



**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**

External Speakers Policy & Procedure

Version number	Status (draft/final)	Owning Directorate / Faculty		
6	FINAL	Academic Registry		
Summary of any amendments:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated procedure to reflect online notification form • Clarity about the definition of an external speaker 				
Document objectives:				
This document outlines:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University's definition of an external speaker • The legal framework • The process for safeguarding the use of external speakers including recording and risk assessment • The guidance to be shared with any external speakers used by the University. 				
Intended Recipients:				
Students, staff, prospective and current external speakers, visitors				
Approving Body and Date Approved				University Safety Committee
Date of Issue				11 March 2021
Review Date:				2 years from above
Contact for review:				Head of Student Services (University Prevent Lead and Designated Safeguarding Officer)
Version	Date	Author(s)	Replaces	Comment
6	Sept 2020	Laura Beahan	5	Updated policy
5	Nov 2018	Claire Oldfield	4	Updated policy

Contents

1. Our approach and philosophy 3

2. Duty of care and legal responsibilities 4

3. Definition of an External Speaker 5

4. Expectations of external speakers 6

5. External speakers notification procedure 6

6. Risk assessment..... 7

7. Advice and Support 8

Appendix 1: Guidance and expectations for External Speakers..... 9

Appendix 2: External Speakers Notification Procedure 11

Appendix 3: Refusal of events..... 12

1. Our approach and philosophy

- 1.1. As part of our mission, we are committed to academic freedom of speech and have a long history as an academic institution which has regularly welcomed visiting speakers from around the world, bringing great diversity of experience, insight and opinion, enriching our events and activities and speaking discussion and debate amongst students, staff and visitors alike.
- 1.2. The University regularly invites a wide range of speakers throughout the year we run successful programmes of events both within academic departments and professional services areas.
- 1.3. This policy serves as a governing framework for the engagement of external speakers to ensure that this tradition, where debate, challenge and dissent are not only permitted but expected, can be preserved and balanced with the University's ability to meet its legal responsibilities.
- 1.4. The policy covers all events hosted by/affiliated to the University of Plymouth. This includes events hosted by external organisations which take place on University premises, online events and those off campus, where the University is hosting or co-hosting. For instance, this includes events:
 - 1.4.1. With a speaker at a live event in the UK
 - 1.4.2. With a speaker at a live event outside UK to a meeting/event in UK
 - 1.4.3. With a speaker a live event in UK or overseas streamed to students in private/multiple settings (i.e. halls, informal gathering)
 - 1.4.4. Using a pre-recorded video of a speaker
 - 1.4.5. Utilising Eventbrite or other ticketing platforms to charge entrance/joining fees or to otherwise generate revenue, cover costs, manage entry.
- 1.5. Whilst the legal framework will differ in countries around the world, all activities led or hosted/co-hosted by the University, irrespective of where in the world they take place, should uphold this policy unless to do so would breach that country's law(s); any breach of this policy may pose risk of reputational damage even if, within a particular country, the law is not broken.
- 1.6. The policy does not cover events hosted by the University of Plymouth Students' Union, which has a separate policy. Both organisations work closely to ensure that events organised by students using University premises are consistent both with this policy and the Union's own policies and procedures and use the University's notification and escalation process.

2. Duty of care and legal responsibilities

Universities operate in a complex legal environment and it is vital that all individuals involved in the external speaker process, including the speaker(s) themselves, understand this policy and procedure.

2.1. Freedom of speech

Universities in the UK play an important role in promoting academic freedom and freedom of speech, which is underpinned by legislation. The University of Plymouth:

- 2.1.1. Ensures that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions (Education Reform Act 1988)
- 2.1.2. Takes steps as reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for students and staff of the university and for external speakers (Education No. 2 Act 1986)
- 2.1.3. Ensures, as reasonably practicable, that the use of any premises of the university is not denied to any individual or body of persons on any ground connected with their beliefs or views or policy objectives
- 2.1.4. Issues and keeps a code of practice setting out the procedures to be followed by students, employees and external speakers of the university and the conduct of such persons.

