

University of Huddersfield

Procedure for Speaker Events

This procedure supports the University's Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. The starting point for consideration should be to permit speaker events at the University, including with external speakers by taking reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law.

The procedure should be followed to ensure these protections and to guide decision-making where there is any doubt about an event or speaker which may lead to a breach of the law.

1 Useful Definitions

In this policy, the following words shall have the following meanings:

- 1.1 An **event** is any gathering (which would include meetings, events and other activities, including peaceful protest) conducted, hosted, or sponsored by the University, including those organised or managed by the Students' Union and events hosted by other organisations that take place on the University's premises.
- 1.2 The person, society or group who takes responsibility for organising an event will be referred to as the **Event Organiser**.
- 1.3 **External speaker event** is any event that involves an external speaker addressing a group, including in a teaching, learning or research setting (lecture, conference, seminar) or in the context of extracurricular activity. This does not include meetings held in the normal course of the University's administration or management, provided that (with the exception of the external speaker) they are attended exclusively by Council Members, staff or officers of the University. For events held in a virtual environment this definition extends to content used both synchronously and asynchronously.
- 1.4 An **external speaker** is anyone who is not a member of the University community and who is invited to speak at an event to provide or disseminate their views, ideas or opinions on a given topic. For example, a guest lecturer, member of a discussion panel, those giving religious addresses or prayer leaders would be an external speaker, a person engaged to deliver approved curriculum or a trainer who leads a fitness class would not usually be an external speaker.
- 1.5 The **Events Management Team** are the central team who look after internal and external room bookings or where appropriate the Heritage Quay team with responsibility for co-ordinating external room bookings in Heritage Quay. For events hosted in the virtual environment, those organising the event should still use the external speaker booking system.
- 1.6 A **Proscribed Group** is an organisation which has been banned from the UK and placed on the UK government's proscribed groups list.

2 Scope of the procedure

- 2.1 The procedure relates to activities on all University premises (including the University's virtual learning environment). Also covered are events taking place off campus, where the University is hosting (or co-hosting) an event.

- 2.2 Any activity or gathering which does not fall within the definition of event should uphold the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom.

3. All University events

- 3.1 All University events should be arranged to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom.
- 3.2 All events, regardless of whether they involve an external speaker should consider the three-step framework included in the Office for Students Regulatory Advice note.

Step 1: Is the speech 'within the law'

Step 2: Are there any 'reasonably practicable steps' to secure the speech?

Step 3: Are any restrictions 'prescribed by law' and proportionate under the European Convention on Human Rights?

Illustrative examples are provided in the OfS guidance.

- 3.3 Advice regarding internal events should be sought from the University Secretary.
- 3.4 For all external speaker events, except those specifically mentioned below, the Event Organiser must, not less than 14 days before an event:
- 3.4.1 log the details of the event on the [University's External Speaker log](#);
 - 3.4.2 undertake a local assessment of the proposed external speaker(s), as summarised below, and if there are any concerns, escalate the decision about whether to invite that speaker; and
 - 3.4.3 ensure that all proposed speakers are provided with a copy of the University's Code and this procedure and are made aware of their responsibility to abide by the laws and regulations governing the University.
- 3.5 Before an external speaker can be confirmed or an event advertised, the Event Organiser is responsible for assessing the speaker against the following set of questions:

Question 1: Has the external speaker(s) previously been prevented from speaking at the University of Huddersfield, or any other University, or similar establishment?

Question 2: Has the external speaker(s) previously been known to express views, or been affiliated with a [proscribed group](#) or an organisation that expresses views, which may either be in breach of the University's Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, or be deemed to be extreme in that they are opposed to the fundamental values of our society?

Question 3: Does the proposed title or theme of the event present a potential risk that views/opinions expressed by the speaker(s) may be in breach of the University's Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom?

Question 4: Is the proposed speaker(s)/theme likely to attract attendance from individuals/groups that have previously been known to express views that may be in breach of the University's Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom?

Question 5: Do you have any other concerns, or reason to believe that the proposed speaker(s)/theme may be in breach of, or cause concerns related to the University's Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom (e.g. significant media interest, large attendance, significant amount of controversy)?

3.6 In addition, the Event Organiser must refer to the three-step framework published by the Office for Students in Regulatory Advice 24 (Section 2); namely:

Step 1: Is the speech 'within the law'

Step 2: Are there any 'reasonably practicable steps' to secure the speech?

Step 3: Are any restrictions 'prescribed by law' and proportionate under the European Convention on Human Rights?

Illustrative examples are provided in the OfS guidance.

3.7 If the answer to all five of the above questions is "no" and if the three-step mechanism above is satisfactory, the Event Organiser can confirm the event and any external speaker and book them to speak at their event or activity and promote this in the normal way.

3.8 If the answer to any of the questions is either unclear or yes, the Event Organiser must seek guidance from the Responsible Person for their area. This will normally be the Dean or Director. That person will then be responsible for undertaking a further review of the event/speaker(s) against the questions above. The event must not be advertised or promoted until it has been authorised by the Responsible Person.

