

## **SAFE SPACE POLICY**

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## **1 POLICY STATEMENT**

- 1.1 The University of Manchester Students' Union believes in liberation for all and everything that we do has equality and liberation at its heart. By enabling all of students to participate in the work that we do, we are helping to progress towards a fairer and more equal society.
- 1.2 Students are expected to respect the right of all members and staff to enjoy the Students' Union as a safe space environment, defined as a space which is welcoming and safe and includes the prohibition of discriminatory language and actions.
- 1.2.1 The Students' Union is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive space for all students. This policy is applicable to the whole student community, whether an individual or a member within a group, including but not limited to; Students' Union societies, volunteering projects and assemblies and public social media. The Students' Union believes all students should be free from intimidation or harassment, and from prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, marital or maternity/paternity status, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or sexual activity, gender identity, trans status, socio-economic status, or culture, or any other form of distinction.
- 1.2.2 The Students Union believe strongly in the right to free speech within the boundaries of the law and recognises that feeling free to speak one's mind is a key prerogative of any liberation movement. However, it acknowledges that this should not be to the detriment of the rights of other individuals and groups. Freedom of speech is important, yet intention to incite hatred is never acceptable.
- 1.2.3 The Students' Union is therefore committed, where possible, to finding practical solutions that respect both freedom of expression and the right to personal safety by negotiating regulations for spaces for debate with organisers of Students' Union events which could breach the safe space policy.
- 1.2.4 The Students' Union recognises discrimination can occur wherever it is not consciously challenged. Any person in a Students' Union space or attending a Students' Union event, including in non- Students' Union buildings, is accountable for their own language and behaviour. If behaviour is reported that is not in accordance with this policy, members may be asked to leave immediately by staff or an elected full-time officer.

## **2 DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 Students' Union refers to the University of Manchester Students' Union Registered Charity number 1144146
- 2.2 Members of the Students' Union are as defined in the Students' Union Memorandum and Articles of Association
- 2.3 References to societies apply to all student groups facilitated by the Students' Union whether constituted as societies or not.
- 2.4 References to society committee members apply to leaders of all student groups facilitated by the Students' Union whether in a formal or informal leadership role.

### **3 REQUIREMENTS OF SAFE SPACE USE**

- 3.1 Members of the Students' Union must not:
  - say things that are likely to incite hatred against any individual or group
  - set up societies or other groups as front organisations i.e. groups that promote ideologies or organisations other than those clearly expressed in their constitutional aims
  - create an unsafe environment for any individual or group of individuals through unwanted attention
  - create or seek to create an intimidating environment for any other member, member of staff or member of the general public
  - deny any other member access to opportunities based on any irrelevant characteristic
- 3.2 Student society committee members must take all reasonable steps to:
  - ensure that all events and activities of their society comply with this policy
  - ensure that all events and activities of their society involving visiting speakers are granted the proper permissions in line with the visiting speaker process under the University of Manchester Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech
  - ensure that their society is not being used to promote or recruit to extremist ideologies or groups
  - host events in spaces that are accessible to every student (or in the case of public events every member of the public) who might be interested in them
  - protect members and other participants in their activities from harassment or intimidation
  - ensure that opportunities are open to all regardless of any irrelevant characteristics
- 3.3 Societies and representatives must actively engage with the Student Union to ensure that visiting speakers at their events:
  - Are informed about the terms of engagement agreed upon for the event and do not violate them.
  - Are informed that students have the right to actively challenge their views.
  - Do not promote or recruit to extremist ideologies and groups.

- Do not violate existing hate speech laws and the University's Code of Practice on Free Speech. That is to say, the speakers' thoughts and expressions must not go beyond the articulation of points of view and must not constitute incitement to riot, insurrection, hatred, sexual harassment, or other activities (beyond the right of peaceful protest) which are likely to cause a breach of the peace or public disorder or otherwise to be unlawful.

