

EXTERNAL SPEAKER GUIDE
A GUIDE FOR STUDENT GROUPS AND EXTERNALS



As a charity, we are required by the Charities Commission to ensure that all events which take place under the umbrella of the Students' Union (which includes all society events), must have the risks posed by these events considered, that checks are made on people who have been invited to speak at an event and that any risks identified by this check should be mitigated.

Risks for a charity can include potential reputational, financial, operational damage.

In addition to this, unlike many Students' Unions, we do not have our own building space separate from the university. This means that all Students' Union events take place upon university premises which means we must also take into account any university policies and procedures when booking in external speakers.

With these things being said, our approach to this process is that we want to make events happen at the Students' Union and will accommodate as many external speakers as possible.

What does this mean for me?

All external speakers (which we define as anyone other than a current student or current staff member of the university or students' union who may be invited to participate in a debate or deliver a speech/presentation and similar activities) are required to agree to the university's code of practice on freedom of speech [here](#). This will have to be done in each new academic year.

This code of practice does not limit a speaker from speaking on any issue, except for those examples set out in section 4.3.

For the vast majority of speakers this will be the full extent of your interaction with our external speakers' policy. Once you've agreed with the code of practice, you'll be good to go!

What else could be involved?

For every external speaker, the Students' Union will run background checks to ensure that you are a relevant speaker and to ensure that there have been no issues in the past which may require further checks. If we feel that it is required, we may need to contact you with a phone call to establish any facts or viewpoints that you may have. This will only happen with a small percentage of speakers and we will inform you beforehand about the criteria of the call.

Questions could include a request for details of any previous speaking engagements, the reason for your invitation to an event, the planned areas which you intend to speak around and verifying boundaries between that and unacceptable expression or conduct.

These phone calls will be conducted either by the Student Opportunities Manager, Andita Santoso or our Societies and CPA Coordinator, Sofia Mansfeld.

Where does all this information go?

The Students' Union maintains a database of all the speakers which have been invited to events with a list of contact details, checks made and details of any conversations which we have with external speakers. This database will also record the level of risk that we assess the event has for the charity and

also any mitigating circumstances which we would require to happen for the event to take place (if necessary).

Access to this database is strictly regulated due to the sensitive nature of some of the information, although it may be shared with the Sabbatical Officers and specific staff of the University, and the Charities Commission upon request. More details on this are below.

What do you do with the information once it is all gathered?

On completion of our checks, the Students' Union Opportunities team will perform a risk assessment of your event and rate it from no risk to very high risk.

Following on from this assessment we may set a number of requirements in place to mitigate risks that we have identified which the society/officers, and potentially speaker(s) must agree to for the event to take place.

These could include:

- Approving a request on the condition that a particular individual chair the event
- Opening the event up to the general public
- Enhancing security arrangements including possible police attendance, minimum number of stewards
- Requesting a script or précis from the speaker outlining what they intend to say and requiring them to sign an undertaking acknowledging that their speech will be terminated if they deviate from it
- Attendance at the event by a member of staff or elected officer from the Students' Union

The vast majority of events with external speakers are classed as no risk.

Upon confirmation of this by all parties, any event which the Student Opportunities team deemed a medium risk or higher must be approved by a committee. Firstly, it will be referred to the Students' Union's internal speaker approval committee, this is made up of the four elected Vice-Presidents of the Students' Union and the relevant Estates staff member of the campus the event is being held on. Once all risks have been mitigated and agreed upon, the event should go ahead with the speakers.

This ensures that we're meeting our duties as a charity whilst also ensuring that the officers are happy politically with the speakers being invited onto campus, because they would have to defend the union allowing a particular speaker onto campus if it became an issue within the student body or the media.

[The Students' Union's Societies Charter](#) has a simplified flowchart on page 8 which demonstrates how this process works.

Appealing a speaker decision

To appeal the approval or non-approval of an external speaker the following procedure must be adhered to:

All appeals must be sent to the Head of Student Voice & Engagement, Andy Morwood at A.Morwood@westminster.ac.uk and come from a currently registered student member of the Students' Union.

An appeal will only be accepted on the basis of providing evidence where they believe procedures were not followed and may provide evidence that was not considered or absent about the speaker(s).

Appeals will be responded to within 5 working days of submission.

Please refer to the UoW Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech for appeals processes

I'd like to know more!

If you'd like further information about the requirements of universities who allow speakers onto campus, feel free to look at the following publications.

[Universities UK – External speakers in higher education institutions](#)

[National Union of Students – Mitigating the risks associated with external speakers](#)

If you'd like to speak to a staff member of the union directly about this, please contact the Student Opportunities Manager, *Andita Ward* at a.ward@westminster.ac.uk.