

SOC002

External Speaker Policy



Document Owner: Societies Development Coordinator

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights to be protected and are protected by law.
- 1.2. Open debate is central to the culture of academic freedom, the development of student ideas and understanding and is protected by an Act of Parliament relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus.
- 1.3. That said, student safety and welfare is at the heart of the Students' Union policies and practices.
- 1.4. As such, the freedom to express views can sometimes be tempered by the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities.
- 1.5. Where there is a potential for these rights to come into conflict in relation to controversial speakers, this Students' Union is committed to collaboration that will allow us to reach sound, evidenced judgements about the organisation or person in question which allows the union to meet its various legal obligations.

2. Purpose of Policy

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to: Make students and External Speakers aware of the External Speaker Process and obtain their agreement to this Policy.

3. Background

- 3.1. Student groups must notify the Students' Union of any events that involve external speakers (Defined as individuals or organisations that are not part of the Students' Union or the University) through these procedures.
- 3.2. The President of the group organising any event is responsible for the activities that take place within their group's events.
 - 3.2.1. This is communicated to all student committees at the annual Volunteer Training Conference.
- 3.3. All speakers will be made aware of their responsibility to abide by the law, the University and the Students' Union's various policies, including that:
 - 3.3.1. They must not incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law
 - 3.3.2. They are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts.
 - 3.3.3. They must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony
 - 3.3.4. Within a framework of positive debate and challenge seek to avoid insulting other faiths or groups
 - 3.3.5. They are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without the express permission of the Student Opportunities Manager.
- 3.4. Speakers are made aware of their responsibilities through e-mail and need to confirm that they have read and agreed to the policy in writing.
- 3.5. No event involving any external speakers may be publicised until the speaker has been cleared through the appropriate procedures as provided in this policy.

- 3.6. The Students' Union reserves the right to cancel or prohibit any event with an external speaker without recompense to individuals or groups involved if the procedures provided herein are not followed or if the relevant health, safety and security criteria cannot be met.
- 3.7. The Students' Union reserves the right to deny a platform to racist and fascist individuals and groups by debating them as part of the no platform policy in the usual channels.

4. Initial process

- 4.1. The Students' Union's 'External Speaker Request Form' requires Event Organisers to provide:
 - 4.1.1. Expected number of attendees
 - 4.1.2. Confirm whether the event will be a member only, invitation-only event, or open to the general public
 - 4.1.3. Confirm any external speakers' affiliations (specifically where political or religious)
 - 4.1.4. Declaration of any knowledge of controversy attracted by the speaker or the topic in the past
 - 4.1.5. Confirmation if the event and speaker are likely to attract media interest – if so why?
 - 4.1.6. Confirmation of website details (where relevant) providing further information on the speaker
- 4.2. External speaker request forms must disclose full speaker details as defined in section 4.1 and be provided to the relevant Coordinator a minimum of 14 days prior to the event. Failure to comply with the minimum notification period must result in an event/booking being postponed. Failure to adhere to this instruction could result in referral for union disciplinary action.
- 4.3. Failure to disclose full speaker details ahead of the 14 day deadline must result in an event/booking being postponed. Failure to adhere to this instruction could result in referral for Union disciplinary action.
- 4.4. On receipt of the form the relevant Coordinator will check all speakers, affiliated organisations and other relevant information, and conduct a minimum of 3 pages of Google Open Source checks (30 links), keeping a record of relevant hyperlinks.
- 4.5. In the event of uncertainty about allowing an external speaker on campus, the Students' Union should seek outside assistance from the University and may seek help from external partners such as other Students' Unions, local authority, police or a BIS Prevent Coordinator. Such events could be:
 - 4.5.1. The speaker has previously been associated with an event where they have broken the law, gone against the University or the Students' Union's various policies as per section 3.3.
 - 4.5.2. The speaker or subject or organisation is known to cause controversy, or is associated with a group that is known to cause controversy.
- 4.6. Any speakers that may require further exploration as per section 4.5 will be referred to the Student Opportunities Manager, who will manage communication with the University and external bodies. All non-referred speakers will be considered to be approved once the search has been logged.

5. Referred speakers

- 5.1. Any events with referred speakers will be investigated further by the Student Opportunities Manager who will provide evidence for a decision by the following:
 - 5.1.1. The University will make a decision on whether the speaker is permitted to speak to the Union's members, based on it complying with its duty in the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
 - 5.1.2. The Vice President (Union Development) will make a decision on whether the speaker is permitted to speak to the Union's members, based on any existing Union policy, and whether the speaker fits the values of the organisation

- 5.2. The group organising the event should be informed in the event of a speaker being referred
- 5.3. The Student Opportunities Manager will conduct a short investigation into the speaker and the event that, wherever possible, takes representations from the students group related to the booking and from a wide number of concerned student groups, university officials and external bodies.
- 5.4. In making recommendations they will assess risk on the following basis:
 - 5.4.1. The potential for any decision to limit freedom of speech as per the University's code of practice in pursuance of the 1986 Education Act
 - 5.4.2. The potential for the event to cause the union to be in breach of its equal opportunities policy
 - 5.4.3. The potential for the event to cause the Union to fail in its wider legal duties
 - 5.4.4. The potential for the event to cause reputational risk to the Union
 - 5.4.5. The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to cause fear or alarm to members of the student body
 - 5.4.6. The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to give rise to breach of peace
- 5.5. They may make one of the following recommendations
 - 5.5.1. On the basis of the risks presented to not permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead
 - 5.5.2. On the basis of the risks presented to fully permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted
 - 5.5.3. On the basis of the risks presented to permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead on the basis of regulatory steps designed to reduce risk
- 5.6. Regulatory steps designed to reduce risk may include:
 - 5.6.1. Requiring that the event be filmed by an independent body
 - 5.6.2. Requiring that the event be observed by Union, University or third party officials
 - 5.6.3. Requiring that the event be stewarded or subject to security on the door
 - 5.6.4. Requiring that an event promoting a particular view includes an opportunity to debate or challenge that view
 - 5.6.5. Requiring that an event closed to student group members only be opened to all members of the Union
 - 5.6.6. Requiring that a copy of any speech to be delivered by the speaker be submitted to the Union
- 5.7. When considering any regulatory steps designed to reduce risk, their potential to and of themselves cause risk (for example, the sense of oppression felt by the imposition of security on the door) should be taken into account.
- 5.8. The recommendation will be put to the University and Vice President (Union Development) who will make a decision that is routinely communicated to the Trustee Board. Where members of the Trustee Board disagree with the decision they can call an extraordinary meeting in the usual way.
- 5.9. Where the group in question disagrees with the decision made they shall have the right to appeal which will be considered by:
 - 5.9.1. In the case of a University decision, the appeal will go back to the University
 - 5.9.2. In the case of a Vice President (Union Development) decision, the appeal will go to the President
- 5.10. Where students or student groups disagree with the decision made they shall have the right to submit a complaint in the usual way, a remedy to which shall be the option to consider the complaint an appeal as above.
- 5.11. The Students' Union shall keep a secure record of all referred speakers for 7 years.
- 5.12. An annual report on referred speakers will be produced by the VP (Union Development) for consideration by the Trustee Board. This report will include:

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- 5.12.1. Referred speaker details
- 5.12.2. Cancelled speaker events
- 5.12.3. Conditions of such events
- 5.12.4. Incidents relating to a guest speaker
- 5.12.5. Press coverage of events where a guest speaker was invited
- 5.12.6. Details of events and attendees

REVIEW

- 6. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Societies Development coordinator and approved at the Membership Services Managers meeting.

Date of this revision: 16/09/18

Date of next revision: 16/09/19