2.2. Equality and Safeguarding (including the Prevent Duty)

- 2.2.1. Universities are also under obligations which may constrain freedom of speech, in particular in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.
- 2.2.2. Everyone is entitled to protection from harassment, defamation and unlawful breach of their human rights, as well as from unfair treatment under equality law.
- 2.2.3. As part of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, universities must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and have particular regard to the duty to ensure freedom of speech and the importance of academic freedom.
- 2.2.4. The University has a separate Safeguarding Policy (including Prevent) which describes how the university will support and respond to cases

where there is a concern that any person may be at risk of being drawn into terrorism or violent extremism, or radicalised.

3. Definition of an External Speaker

- 3.1. The University takes a proportionate and risk-based approach to safeguarding the use of external speakers. To help staff and students decide whether this policy needs to be used in the event of working with an external speaker, this section of the policy provides a definition.
- 3.2. If anyone is working with an external speaker but is unsure whether this policy needs to be followed, advice can be sought by emailing safeguarding@plymouth.ac.uk. In general, there are certain circumstances when the policy applies, including where the speaker's identity or content of the lecture/talk might raise concerns.
- 3.3. We usually define an external speaker as someone who is neither a registered student nor a paid or unpaid employee (including people engaged on honorary contracts) of the University, who will be addressing a group at an 'event'.
- 3.4. 'Events' include any gathering hosted by/affiliated to the University using its premises or an external venue, including events online (see 1.4).
- 3.5. It includes a speaker addressing a group for teaching, learning, research or in the context of a curricular or co-curricular activity.
- 3.6. This process does not normally apply to the engagement of paid visiting specialists to contribute to the delivery of approved academic programmes, except where the identity of the visiting specialist or the content of the lecture might raise concerns as outlined in this policy (see 3.2).

Real examples from UoP activities:

- *Clinical specialists engaged on honorary contracts with NHS organisations **are not included** as external speakers because they have an existing honorary contract in place and are employed in a professional capacity*
- *A paid visiting specialist who is delivering a session to students as part of their academic programme of study **is not included** where the content relates to the curriculum and is not likely to attract concern*
- *A specialist in sexual violence attending an online (or in person) event to provide a talk to students about consent **is included** as an external speaker (whether paid or unpaid)*
- *A local businessperson who joins the Professional Mentoring Scheme for students **is not included** because this is not an event*

- *Employers attending part-time jobs fayres are **not included** because the event is likely to be low-risk and already part of governance within the Careers Service*
- *An external organisation booked by a member of staff to deliver a workshop to students off-campus **is included** because this remains a University event, albeit off campus*
- *An external organisation using University premises to host an event for members of the public **is included** because the University is facilitating the event on its own premises*
- *Students booking an external speaker for a Students' Union club or society event to take place on any University premises **is included** because the event is happening on University premises (events held off University premises would still be governed by the UPSU External Speakers Policy)*

3.7. Where an external speaker is to receive a payment for their time and/or attendance, staff should ensure they have familiarised themselves with the University's No Purchase Order, No Pay Policy. This policy exists to ensure timely payment of suppliers, whilst complying with University Financial Governance:

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/procurement/no-po-no-pay-policy>

4. Expectations of external speakers

4.1. External speakers must commit to conduct themselves in line with the University's duty of care and legal responsibilities as described within this document; expectations of external speakers are described in Appendix 1.

5. External speakers notification procedure

5.1. This procedure should be applied by university staff in all cases when an external speaker is being considered to talk to students, staff or visitors.

5.2. Any member of staff wishing to host an event on University premises for an external organisation should use this procedure and this member of staff will be classed as the 'organiser'; this person should:

- Liaise with the Events Team and University Security
- Carry out a risk assessment before the booking is made
- Obtain approval from the Head of School/Head of Department.

