

External Speaker Policy

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Contents

Introduction	page 3
Purpose	page 3
Definitions	page 3
Organising an event	page 3
Approval of an event with an external speaker	page 4
Managing events	page 6
Managing external speakers	page 6
Data sharing	page 6
Complaints	page 6
Policy review	page 7

Introduction

The University has a long and rich history as an academic institution that has regularly welcomed visiting speakers from around the world to its campuses. Such speakers have brought and continue to bring great diversity of experience, insight and opinion, enriching our events and activities and sparking discussion and debate among our students, staff and visitors alike.

Holding open, challenging debates rather than silencing the views of those we do not agree with helps to build tolerance and address prejudice and discrimination. Freedom of speech in higher education should be upheld at every opportunity and should only be limited where there are genuine safety concerns or it constitutes unlawful behaviour.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set in place a governing framework for events with external speakers to ensure that this proud heritage, where debate, challenge and dissent are not only permitted but expected, can continue for current and future generations, while safeguarding our institution and its staff and students. The policy outlines the context for the approval of external speakers and events. This policy aims to ensure that event organisers are aware of the framework we operate within when facilitating external speakers and the measures that may be required to support their event. It should be read in conjunction with the associated External Speaker Booking Procedure and Booking Form.

Definitions

An 'external speaker' is deemed to be anybody who is neither a registered student nor a paid/unpaid employee of the University of the West of England who will be addressing a group at an event. Where an employee of the University of the West of England is speaking on a topic out of scope of their job description then they will be deemed an external speaker.

An 'event' is any gathering that is hosted on university premises, an external venue or online in the name of the university, that includes a speaker addressing a group, including in a teaching, learning or research setting or in the context of co-curricular or extra-curricular activity.

Organising an event

The University's aim is for events to take place and to mitigate risks where appropriate to enable this. Therefore notice is required to allow sufficient time to put in place any risk mitigation measures required.

Assessment of risk will include consideration of the safety of the speaker, attendees and University reputation. A potentially high risk event may include where the speaker or topic of the event is political, religious or controversial in any way. Assessment of risk is holistic and includes consideration of potential risks to the speaker, attendees, organiser and the institution; risks could be physical or reputational. The potential risks of the event not going ahead would likewise be considered.

Anyone organising an event that involves a speaker or speakers to be hosted by the University must ensure that:

- This policy and associated processes are followed;
- All such events have a completed [External Speaker Booking Form](#) submitted to the Events Team for approval at least 14 days in advance of the event taking place, however if an event or speaker are potentially high risk, organisers should allow the University 21 days notice in order to ensure there is adequate time to plan for the event.
- Any requested modifications are implemented before the event takes place
- Where an event has been previously agreed but has been rearranged, the 14 or 21 days notice may not be required but organisers should submit their booking form to the Events Team for re-approval as soon as possible.
- Where there are changes to speakers at previously agreed events, the 14 or 21 days notice may not be required but organisers should submit their booking form for the new speaker to the Events Team for re-approval as soon as possible.

Under no circumstances should an event be advertised or take place if the External Speaker Policy and process has not been followed or an event has not been approved. Failure to comply with the External Speaker policy may result in the room booking being cancelled and the organiser may be subject to formal action under the University's normal disciplinary processes.

The University acknowledges that there are occasions where opportunities for speakers arise at short notice or situations are fast changing. Where it has not been possible to follow these processes in the defined timescale, the University will still consider late bookings and accommodate where possible but cannot commit to agreeing bookings outside of the specified timescales. In these instances organisers should complete and send forms as usual and follow up with a phone call to the Safeguarding Manager.

Approval of an event with an external speaker

Events hosted and organised by The Student Union at UWE and its affiliated groups are subject to the [Students Union policies and procedures](#). In allowing events to take place, the

University will assess the event and speakers. This assessment will be based on the understanding that all events will be held in accordance with this Policy, the [Freedom of Speech Policy](#), and all other relevant rules and regulations. In deciding whether to approve an event, the University will consider its general duties:

- Duty of care to its staff, students and visitors; to ensure freedom of speech with reference to the Education Act 1982¹;
- Preventing people from being drawn into terrorism with reference to the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015²;
- Its obligation to prevent individuals from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010³; and
- Any other relevant legislation.