3.9 This further review will require the Responsible Person, in consultation with the Event Organiser, to undertake a more detailed risk assessment of the speaker and the event by checking both the speaker and the topic on Google, looking at the first three pages of web results and accessing any relevant web addresses given.

3.10 If the Responsible Person believes that the event or speaker will not result in an infringement of the University's Code of Practice, they may authorise the event.

3.11 Ultimately, if the answer to any of questions one to five is YES or remains UNCLEAR, or if any matters arising through the consideration of the three-step framework is UNCLEAR, the Responsible Person should contact the University Secretary for approval, providing the detail required in the External Speaker Referral Form. This process is intended to support the principle that the starting point for any event is that it should go ahead and that cancellation is exceptional and not desirable.

3.7 If the Event Organiser has at any time reason to believe that their assessment of risk has changed, the Event Organiser must notify the Responsible Person without delay. If the Responsible Person believes the event should not go ahead they should contact the University Secretary for advice. As set out above, cancellation for any concerns related to this procedure and associated Code will be in exceptional circumstances only.

3.8 The Responsible Person shall ensure that a record of all referrals made to them under this policy, and the decision made in each case is kept up to date and is easily accessible.

4 Assessment of academic conferences, events that form part of normal course provision, and events organised by the Students' Union, or the Events Management Team

4.1 Assessment of Academic Conferences

For academic conferences hosted by a School/Service of the University, it will be sufficient to complete a single local assessment for the event, if the overall assessment is that the answer to the five questions in paragraph 3.2 would be, no. However, if there are any concerns at any time about an individual speaker, or the proposed theme of any such conference then the Event Organiser should liaise with the Responsible Person to agree a proportionate approach to assessing the risks and for escalation in accordance with this policy, as appropriate.

4.2 Events that form part of normal course provision

In relation to events that contain an external speaker, but that form part of a normal course provision and, as such, only have students registered on that course and relevant staff in attendance, it will be sufficient for the School to maintain a local register of speakers, including the name, any associated organisation and approval of the Responsible Person.

4.3 Events organised by the Students' Union or a society affiliated with the Students' Union

The Students' Union will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this procedure for all events managed by them. They will, as part of the Students' Union room booking and speakers' procedure, undertake the local assessment with/on behalf of the student co-ordinator. If a referral to the University Secretary is required, the Chief Executive will be responsible for making the submission with/on behalf of the student co-ordinator. A copy of the Students' Union booking form and any decision on allowing the event to proceed must be provided to the University on request.

4.4 Events organised by the Events Management Team

The Events Management Team will be responsible for implementing a system to support all external events with proposed external speakers in accordance with this procedure and the University policy. They will undertake the local assessment in accordance with paragraph 3.2 with/on behalf of the client. If a referral to the University Secretary is required, the relevant Director will be responsible for making the submission with/on behalf of the Client.

5 Referrals to the University Secretary for approval

5.1 If an event is referred to the University Secretary they shall convene a panel comprising:

- 5.1.1 the University Secretary;
- 5.1.2 the most appropriate Pro Vice-Chancellor (dependent on the nature of the event); and
- 5.1.3 (if appropriate) any other person the University Secretary or the Pro Vice-Chancellor considers relevant or useful to the decision-making process.

5.2 The panel will consider all relevant information and either:

- 5.2.1 Decide not to approve the event or speaker; or

5.2.2 Impose such restrictions or conditions upon the event as the panel, in their absolute discretion, deem necessary.

- 5.3 Such conditions are intended to permit the event to go ahead and may include (but are not limited to) imposing a cap on the number of attendees, designating a Chair, changing the venue or participant requirements, requiring a balancing view, requiring the speaker's script to be submitted and approved in advance or requiring a police/security presence. The University will not normally impose a restriction by way of passing on the costs of security to the event organiser unless in exceptional circumstances. Such consideration will be made by the University Secretary.
- 5.4 If the Event Organiser/external speaker does not agree to any such conditions or restrictions then the event may not take place as planned.
- 5.5 If the panel requires further information to accurately assess the risk the University Secretary shall request this from the Event Organiser who must provide any requested information promptly. If sufficient information is not provided to enable the panel to determine the risk, the event may not be able to go ahead as planned.
- 5.6 If an event is not approved by the panel and the Event Organiser believes it does not breach the Code, or the Event Organiser does not agree with any conditions imposed, the Event Organiser may appeal the decision to the Deputy Vice- Chancellor who will review the matter and shall determine whether an event may take place. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor's decision shall be final.
- 5.7 The University may monitor any event to ensure compliance with its Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom and this procedure and any conditions imposed. The University may terminate an event at any time if any conditions are not met or this Code is breached. This does not absolve the Event Organiser of their responsibility to ensure their event complies with the conditions and/or this procedure at all times.