**The Students’ Union at UWE**

**External Speakers Policy**

The Students’ Union at UWE has a long and rich history as an organisation that explores culture, debate and therefore 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.

The Students’ Union at UWE is committed to facilitating debate and discussion to further the extra-curricular development of our students and to support student groups in inviting external speakers to their events to contribute the dialogue.

**Definition**

‘External speaker’ is used throughout this document to describe any individual or organisation who is not a student or staff member at UWE or The Students’ Union at UWE.

This policy covers external speakers at:

* Students’ Union events;
* Events organised by affiliated groups (e.g. societies and sports clubs) in any venue;
* Events held in the Students’ Union building (external organisations requesting Students’ Union space);
* All three Students’ Union venues – Frenchay, Bower and Glenside.

**Aims**

The purpose of this policy is to set in place a governing framework for visiting speakers to ensure that this proud heritage, where debate, challenge and dissent are not only permitted but expected, can continue.

It is Students’ Union at UWE Policy:

* To provide an environment where freedom of expression and speech are protected balanced with the need to ensure that our community is free from harm and that incitement to hatred is never acceptable;
* To provide a supportive, inclusive and safe space for students;
* To provide clearly defined and effective procedures to ensure that the law is upheld;
* To collaborate with necessary agencies and advisors to reach sound, evidenced judgements about proposed external speakers ensuring that the Students’ Union and the University can meet their legal, social and moral obligations;
* To encourage and provide a balance of opinion at any academic discussion or debate; and
* To communicate to all members, volunteers, staff and visitors, that it is our mutual responsibility to comply with anti-discrimination, anti-bullying or anti-harassment legislation and that both The Students’ Union at UWE and the individual can be held liable if they contravene the law.
* To challenge behaviour and change practice that directly or indirectly results in discrimination.
* To ensure that external speakers cannot insist on gender segregation as a condition of participation the event because gender segregation is unlawful, unless to observe religious worship.

**Freedom of Expression**

Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights that are protected by law. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are not absolute freedoms but freedoms within the law.

‘Academic freedom’ is a term used to describe the law that allows for open and honest debate in an academic context. UWE has a legal duty (Education Act (no. 2) 1986 sec 43) to secure the development of students’ ideas and understanding in the form of academic freedom on campus. Academic freedom (the principle of which is referred to in Education Reform Act 1988 Sec 202) only applies to University academic staff and does not apply to students and visiting speakers. Student safety and welfare is at the heart of Student’s Union at UWE policies and practices. The freedom to express views needs to be balanced with the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities. We want all of our activities and those hosted by of our student groups to be:

* safe without risk to the reputation of the Union or University;
* within the law.

Sometimes an external speaker or their topic of discussion has the potential to contravene our conditions for a safe event. We’re committed to working together with event organisers (and in some cases the external speakers themselves) to make sure that we reach a decision regarding the proposed event that is reasonable, informed and within the law.

**Students’ Union Event Considerations**

When approving external speaker requests, it is important that The Students’ Union takes into consideration any risks associated with the speakers attending the event so that we can work with you to mitigate them. This may require additional support and resources so the more time we have to prepare the better.

The Students’ Union at UWE need to take into consideration when approving a speaker include:

* risk to student wellbeing, health and safety;
* history of the speaker and any media or police attention they have received previously;
* laws regarding discrimination, incitement and intimidation are taken into account when reviewing the history of the speaker to ensure that we are not perceived to be providing a platform for illegal activity or potentially illegal activity; and
* particular student groups that may take offence at the invitation of the speaker to an event.

The Students’ Union will work with the University to ensure that risks identified around particular speakers or events being held on campus will be properly managed. The University has a legal duty to prevent people from being drawn into extremist activity under the 2015 Counter Terrorism and Security Act and you are advised that the University will be mindful of this duty when considering requests for external speakers on its premises.

**External Speakers Process – Students’ Union Society, Club or Affiliated Group**

Student groups must notify the Students’ Union of any events that involve external speakers through this procedure.

The Students’ Union at UWE has three part procedure:

1. PART 1 -initial assessment and speaker validation
2. PART 2- process to manage referred speakers.
3. PART 3 – event approval

* No event involving any external speakers may be publicised or considered confirmed until the speaker has been cleared through the procedure detailed in this policy. This includes advertisement through any social media platform. The Student’s Union reserves the right to cancel, prohibit or delay any event with an external speaker if our policy is not followed or if health, safety and security criteria cannot be met.
* Any room booking with an external speaker involved must be made no later than **14 days before the date of the event (For events where Political or Religious speakers will be attending the University requires at least 21 days’ notice)** . This is to allow for adequate safeguarding checks to be made, as well as allowing time for alterations to the event if necessary. Any request made outside of this timeframe will be rejected unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances. This will be at the discretion of the Students’ Union at UWE.
* When booking for a room online with external speakers, the event organiser will be asked complete ‘The Students’ Union: External Speaker – Booking Request Form’**.** It is important that you include as much information as possible to speed up the checks we have to perform on the speaker. If the form is submitted incomplete or we require more detail, we will send the form back to you to be updated.
* It may take up to five working days for the Students’ Union to carry out our approval process from the date of submission of a complete and appropriately detailed form, so submitting an inappropriately completed form risks having your event postponed. Any failure to disclose the full details of an external speaker may result in an event/booking being cancelled and could result in disciplinary action.
* Please note that as speaker forms may take up to five working days to be processed, events should be planned with this in mind to ensure there is enough time to promote the event.