5.3. Students wishing to book an external speaker should use the University of Plymouth Students' Union procedure.

5.4. Data collated through this procedure is reported to the Office for Students, annually, as part of the Accountability and Data Return.

5.5. The aim of this procedure is to facilitate the risk assessment of speakers and where risks are highlighted, to ensure mitigation is put into place. Most speakers are uncontroversial and provide little or no risk, yet some express contentious, inflammatory or offensive views, and there are measures that can be put into place to manage this, whilst allowing debate to take place.

5.6. The process for notification is included in Appendix 2.

6. Risk assessment

6.1. In all cases, the notification procedure in Section 5 must be used.

6.2. Speakers will be classed as low risk (therefore requiring no intervention) if all of the following criteria are met:

6.2.1. The event will not be open to the general public

6.2.2. The speaker will be primarily speaking in English

6.2.3. The event will not be broadcast, streamed or offered for download by the organisers (this does not apply to external speakers 'events' that are part of an approved programme)

If any of the above criteria are not met, the event/speaker is classed as 'medium risk' and the Prevent Lead will support the organiser to put mitigations in place such as:

- *Support from the Events or Security teams*
- *Advice from External Relations regarding reputational risks*
- *Where the primary language is a language other than English, the organiser should ensure that a University representative who is fluent in the language being spoken is present during the event*
- *Where the event is to be broadcast, streamed or downloadable, advice should be sought from External Relations to ensure any reputational risks and those associated with intellectual property are taken into consideration*
- *Referral to the Deputy Vice Chancellor if any risks cannot be resolved*

6.2.4. The proposed title or theme of the event does not present a potential risk that views/opinions expressed by speakers may be in breach of this policy

6.2.5. The speaker has not previously been prevented from speaking at the University of Plymouth or, to our knowledge, other similar establishment

6.2.6. The speaker has not been known to express views that may be in breach of this policy

6.2.7. The subject matter or speaker is unlikely to attract protest, negative media coverage or is not otherwise a potential threat to the reputation of the University

6.2.8. It is unlikely that people might experience harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or violence or that those in attendance are unlikely to be incited to engage in harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or violence directed at others, as defined within law and within the University's policies governing bullying and harassment, either within the UK or abroad.

If any of the above criteria are not met, the event/speaker is classed as 'high risk' and the Prevent Lead will discuss the event with the organiser and refer to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for consideration and approval

6.3. The Deputy Vice Chancellor may, for medium- and high-risk events:

- Approve the event
- Request further information
- Approve the event with conditions such as: restriction on hospitality provision, such as the consumption of alcohol, the appointment of an independent Chair to oversee the event, or specific arrangements governing health, safety and security
- Refuse the event (this would occur in exceptional circumstances, see Appendix 3).

6.4. Any independent Chair of an event will as far as possible be responsible for ensuring the audience and speaker(s) act in accordance with this policy. The audience and speaker(s) are obliged to comply with the Chair's rulings relating to the conduct of the event, to the agreed arrangements and to other University policies. The Chair may request the removal of individuals acting in a disorderly manner or persistently disrupting the event. The Chair may also suspend or close the event if in their opinion it can no longer be conducted in an orderly manner, or if the safety and security of those in attendance is under threat.

7. Advice and Support

7.1. The University's Safeguarding eLearning module includes information about events and external speakers, and this is accessible on the HR Community: [Human Resources - Staff Development - eLearning \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

7.2. Advice and support regarding the risk assessment and referral process is available from the University Prevent Lead (or nominee) by contacting safeguarding@plymouth.ac.uk .

Appendix 1: Guidance and expectations for External Speakers



UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH

To external speakers of the University of Plymouth: thank you for working with us and welcome to the University of Plymouth (UoP).

This guidance exists to ensure that all speakers taking part in a UoP hosted event, be that on campus, online or elsewhere, understand and are able to adopt the principles of the University's External Speaker Policy. This also applies where external providers use University property to run a non-University related event or activity.

