty) on universities (and other public bodies) to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. The University's statutory obligations under the Duty are balanced with those under the Duty to uphold the public-interest principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 The University supports the right of individuals to express controversial or unpopular views, provided that the expression of those views does not constitute racial hatred, religious hatred, hate crimes, sexual harassment or other activities which are likely to cause a breach of the peace or public disorder, create a risk to health and safety or are otherwise unlawful.

- 4.2 The University reserves the right to determine that, where an event is allowed to proceed, speakers with extremist views can be and are challenged with opposing views as part of that same event and that all the speakers are of equal standing and profile.
- 4.3 Where the University has concerns that an event might draw people into terrorism, it has the authority not to allow the event to proceed in accordance with the University's Prevent Policy and Procedure, and Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy.
- 4.4 The following principles apply to all events, lectures, workshops etc. where an external speaker has been invited:
- The University will not provide a platform for any proscribed terrorist organisation nor allow gender segregation at any event.
 - A risk-based approach will be taken to booking external speakers, whereby consideration will be given to whether a speaker's presence represents a potential risk to the University or its ability to exercise its statutory duties.
 - The lawful expression of controversial or unpopular views will not in itself constitute reasonable grounds for withholding permission for a University meeting or event, however if any speaker at a University event breaks the law, it is the speaker themselves - and not the University - who shall be culpable.
 - In circumstances where this policy or any other University policy is breached, the University reserves the right to take action in accordance with the relevant regulations, policies and procedures.
 - In instances where the actions of an external speaker, in respect of this University policy or any other, may constitute a breach of criminal law, the University will assist the prosecuting authorities as appropriate in line with its Data Protection Policy.
 - Where the University is reasonably satisfied that the otherwise lawful expression of views at an event or meeting on University premises is likely to give rise to disorder or threats to the safety of participants or the wider University community, the University shall consider what steps it is necessary to take to ensure the safety of all persons and the security of University premises. This may include, but is not limited to, requirements as to the provision of security/stewards, the speaker being part of a wider panel of speakers, ensuring that a member, or members, of staff are in attendance, or that the event or meeting should take place in alternative premises, at a later date, or in a different format. The University may impose such conditions and requirements upon the organisers as are reasonably necessary in all the circumstances, ensuring that the conditions and requirements go no further than is necessary to address the risks it has identified
- 4.5 Any concerns regarding the implementation of this Policy may be lodged with the Free Speech Lead, the Prevent Lead or via the University's standard complaints processes.

5. Responsibility

- 5.1 All staff, students, visitors and contractors are responsible for following this policy and procedure.
- 5.2 Event organisers where an external speaker is attending are responsible for:
- Taking into consideration this Policy and Procedure.
 - Taking a risk-based approach to planning, in particular considering whether the speaker's presence represents a potential risk to the University or its ability to exercise its duties. When considering risk, the organiser should think about

Reputational Damage, Compliance & Regulation, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Financial Sustainability and People and Culture.

- Taking an informed approach to determining the suitability of a potential external speaker with respect to the principles outlined in this policy, the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, the Prevent Policy, the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures, and any other relevant University policies.
- Undertaking all relevant [risk assessments](#) and submitting all documents to the necessary departments – see Annex 1 – Guidance for event organisers.
- Considering whether there is a possible prevent risk, if one is identified they must complete a prevent risk assessment and submit it to the relevant Dean or Director.

5.3 Hiring Academics for visiting lectures and speakers are responsible for:

- Taking into consideration this policy and where there is a possible identified prevent risk completing a prevent risk assessment and submitting it to the relevant Dean or Director.

5.4 The Student Union are responsible for:

- Ensuring it follows this policy in relation to the booking of events organised by its societies.

5.5 Deans / Directors are responsible for:

- Ensuring hiring academics are aware of their responsibilities under this policy for booking visiting lecturers and speakers.
- Reviewing Prevent risk assessments, seeking advice and guidance where necessary, to determine whether there is an identified Prevent risk.
- Submitting the Prevent Risk Assessment to the Prevent Lead where a Prevent risk is identified.

5.6 The Registrar & Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for:

- Reviewing Prevent risk assessments for external providers seeking to book University premises, seeking advice and guidance where necessary, to determine whether there is an identified Prevent risk.
- Submitting the Prevent Risk Assessment to the Prevent Lead where a Prevent risk is identified.
- When deciding that an external speaker event can go ahead with mitigating actions – determining what those mitigating actions are and assigning responsibilities to the relevant members of staff.

5.7 The Prevent Lead is responsible for:

- Arranging meetings with relevant members of the Prevent working group to consider the Prevent risk that has been identified and developing an action plan.
- Completing the Prevent external referral form when necessary and being the point of contact for external organisations.

6. Definitions

Event: an event or activity open to all members of the general public or an event restricted to staff / students and external speakers.

Premises: any building, land or other space occupied either wholly or in part by the University, including any premises for the time being occupied by the University of Students.

External Speakers: persons who are not a member of the University or student and are individuals outside of the University, who are invited to speak at an event for example, a guest academic, politician or journalist. This may also include the use of generative artificial intelligence for the purpose of producing video and/or audio presentations talks or any form of speaker series.

Students: individuals registered full-time or part-time for any qualification or course at the University, or otherwise participating in any form of instruction provided by the University.

Employees: individuals or bodies currently employed or engaged, either for remuneration or otherwise, by the University itself or any other legal or charitable body associated or affiliated with the University.

Use of University Premises: the holding of a public or private meeting or event on the University's premises.

7. Relationship with other policies/procedures

7.1 This Policy also takes into consideration and is in congruence with the following University policies and/or procedures:

- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom
- Dignity at Work Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy
- Donations Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure
- Prevent Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

8. Review and Monitoring

8.1 The University will review and, where necessary, update this Policy annually or in accordance with statutory changes, whichever comes first.

8.2 An annual report on events involving external speakers approved in accordance with the terms of this Code of Practice will be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee for information.

Annex 1: Events Process