In the spirit of debate, the University will normally seek to ensure that events or speakers identified as posing a risk will go ahead subject to the agreement of appropriate safeguards. Refusal or cancellation of an event will only occur in exceptional circumstances, for example upon the advice of Police.

Where a proposed speaker or event presents potential high risks and/or possible reputational damage, the request will be referred to the University's Safeguarding Manager for approval. They will seek advice and guidance from relevant internal and external stakeholders. Where an event is assessed as high risk, these events will require the approval of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or nominee. In such cases, the Safeguarding Manager will notify the organiser of the outcome of the approval process and necessary modifications within the specified time.

Where an event is not assessed as high risk, the University will only require 14 days notice of such events.

The University reserves the right to cancel, postpone or request modification to any event at any time should risks be identified. The University may, amongst other things:

- Request submission of the speeches in advance of the event;
- Place a limit on attendees or to whom it is advertised/accessible to (ie. University audience or open to the general public);
- Seek declaration of attendees in advance of the event;

¹ Legislation.gov.uk. Education Act 2002. [online] Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents> [Accessed 13th August 2018].

² Legislation.gov.uk. Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. [online] Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents> [Accessed 13th August 2018]

³ Legislation.gov.uk. Equality Act 2010. [online] Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> [Accessed 13th August 2018]

- Request stewards be provided by the organisers;
- Ensure a presence of a Duty Manager of the University and/or the Students' Union at UWE to ensure good order;
- Ensure a presence of University Security to ensure good order;
- Place a limitation on what attendees may bring to a venue, which may include banning food or drink or anything that could be used as a potential weapon;
- Bag searches and ID checks;
- Place a ban on banners, flags, placards or similar items being allowed into a venue and its immediate surroundings;
- Alter the proceedings of the meeting and/or its facilitation, such as appointing an alternative Chair;
- Reserve the right to input into communications about the event (before and after);
- Cancel, prohibit or delay at any time.

Any costs incurred by the University in complying with these conditions may be passed onto the event organiser. Event organisers would be consulted on any conditions or modifications in advance of the event taking place and they would then be responsible for informing the external speaker of the outcome.

The University reserves the right to perform spot checks on events being hosted on University premises or other external hosting venues. If there are breaches of policies at any event the matter may be referred for disciplinary or legal action.

Managing events

Event organisers have a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010⁴ to ensure that no enforced segregation by any protected characteristic takes place at any event, unless it is specifically for religious worship or practice or for reasons of health and safety, and that attendees have the freedom to choose where they sit. Event organisers must not knowingly facilitate discrimination by others at the request of an external speaker or any individual attending or wishing to attend an event.

The protection of freedom of speech does not allow a speaker to break the law or breach the lawful rights of others. It should be noted that these provisions do not create a broad right not to be offended; the expression of views which some people may find objectionable or offensive is not prohibited generally by law and students should be able to confront and debate opinions and ways of thinking which may be different to their own.

⁴ Legislation.gov.uk Equality Act 2010 [online] Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> [Accessed 29th September 2018]

Managing external speakers and attendees

It is the responsibility of the event organiser to ensure that all external speakers receive a copy of the Guidelines for External Speakers and the Freedom of Speech Policy.

All speakers and attendees are expected to act with civility, consideration and respect for others in the University and the local community.

Data Sharing

Where it deems there is a legitimate reason to do so, the University reserves the right to share information on the external speakers it has hosted, and/or those it deemed to be a risk, with other relevant agencies.

In accordance with its obligations as detailed in the Prevent Duty Guidance⁵, the University will report any major incidences of concern involving external speakers on campus to the Office for Students (OfS).

Complaints

Failure by a member of staff or student to comply with this policy will be treated seriously and may be subject to formal action under the University's normal disciplinary processes.

In the event that a member of staff, student or visitor considers there to have been a breach of this policy, they have the right to make a formal complaint by emailing complaints@uwe.ac.uk

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, unless there are internal or legislative changes that necessitate earlier review.

⁵ HM Government. Prevent Duty Guidance: for further education institutions in England and Wales [online] Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance> [Accessed 13th August 2018]