It is the responsibility of the event organiser (the individual within the University e.g. member of staff or student, to be the main point of contact for the event booking) to ensure that:

- this guidance is communicated to all external speakers
- all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the requirements of external speakers are upheld during the running of the event or activity.

Set out below are some examples of the University's expectations. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but illustrates how we safeguard events. 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 Speakers Policy or of any legal obligation:

All speakers are expected to:

- Read, understand and comply with the University's External Speaker Policy (this 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

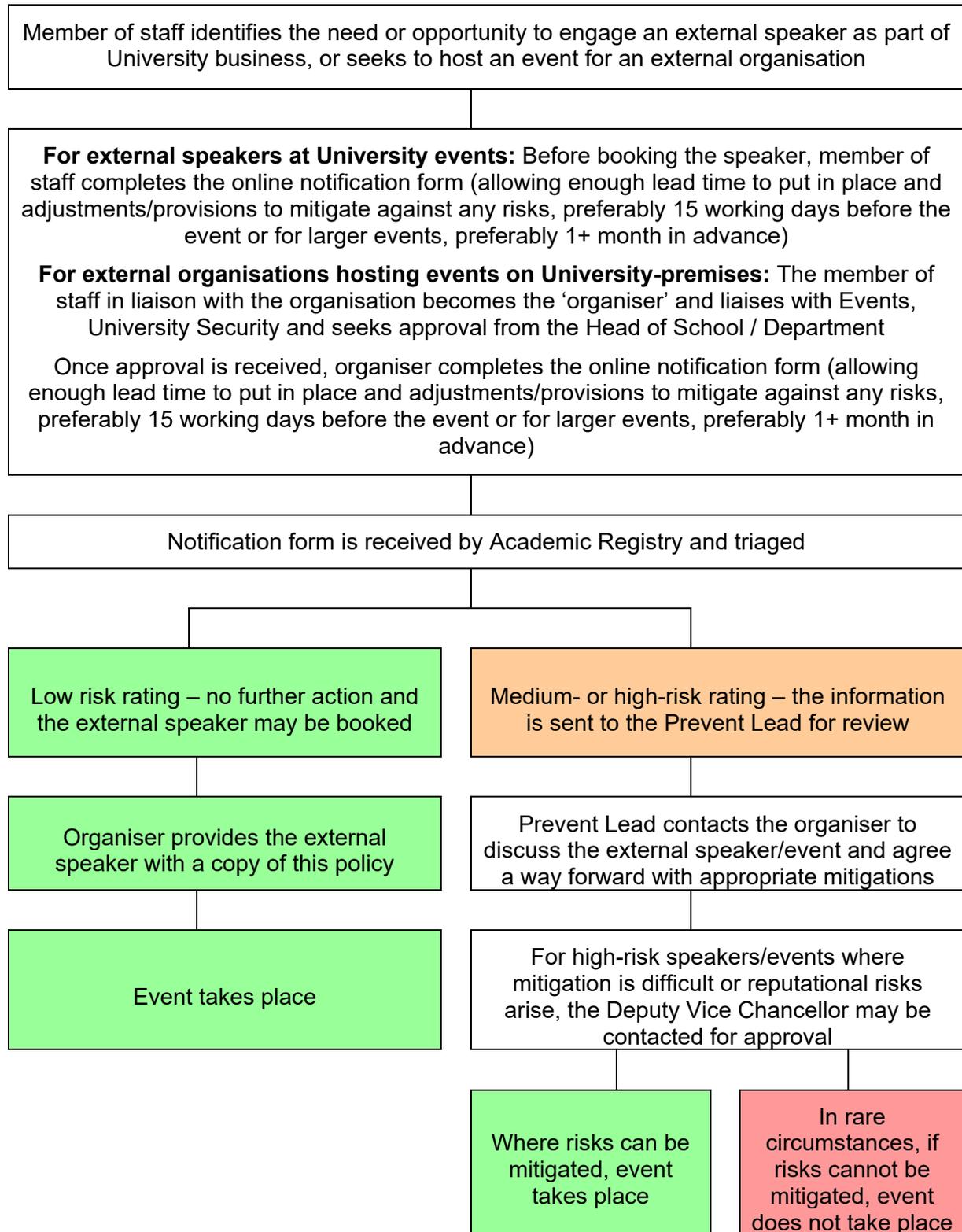
A speaker must not:

