

# birkbeck

## students' union

### EXTERNAL SPEAKERS PROTOCOL

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#### Introduction

Birkbeck Students' Union hosts, organises & runs hundreds of events each year as a result of the self-organising efforts of our Student Groups, Representative Campaigns, & Student Officers; many of these events welcome external speakers & contributors who add value, making these extra-curricular activities an important part of Birkbeck life for many students. This External Speakers protocol is designed to ensure that students are empowered to get the most out of their University experience whilst keeping in line with the legislation & policies that we are responsible for upholding.

#### Scope:

1. This procedure should be followed any time an External Speaker is to be invited as part of Union activities (including off-campus events).
2. This policy is designed in reference to the BBKSU Room Bookings & Events protocols and therefore it will be followed in conjunction with these procedures.
3. An External Speaker can be considered as anyone who is acting in their capacity as a non-student/member at Birkbeck University or Birkbeck Students' Union.
4. It should be understood that while the Union actively encourages all our members' self-organising efforts, the safety & wellbeing of our members is paramount. With this in mind Birkbeck Students' Union will always work with event organisers to balance safe-guarding considerations with our commitment to our members' freedom to express their views,

5. Decisions will be made in reference to both Union & College Policies (e.g.: safeguarding, security & estates) as well as the charity legislation & laws that relate to our work as a Union.
6. Failure to comply with any part of this procedure may result in requests being denied or further disciplinary action.

## **Procedure:**

When a SU group would like to host an external speaker, the following procedure should be followed:

1. The SU [Event Planning Form](#) must be completed with at least 28 clear days' notice of the proposed event date, including as much detail as possible about the nature of the event, and the profile of the speaker.
2. Where appropriate, further information relevant to a risk assessment should be provided at the earliest opportunity (for example, where speakers intend to provide their own security).
3. The appropriate member of staff will conduct a risk assessment on the event, considering all the relevant legislation & policy, as well as the SU's capacity to facilitate the safety & wellbeing of both the speaker & attendees.
4. Where the event is deemed "low risk", the event organiser will be informed within 14 working days & the event will be approved to proceed. A "low risk" event is where neither the speakers' presence, profile, predictable conduct, nor the content of their materials is likely to cause distress or a strong (in some cases e.g. celebrities this includes a 'favourable' response) response from the membership, Birkbeck College or the general public.
5. Where the event is deemed "medium risk", the event organiser may be contacted for further information, & measures to ensure the safety & wellbeing of both the speaker(s) and all attendees may need to be discussed. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure the event's approval where the Union has the appropriate resources. Where all perceived risks can be mediated, a recommendation (which may include a staff or security presence) for the event's approval will be made; this may include a tailored agreement that the event organisers/the speaker must agree to. A "medium risk" event is where either the speaker's profile, predictable behaviour, or the contents of their material could illicit a negative/distressed response from the membership, Birkbeck College or the general public. An event may also be deemed "medium risk" where a speaker is expected to illicit passive commentary (e.g. discussion on social media) from non-attendees in support or peaceful protest.
6. Where an event is deemed "high risk", it is likely that the Union will have to consult with college staff (this may include members of security, estates, external relations & student services) before a decision is made. The event organiser will be informed at the earliest opportunity, in some cases it is possible that changes to the format/location of the event will need to be agreed before the event can be approved. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure the event's approval, however in some cases events may be deemed unsuitable to be held by the Union where we do not have the appropriate resources to mitigate perceived

risks. An event will be considered “high risk” where the speaker’s profile, predictable behaviour, or the contents of their materials is likely to illicit a negative/distressed response from the membership, Birkbeck College or the general public. An event may also be deemed “high risk” where a speaker is expected to illicit the presence of non-attendees in support or protest of the speaker. Any event may be deemed “high risk” where the appraising staff member considers that the safety or wellbeing of the speaker, Union or College staff, event attendees or general members to be at risk for any reason.

7. Responses confirming the Union’s approval of external speakers will be communicated in writing via email. Where changes or additional preparations need to be made, event organisers/speakers may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss potential security or safeguarding arrangements.
8. Where the event organiser is unsatisfied with the Union’s initial assessment/response, an appeal can be made to the Union Executive Committee by contacting the Communications & Activities Officer.

## Useful Links

The following links include some of the most relevant UK Legislation and Union & College policies to this procedure.

[The Education \(No. 2\) Act 1986 S43](#)

[Education Reform Act 1988 – Academic](#)

[Freedom](#)

[Terrorism Act 2000](#)

[Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[Equality Act 2010 S10](#)

[Public Order Act 1986](#)

[Discrimination Law – Religion & Belief](#)

[BBKSU Clubs & Societies Handbook](#)

[BBKSU Health & Safety Policy](#)

[BBKSU Room Bookings Policy](#)

[Birkbeck External Room Bookings T&Cs](#)

[Birkbeck Health & Safety Policies](#)

For more info, please [contact us](#).