

Guidance for External Speakers

This guidance exists to ensure that all speakers taking part in a Plymouth University hosted or run event or activity, on campus or elsewhere, act in accordance with the University's External Speaker and Events Policy.

It is the responsibility of the event or activity organiser (the individual from within Plymouth University e.g. member of staff or student, named in the External Speaker submission as the principal organiser) to ensure that:

- this Guidance is communicated to all external speakers (once approved and confirmed via the External Speaker Booking Process)
- all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the requirements within it are upheld during the running of the event or activity.

Freedom of speech

Freedom of speech is fundamental to a University. The Education Act (No 2) 1986 requires the university to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for its employees, students and visiting speakers. The Senate of the University therefore requires all employees and students of the University to tolerate and protect the expression of opinions within the law whether or not these opinions are repugnant to them; this obligation is set out in the University's Freedom of Speech: Code of Conduct.

However, whilst the law promotes and protects freedom of speech, it also places limits on those freedoms in order to maintain public order and safety and to ensure that there is no breach of the law. The University recognises that in this context a conflict exists between the laws which promote freedom of speech and those which restrict it and consequently acknowledges that it has a legal responsibility to create a balance between minimising the possibility that extremism or unlawful conduct will arise on campus and ensuring that it meets its legal obligations in relation to securing freedom of speech.

Legal Context

Universities operate in a complex legal environment and so it is vital that all individuals involved in the external speaker process, including the speakers

themselves, understand the legal framework and context that governs this area. Examples of some of the relevant areas of law are given below.

- People are entitled to protection from harassment, defamation and unlawful breach of their human rights, as well as from unfair treatment under equality law.
- Hate crimes, harassment, breach of the peace and terrorism all come under criminal law.
- Civil legislation and local Council bylaws governing public meetings, public processions/assemblies and public order may be of relevance, including legislation governing health and safety.

Conduct

The University expects external speakers to act in accordance with the law and not to breach the lawful rights of others.

Set out below are some examples of the University's expectations. Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of unacceptable conduct by external speakers. The University reserves the right to not permit an external speaker to speak at or attend an event, to refuse to permit an event and/or to halt an event at any time if it reasonably considers there may be a breach of the External Speaker Policy or of any legal obligation.

During the course of the event at which he or she participates, no speaker shall:

- Act in breach of the criminal law.
- Incite hatred or violence or any breach of the criminal law.
- Encourage or promote any acts of terrorism or promote individuals, groups or organisations that support terrorism within the UK or abroad.
- Spread hatred and intolerance.
- Discriminate against or harass any person or group on the grounds of their sex, gender identity, race, nationality or state of origin, ethnicity, disability, religion and belief (including non-belief), sexual orientation or age.
- Defame any person or organisation.

- Raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the University.

During the course of the event, all speakers shall:

- Comply with the University's External Speaker and Events Policy.
- Present ideas and opinions, in particular those that may be contentious or potentially offensive, in the spirit of academic debate, being open to challenge and question.
- Follow the University's policy on and instructions relating to security, health and safety.

Enforced Segregation

Universities have duties under the Equality Act 2010 as education providers, employers and service providers; thus they must not unlawfully discriminate against students, employees and other individuals to whom services are provided.

Enforced segregation is not permitted in any academic meetings or at events, lectures or meetings provided for students, or at events attended by members of the public or employees of the university or the students' union. Enforced segregation is therefore not permissible for any event covered by the External Speaker Policy and this Guidance.