

# **Policy on handling events with external speakers.**

## **Preamble**

1. Open debate is central to 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.
2. However, the freedom to express views may need to be balanced against the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities.
3. Where there is a potential for these rights to come into conflict in relation to controversial speakers, this SU is committed to collaboration that will allow it to reach sound, evidenced judgements about the organisation or person in question, and to meet its various obligations.
4. University Regulation 18, Freedom of Expression, sets out the Code of Practice which describes the framework within which staff and students of the University and visitors enjoy the right to freedom of expression. The Code of Practice also fulfils the requirement in the Prevent Duty for Universities to have policies and procedures in place for the management of events on campus and use of the University's premises.

The University Secretary acts on behalf of University Council to ensure that all staff, students and visiting speakers comply with the provisions of the Code and permission must be obtained from the University Secretary for any political parties / potentially controversial visiting speakers, using the agreed procedures (these are included as Appendices to this Policy).

## **Obligations of SU student groups**

5. The president/chair of the society/student group organising any event is responsible for the activities that take place within their society's/student group's events.
6. Student groups must notify the SU of any events that involve external speakers (defined as individuals or organisations that are not part of the SU or the University) and submit an event plan giving full details of the event and the speaker.
7. The majority of events covered by this policy are likely to be generated by SU Societies. For this reason, and to provide consistency of practice, all requests will be processed by the student activities team.
8. No event involving any external speakers may be publicised until the speaker has been cleared through the appropriate procedures as provided in this policy.
9. The SU 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.

## **The initial process**

10. Any student group intending to run an event must complete the SU's Activity and Event Planner form, which can be found on Bathstudent.com or obtained through the SU Activities office. This should be returned in the first instance to SU Activities Co-ordinator.

11. If an external speaker is involved, an additional External Speaker Request Form must be completed. Both forms should be passed to the SU Activities' Co-ordinator for processing giving as much notice as possible, and at least 6 weeks ahead of the planned event unless there are exceptional circumstances.

12. If an external speaker is involved, the student group must:

- Provide expected number of attendees, and the proposed management of the event;
- Confirm whether the event will be a member only, invitation only event or open to any University of Bath students, or the general public;
- Confirm any external speakers' affiliations (specifically where they are political or religious);
- Declare any knowledge of controversy attracted by the speaker or topic in the past;
- Confirm whether the event and speaker are likely to attract media interest – if so why?
- Provide 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 SU disciplinary action.

14. On receipt of the event planner and external speakers form, the SU Activities Co-ordinator will check the backgrounds of speakers online. This information will then be noted on the SU Speaker Information Form including a link to the most relevant information about the speaker. The SU Activities Co-ordinator will liaise closely with relevant student groups, and University Security.

15. The SU Activities Co-ordinator will refer any speakers that may require further exploration to the SU Activities Manager who will discuss each case with the SU Activities Officer and, together, agree on the appropriate course of action. All others will be considered to be approved but should be reported to Management Group for information.

### **Referred speakers**

16. Any events with referred speakers will be investigated by the SU Activities Manager for decision by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the SU President.

17. The SU Activities Manager/Chief Executive will, at the same time, refer any request for the attendance of political parties/controversial speakers to the University Secretary for separate consideration under the Code of Practice.

18. The SU Activities Manager/Chief Executive 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.

19. 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;
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause the SU to be in breach of its equal opportunities policy;
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause the SU to fail in its wider legal duties;
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause reputational risk to the SU;
- The potential for the speakers presence on campus to give rise to breach of peace.

20. 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;
- To fully permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted;
- To permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead contingent on the implementation 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 SU, 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 SU;
  - Requiring that a copy of any speech to be delivered by the speaker be submitted to the SU.

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 Chief Executive who, after consulting with the SU President, 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.

23. A decision to permit the event to go ahead will also be subject, for political parties / potentially controversial visiting speakers, to the agreement of the University Secretary who will make their decision within the wider context of the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Expression.

24. Where the society in question disagrees with the decision made by the Chief Executive they shall have the right to appeal to the SU President (Chair of the Board of Trustees) which will be considered by the Board of Trustees. Where a decision is made by the Board of Trustees their decision is final.

25. An annual report on referred speakers will be produced by the Chief Executive for consideration by the Trustee Board.