Guest Speaker Policy

**Preamble**

Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights to be protected and are protected by law. Open debate is central to the culture of academic freedom, 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.

That said, student safety and welfare is at the heart of the Students’ Union’s policies and practices. As such, the freedom to express views can sometimes be tempered by the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities. In addition to this, there is a duty placed upon the organisation by both directly by the Charity Commission1 and indirectly by the Home Office via Cardiff University2 to ensure that due regard is taken to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The Cardiff University Prevent Policy3 outlines the duty that are placed upon the institution as well as the actions that are in place to fulfil the duty.

Where there is a potential for these rights and duties to come into conflict in relation to controversial speakers, the Students’ Union is committed to collaboration that will allow the Students’ Union to reach sound, evidenced judgements about an organisation or person in question and that allows the Students’ Union to meet its various legal obligations. Whilst this document makes reference to Societies, the content applies to all affiliated individual student representatives and student groups including Societies, Sports Clubs, Student Led Services and other student led activities.

The Society President and event coordinator organising any event are responsible for the activities that take place within their society. All speakers must be made aware of their responsibility to abide by the law, the University and the Students’ Union’s various policies, including that:

* They must not incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law
* They are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts
* They must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony
* Within a framework of positive debate and challenge, seek to avoid insulting other faiths or groups
* They are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the trustees

**Requirements**

1. Societies must notify the Students’ Union of any events that involve external speakers (defined as individuals or organisations that are not part of the Union or the University) through these procedures. For the avoidance of doubt this applies to events held both on and off University or Students’ Union premises.
2. No event involving any external speakers may be publicised until the speaker has been cleared through the appropriate procedures as provided in this policy.
3. The Students’ Union 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.
4. The Students’ Union reserves the right to deny a platform to racist and fascist individuals and groups. Such a decision will be made by the Trustees of the Students’ Union.

**Declaration of Speakers**

The Students’ Unions’ external speaker request form requires event organisers to provide:

* Name and details of any guest speaker
* Topic on which the guest speaker is due to talk
* Expected number of attendees
* Confirm whether the event will be a member only, invitation only event or open to the general public
* Confirm any external speakers’ affiliations (specifically where they are political or religious)
* Declaration of any knowledge of controversy attracted by the speaker or topic in the past
* Confirmation if the event and speaker are likely to attract media interest – if so why?
* Confirmation of website details (where relevant) providing further information on the speaker

Any failure to disclose full speaker details may result in an event/booking being cancelled and could result in referral of the Society or an individual for Students’ Union disciplinary action.

**Initial Process**

On receipt of the form, Student Activities Staff will research all speakers on Google (after first looking at any web link provided) and look at the first three pages of results (if any results are found). This information is then noted on the log including a link to the most relevant information about the speaker. Student Activities Staff will receive regular training and briefing on controversial speakers and will liaise closely with student societies, religious and cultural groups and University security.

Student Activities Staff will review the completed spreadsheet weekly. They will refer any speakers that may require further exploration to the Director of Engagement and Participation. They will provide 5 hyperlinks to the most relevant Google results for any speakers that are a cause for concern. All others will be considered to be approved.

**Referred Speakers**

1. Any events with referred speakers will be investigated by the Director of Engagement and Participation and Vice President Societies and Volunteering on behalf of the Trustee Board.
2. They will conduct an investigation into the proposed 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.
3. 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 in pursuance of the 1986 Education Act
* The potential for the event going ahead to cause the Students’ Union to be in breach of its equal opportunities policy
* The potential for the event going ahead to cause the Students’ Union to fail in its wider legal duties
* The potential for the event going ahead to cause reputational risk to the Students’ Union
* The potential for the speaker’s presence on campus to cause fear or alarm to members of the student body
* The potential for the speakers presence on campus to give rise to breach of peace
1. Where the attendance of a guest speaker would be defined as a “*specified event/meeting*” as defined by the Cardiff University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech4, advice and authorisation shall be sought from the Director of Strategic Planning and Governance, in line with the procedure set out within the code.

They may make one of the following recommendations:

1. On the basis of the risks presented to not permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead
2. On the basis of the risks presented to fully permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted
3. On the basis of the risks presented to permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead on the basis of regulatory steps designed to reduce risk

Regulatory steps designed to reduce risk may include (but not be limited to):

* Requiring that the event be filmed by an independent body
* Requiring that the event be observed by Students’ Union, 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 Students’ Union
* Requiring that a copy of any speech to be delivered by the speaker be submitted to the Students’ Union in advance

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.

Where students or student groups disagree with the decision made they shall have the right to submit a complaint in line with the complaint procedures within the Students’ Union constitution.

**Non-compliance**

Where a society has not followed the booking process, the Students’ Union reserves the right to take appropriate action to remedy the situation or to place restrictions on the society for a period of time. In an extreme measure, the Student’s Union may suspend or initiate disciplinary action with a Society or individual where it believes action has been taken to intentionally circumvent this process.

Actions by a society that would be deemed as inappropriate would include, but not be limited to:

* Providing false information on the room booking or guest speaker form
* Providing incomplete information on the room booking or guest speaker form
* Hosting a guest speaker (on or off University of Union premises) without consent
* Seeking to book a venue for non society activity
* Seeking to book a venue for another society or external individual or group
* Breaching the terms and conditions of room use

Where an event has not been registered through this process, it must not be advertised under the name or branding of the Society, Students’ Union and/or University.

**Monitoring**

A periodic report of guest speakers attending events organised by affiliated groups of the Students’ Union will be provided to the Satisfaction, Engagement and Participation Sub Committee of the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis.

**Links to relevant and referenced guidelines and policies**

1 – Charity Commission – Protecting Charities from abuse for extremist purposes

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572853/Chapter5.pdf>

2 – HM Government – Prevent Duty Guidance for higher education institutions in England and Wales: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445916/Prevent_Duty_Guidance_For_Higher_Education__England__Wales_.pdf>

3 – Cardiff University Prevent Policy - <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1079635/CARDIFF-UNIVERSITY-PREVENT-POLICY.pdf>

4 – Cardiff University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech - <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1147091/2018-April-Code-of-Practice-on-Freedom-of-Speech-16278-Final.pdf>