3.4 Societies must actively challenge any speakers or students who:

- say things that are likely to incite hatred against any individual or group
- propose or promote punishment for anyone based on age, disability, marital or maternity/paternity status, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or sexual activity, gender identity, trans status, socio-economic status, or ideology or culture

#### **4 COMMUNICATION OF THIS POLICY**

4.1 Every member of the SU is responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy

4.2 The Students' Union will highlight this policy to students and others through:

- Publication of the policy on the Students' Union website
- Society training and information provided for society leaders
- Announcements at the start of each democratic meeting including Assemblies
- Training of Student Reps
- All other methods as deemed appropriate

#### **5 VISITING SPEAKER PROCESS**

5.1 All societies and student groups operating under the banner of the Students' Union must comply with the visiting speaker process outlined in the University of Manchester Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech. This Code of Practice is amended from time to time by the Board of Governors of the University of Manchester.

5.2 Where a speaker has been flagged as potentially breaching this policy, the Union shall liaise directly with the organising group prior to taking any decision.

5.3 Any negotiation process shall explore a range of control measures, aimed at finding a compromise for the event to take place, examples of which could be:

- Introducing prominent content/trigger warning on all promotional materials
- Not allowing SU premises to be used
- Preventing any SU promotional channels being used
- Preventing direct SU funding being used on this activity, all funds shall be self-generated

- Making the event closed and ticketed to assuage safety concerns
- Ensuring time is allocated to a Q & A session for criticism of ideas discussed
- Ensuring an independent chair is able to facilitate the debate
- Providing challenge to the argument being presented
- Having an impartial observer to document and/or record the event in case of later dispute

5.4 After these negotiations have taken place, if no acceptable compromise is reached, the Students' Union should take an impartial motion to Union Senate on whether the speaker should be banned where both sides can present their case fairly (the question should be phrased as "Should Speaker X be banned from speaking at the event on date Z/ originally scheduled for date Z, to be held in the near future"). The motion's description must detail the control measures that have been accepted or rejected by each party in the negotiation process, and brief descriptions of the cases for and against the ban. For all other aspects, the motion process must follow those detailed in the Students' Union by-laws and be placed at the start of Ideas discussion, in essence as an emergency motion to be discussed.

5.5 No speaker can be banned without the approval of Union Senate.

5.6 The Students' Union must do all it can to ensure the negotiation process allows time for a possible motion to be taken to senate before the scheduled event. If there is no time before the event for Senate to discuss the issue as a motion, the Students' Union and the society must work together to reschedule the event at a suitable time after the decision. Student societies who want to bring a speaker that may be considered controversial must endeavour to give as much notice as possible for these events to allow these procedures to take place. As such they are therefore strongly advised to submit the Visiting Speakers form more than three weeks before the scheduled event and inform the Students' Union about the issue.

## **6 VISITING SPEAKER ACCOUNTABILITY**

6.1 To ensure accountability to members, the Union shall routinely publish a list of speakers which:

- Have been authorised to speak at events held by the Union and its societies
- Have not been authorised to speak at events held by the Union and its societies under this policy

- Have not been authorised to speak at events held by the Union and its societies by the University in accordance with the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.
- 6.2 The list shall be accessible on the Students' Union website.
- 6.3 The list shall be updated each time a speaker is either approved or not, at least two days prior to the event taking place.
- 6.4 The list shall include, for each speaker, the name of the event they are taking part in and the organising group/society.

## **7 COMPLAINTS UNDER THIS POLICY**

- 7.1 Complaints received may result in disciplinary action by the Students' Union in accordance with the Students' Union member's disciplinary procedure and/or Activities Bye-Law. Action that could be taken includes, but is not limited to, being banned from that activity, group or from all Students' Union activity and/or space.
- 7.2 Any complaints should be reported through the Students' Union complaints procedure by emailing [info.su@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:info.su@manchester.ac.uk) in the first instance.

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<sup>i</sup> For clarity, reserving opportunities within the Students' Union and student societies for students of the University of Manchester is not prohibited by this – student status is a relevant characteristic in student groups