

External Speakers Policy

Definition

An '**External speaker**' is used throughout this document to describe any individual or organisation being given a platform to speak to students who is not a student or staff member at UWE Bristol or The Students' Union at UWE. This also includes UWE Bristol staff if they are speaking on a topic that is out of scope of their job description, employed expertise, or remit.

This policy covers external speakers at:

- Students' Union events (physical or virtual in any venue, including social media live streams etc).
- Events or stalls organised by affiliated groups (e.g. societies and sports clubs) in any venue or online.
- Events or stalls held in any of the three Students' Union buildings (external organisations requesting Students' Union space).

Aims of the Policy

- **Protect Freedom of Speech:** Ensure freedom of speech while safeguarding the community from harm and preventing incitement to hatred.
- **Supportive Environment:** Provide a safe, inclusive space for all students.
- **Legal Compliance:** Establish clear procedures to uphold the law.
- **Collaborative Judgements:** Work with agencies and advisors to make informed decisions about external speakers, meeting legal, social, and moral obligations.
- **Balanced Discussions:** Encourage diverse opinions in academic debates.
- **Challenge Discrimination:** Address and change practices that lead to discrimination.
- **Prevent Gender Segregation:** Ensure external speakers cannot enforce gender segregation, except for religious worship.

External Speakers Request Form

- Student groups must notify The Students' Union of any events that involve external speakers through submission of [The Students' Union's External Speakers Form](#).
- It is important that the request form includes as much information as possible. If the form is submitted incomplete or with insufficient detail, the event could be postponed. Any failure to disclose the full details of an external speaker may result in an event being cancelled.
- No event can publicise the proposed external speaker(s) until the speaker has been approved. This includes advertisement through any social media platform.
- Any event with an external speaker(s) must **submit the form no later than 14 days before the date of the event**.
- If an event or speaker are assessed to have potential **high risk**, The Students' Union and UWE Bristol reserve the right to request an addition 7 days to ensure there is adequate time to implement modifications and to plan for the event.
- The Students' Union acknowledges that there are exceptional circumstances where opportunities for speakers arise at short notice or situations are fast changing.

External Speakers Approval Process

Completed External Speaker Forms are shared automatically with UWE's Events Team who will undertake an independent risk assessment and approval process, in accordance with UWE Bristol's External Speakers Policy.

The Students' Union will process the form and undertake independent research of the speaker and topic, considering the following:

- Limiting freedom of speech
- Risks to student wellbeing, health, and safety
- Speaker's history and any media or police attention
- Compliance with laws on discrimination, incitement, and intimidation
- Potential reputational risk to The Students' Union or UWE Bristol
- Whether the speaker incites or spreads hatred, violence, intolerance, or promotes terrorism
- Association with proscribed terrorist organisations or extremist groups
- Previous instances of causing fear or intimidation at other institutions
- Likelihood of causing harm to specific student groups
- Controversial nature of the speaker
- Potential crowd control and health and safety issues due to the speaker's profile and following, or potential for public protest.

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.

The majority of requests received are deemed low risk. If an external speaker or their topic of discussion has the potential to contravene our conditions for a safe event, The Students' Union will work with UWE Bristol and with event organisers to make sure that we reach a decision regarding the proposed event that is reasonable, informed and within the law. 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 or Department for Education.

The Students' Union reserves the right to cancel, prohibit or delay any event with an external speaker if our policy is not followed, if health, safety and security criteria cannot be met and/or if new information or changes take place between receiving approval and the event taking place.

Event Approval

The Students' Union will communicate with the event organiser the decision:

- to decline this external speaker
- to fully permit the event with the external speaker as requested
- to permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead subject to conditions designed to reduce risk

Conditions may include:

- the event be observed by Students' Union, University or third-party officials
- the event needing security
- an event promoting a particular view includes an opportunity to debate or challenge that view
- a copy of any speech to be delivered by the speaker is submitted to The Students' Union in advance

<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/events/external-speakers>

Date: May 2025.

14 DAYS PRIOR TO THE EVENT

**EXTERNAL
SPEAKER
SUBMITTED**

ON THE SU WEBSITE

**UWE
BRISTOL WILL
ASSESS**

**STUDENTS'
UNION WILL
ASSESS**

**SPEAKER
ASSESSMENT**

TO DETERMINE PROCESS A OR B

PROCESS A

**SPEAKER
APPROVED**

**COMMUNICATED TO
STUDENT GROUP**

**SPEAKER
AGREEMENT SENT**

PROCESS B

**ADDITIONAL 7 DAYS
REQUESTED TO
ASSESS AND
MITIGATE THE RISKS**

**STUDENT GROUP
INFORMED**

**MEETING
HELD**

**SPEAKER
APPROVED**

**APPROVED
MODIFY**

**SPEAKER NOT
APPROVED**

FIRST STAGE - TAKES 7 DAYS

SECOND PROCESS B - TAKES 14 DAYS

SECOND PROCESS A - TAKES 7 DAYS