**PART 1 – Initial Assessment and Speaker Validation**

The Students’ Union will conduct a short investigation into the speaker and the event that, wherever possible, it may involve speaking to representatives from student groups that are related to the booking/topics covered, university officials and external bodies. This staff member will seek information from a wide variety of sources, including the University and externally if appropriate.

In making recommendations they will assess risk based on the potential for:

* any decision to limit freedom of speech as per the University’s policy
* the event going ahead to cause the Students’ Union to be in breach of its equal opportunities (or other) policy or safe spaces policy
* the event going ahead to cause the Students’ Union to fail in its wider legal duties or a breach of criminal law
* the event going ahead to cause reputational risk to the Students’ Union
* the speaker’s presence on campus to cause fear or alarm to any members of the student body
* the speaker’s presence on campus to give rise to breach of peace or health and safely fears
* the speaker would Incite or spread hatred, violence or intolerance, encourage or promote any acts of terrorism or promote individuals, groups or organisations that support terrorism, discriminate against or harass any person or group on the grounds of their gender/gender identity, race, nationality, ethnicity, disability, religious or other similar belief, sexual orientation or age
* any other factor which is felt to be appropriate to take into account

They may make one of the following recommendations:

* + 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 subject to conditions designed to reduce risk
  + to proceed to PART 2 - process to manage referred speakers.

Conditions may include that:

* + the event be observed by Students’ Union, University or third party officials
  + the event be stewarded or subject to security (or extra security) on the door (at the expense of the club or society hosting the event)
  + an event promoting a particular view includes an opportunity to debate or challenge that view
  + an event closed to society members only be opened to all members of the Students’ Union
  + a copy of any speech to be delivered by the speaker is submitted to the Students’ Union 3 days in advance

When considering any conditions designed to reduce risk, the potential of those conditions to cause risk (for example, the sense of oppression felt by having security on the door) will be taken into account. The recommendation will be put to the Students’ Union President who will make a decision that is routinely communicated to the Trustee Board, who may overrule this decision should they disagree.

**Part 2 – Process to Manage Referred Speakers**

If there is cause for a referral then the details for the booking will be sent to the Chief Executive, or nominee, for further investigation and guidance. At this point the booking with be shared with the University.

Reasons for a referral are any of the following:

* + any person or group on/or linked to the UK Government list of proscribed terrorist organisations
  + talks by organisations generally considered to be extremist by NUS and related searches
  + a speaker who is known to have spoken previously at another institution on a topic that has caused fear or intimidation of students or staff
  + a speaker accepted in mainstream opinion as being highly controversial
  + a speaker known to/or likely to cause harm to a specific group of students
  + a speaker who has significant profile and attracts a following that could create crowd control and health and safety issues.

**Part 3 – Event Approval**

* Any modifications to your booking will need to be actioned.
* If you wish to book a University room or space, at this point your students’ Union Development/Support Co-ordinator will submit the appropriate room booking request.
* In some cases you may be asked to complete a *‘Students’ Union Risk Assessment’* form which is to be completed with your Students’ Union Development/Support Co-ordinator.
* You must include the ‘Students’ Union Speakers Agreement’ and a link to the [UWE Freedom of Speech Policy](http://www2.uwe.ac.uk/services/Marketing/about-us/pdf/Policies/Freedom%20of%20speech%20policy.pdf) within all event publicity/emails and share with the incoming speaker. It is essential that this be circulated as due to the nature of some events, even those that are not classified as speakers will be voicing their opinions and contributing to discussions.
* The ‘participant agreement poster’ needs to be displayed clearly at the event.
* The ‘Guidance for External Speakers at Students’ Union Events at UWE’ must be circulated to all speakers in advance of submission of the form. You then need to confirm with them that they agree to comply with Students’ Union procedures and policies while being hosted at one of our events, and note this on the form.

While we realise that the bureaucratic burden of forms is not insignificant, we hope you understand that the information you provide is important for us to be able to fairly assess each speaker and make a decision that is in the best interests of all UWE students and the Students’ Union*.* Overall, responsibility for all The Students’ Union at UWE activity, including Sports Clubs/Society events and student- led projects, lies with the Students’ Union Trustee Board.

**External Organisation Booking the Students’ Union Venues**

If an external organisation seeks to book a space within the Students’ Union directly, they will need to complete an external speakers form as part of the room booking online process and the same procedure will apply as stated for affiliated groups. The request will first be passed to the most relevant Development Co-ordinator.

**Review:** this policy and procedure will be renewed annually to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Review date: February 2017.

**For more information**, please see The Students’ Union at UWE’s policies:

* External Speakers Policy *(link to be included when policy up to date on website)*
* External Speakers Booking Form *(link to be included when up to date on website)*
* [Safe Spaces Policy](https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/pageassets/union/constitution/Safer-Spaces-Policy.pdf)
* [Zero Tolerance Policy Statement](https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/pageassets/union/constitution/UWE-and-The-Students-Union-at-UWE-statement-on-sexual-and-domestic-violence-abuse-and-harassment.pdf)
* [UWE’s Freedom of Speech Policy](http://www2.uwe.ac.uk/services/Marketing/about-us/pdf/Policies/Freedom%20of%20speech%20policy.pdf)
* UWE’s Room Bookings Policy *(link to be added when approved)*
* UWE’s External Speakers Policy *(link to be added when approved)*