

**Policy on handling events with external speakers**

**Preamble**

1. Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights to be protected and are protected by law.
2. Open debate is central to the culture of academic freedom, the development of students ideas and understanding and is protected by an act of parliament relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus.
3. That said, student safety and welfare is at the heart of the union's policies and practices.
4. As such, the freedom to express views can sometimes be tempered by the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities.
5. Where there is a potential for these rights to come into conflict in relation to controversial speakers, this union is committed to collaboration that will allow the union to reach sound, evidenced judgements about the organisation or person in question and that allows the union to meet its various legal obligations.
6. The President of the society organising any event are responsible for the activities that take place within their society's events.
7. All speakers will be made aware of their responsibility to abide by the law, the university and the union's various policies, including that:
  - They must not incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law
  - They are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts
  - They must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony
  - Within a framework of positive debate and challenge seek to avoid insulting faiths or groups
  - They are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the trustees nominee
8. Clubs and Societies must notify the Union of any events that involve external speakers (defined as individuals or organisations that are not part of the Union or the University) through these procedures.
9. No event involving any external speakers may be publicised until the speaker has been cleared through the appropriate procedures as provided in this policy.
10. The Union reserves the right to cancel or prohibit any event with an external speaker if the procedures provided herein are not followed or if the relevant health, safety and security criteria cannot be met.
11. The 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. It will be for the No Platform Policy Implementation Taskforce (NPPIT) on behalf of the Trustee Board to determine processes that reasonably identify individuals and members of groups that fall within the no platform policy and where this judgement is made the event will automatically not be approved.



### **Initial process**

12. The Union's external speaker request form requires event organisers to provide:

- Expected number of attendees
- Confirm whether the event will be a member only, invitation only event or open to the general public
- Confirm any external speakers' affiliations (specifically where they are political or religious)
- Declaration of any knowledge of controversy attracted by the speaker or topic in the past
- Confirmation if the event and speaker are likely to attract media interest – if so why?
- Confirmation of website details (where relevant) providing further information on the speaker

13. Any failure to disclose full speaker details may result in an event/booking being cancelled and could result in referral for union disciplinary action

14. On receipt of the form the Student Activities Staff will check all speakers on Google (after first looking at any web link provided) and look at the first three pages of results (if any results are found). This information is then noted on the sheet including a link to the most relevant information about the speaker. The Student Activities Staff will receive regular training and briefing on controversial speakers and will liaise closely with student societies, religious and cultural groups and University security.

15. The Student Activities Staff will refer any speakers that may require further exploration to NPPIT. The Student Activities Staff will provide 5 hyperlinks to the most relevant Google results for any speakers that are a cause for concern. All others will be considered to be approved.

### **Referred speakers**

16. Any events with referred speakers will be investigated by NPPIT on behalf of the Trustee Board.

17. They will conduct a short investigation into the speaker and the event that, wherever possible, takes representations from the student society related to the booking and from a wide number of concerned student groups, university officials and external bodies.

18. In the first instance the NPPIT will make a decision on whether or not the speaker or event contradicts the No Platform Policy, specifically whether or not they contradict the list of banned organisations published once every two years.

18. In making recommendations they will assess risk on the following basis:

- 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
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause the union to be in breach of its equal opportunities policy
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause the union to fail in its wider legal duties
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause reputational risk to the Union
- The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to cause fear or alarm to members of the student body
- The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to give rise to breach of peace

19. They may make one of the following recommendations

- On the basis of the risks presented to not permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead



- On the basis of the risks presented to fully permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted
- 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

20. Regulatory steps designed to reduce risk may include:

- Requiring that the event be filmed by an independent body
- Requiring that the event be observed by union, university or third party officials
- Requiring that the event be stewarded or subject to security on the door
- Requiring that an event promoting a particular view includes an opportunity to debate or challenge that view
- Requiring that an event closed to society members only be opened to all members of the union
- Requiring that a copy of any speech to be delivered by the speaker be submitted to the union

21. When considering any regulatory steps designed to reduce risk, their potential to in 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.

22. The recommendation will be put to the Student Activities Staff who will make routinely communicate the decision made to membership through the SU website

23. Where the society in question disagrees with the decision made they shall have the right to appeal which will be considered by a panel of 3 trustee's, no more than 1 of which shall be external and none of which shall have sat on the initial NPPIT

24. 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.

25. An annual report on referred speakers will be produced by the Student Activities Staff for consideration by the Trustee Board.