- 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
- Enforce segregation
- Defame any person or organisation
- Raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the University
- Commit any other act that could be in breach of criminal law

Students and staff attending any event are expected to adhere to all University policies including Dignity and Respect, and behave in an appropriate manner.

Appendix 2: External Speakers Notification Procedure



Appendix 3: Refusal of events

The decision of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor to refuse an event or external speaker of a request or the withdrawal of permission will only occur in exceptional circumstances. These circumstances include (but are not restricted to):

- Failure to submit the request within the normal time frame
- A significant risk of public disorder such that the health and safety of staff, students and visitors is put at risk
- A significant risk of substantial damage to University property
- A serious concern that the law will be broken by those speaking at or attending the event
- A significant risk of major disruption to the operation of the University's activities
- A significant risk that the costs associated with making the event safe (e.g. security provision, facilities management) were beyond the budget of those organising the event, such that the University was likely to face a significant financial loss
- Views expressed or likely to be expressed constitute extremist views that risk drawing people into terrorism.

Appendix 4: Examples of External Speakers

Adapted from UUK guidance “External Speakers in Higher Education” (2014)

Political views

In advance of a general election, the Politics Department is organising a series of seminars featuring representatives from a range of political parties and covering a broad spectrum of political views. One will focus on the politics and views of the UK Independence Party. As students have become aware of this, there has been increasing unrest and some have expressed their opposition to the proposed booking. There are indicators that several are planning to protest and disrupt the event.

Separately, there are unsubstantiated rumours that the English Defence League (EDL) is considering attending the event to promote its own policies.

The event is open to the public and tickets will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis on the night.

The department completes the questions in the notification, answering ‘no’, ‘no’ and ‘unsure’.

The University Prevent Lead contacts the member of staff to discuss the event. Considering the following principles:

- Right to freedom of expression
- Safety of speakers and those attending, including any students who protest
- Equality obligations
- Involvement of the Students’ Union
- Public order implications – how would a protest be managed?
- Security considerations
- Ensuring the speaker(s) adhere to University values and our code for speakers
- UKIP is not a proscribed group
- What is likely to be discussed at the session
- Should the event be made closed and tickets provided in advance
- Police liaison and local authority liaison
- Who is chairing and are they sufficiently experienced?
- Will this attract media attention and therefore, do the Media Team and senior management team need to be informed?

In conclusion, in principle there is no reason why the event could not go ahead with a risk assessment to safeguard all, including students, the speakers and attendees.

Israel and Palestine

A prominent academic, well known for pro-Palestinian views and vocal criticism of Israel has been invited to speak at an event organised by the University’s Palestinian Society. He has frequently spoken publicly in support of sanctions against Israel. The University’s Jewish Network has expressed concern about the event, and are likely to protest and disrupt the event. The local rabbi has written to the local newspaper expressing his concerns. Some have accused the proposed speaker of supporting violent means.

The event, as planned, would be open to staff and students only. The intention is for the chair of the Palestinian Society to chair the event. He is relatively new in post and has little experience of chairing such events. There are no other events planned that will explore alternative views of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The academic completes the questions in the notification, answering 'no', 'unsure' and 'unsure'.

The University Prevent Lead contacts the academic to discuss the event. They both investigate online the speaker, to see if the accusations about the speaker supporting violent means appear valid. For more advice, the University Prevent Lead contacts the Department for Education's Regional Prevent Coordinator for advice. It is decided that the event can go ahead, and that the academic would support the chair with ensuring freedom of speech at the event and managing of any issues that arise. The Security Team are notified and are in close contact before the event.