



University of Essex

External Speaker Code of Practice

University of Essex, Academic Registrar's
Office

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External Speaker Code of Practice

1. Purpose

The University has a legal duty to promote academic freedom, freedom of speech and equality and diversity within the law. The University's 'Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech' (henceforth known as the 'Policy') affirms the University's commitment to promoting such freedoms within the law, as well as specifying circumstances in which these freedoms may need to be restricted. Our 'Equality and Diversity Framework' (henceforth known as the 'Framework') sets out our obligations under equalities legislation. This Code of Practice should be applied in the context provided by the Policy and the Framework.

External speakers play a key role in University life, giving staff and students an opportunity to have access to a broad range of views and beliefs and allowing students to develop their own informed opinions. This Code of Practice outlines the process the University will take to ensure that external speakers who are invited to speak at a University event are aware of the expectation that they promote academic freedom, freedom of speech and equality and diversity, and remain within the law.

This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the Policy, the Framework and the Room Booking and Usage Policy.

2. Explanation of terms and Scope

An **'external speaker'** is any individual (or organisation) who is not a student or staff member of the University of Essex¹, the University of Essex Students' Union or the University of Essex Faith Centre. They may be 'speaking' in-situ at the event or streamed in real-time to the audience via online communication software.

An **'event'** is any meeting or activity which is organised by a staff² or student member of the University of Essex, the University of Essex Students' Union or the University of Essex Faith Centre which does not form part of a programme of study offered by the University or which is considered by the University as a centrally delivered learning event³.

An **'event organiser'** is the staff or student member who has submitted the online External Speaker Notification Form. Where a member of staff submits a form on behalf of a colleague, it is the colleague who will be recognised as the event organiser and will be responsible for the event. The responsibility and oversight of the event starts with the initial planning, includes all marketing, promotion, ticket sales and related communications and continues throughout the event and any post-event related incidents.

¹ An alumni of the University of Essex falls within the scope of this Code of Practice.

² Faculty Convenors may be included as Students' Union staff for the purpose of external speaker approval related to their role.

³ Organisational Development have oversight of all centrally delivered learning events and they are subject to the terms and conditions set out in the University's Training Service Level Agreement.

The **'form'** is the online External Speaker Notification Form that will be submitted by the event organiser.

The **'review'** is the process by which the University will consider possible risks posed by an external speaker and mitigating actions that may be required in order to reduce the level of risk. The outcome of this review will be communicated to the event organiser who may appeal the decision. It is extremely unusual for the University to refuse a request for a speaker, but there are occasions on which measures need to be taken to ensure that the event can take place safely and within appropriate constraints.

This Code of Practice applies to the notification and approval of all external speakers who have been invited to an event organised on University campuses and any event that utilises the University's name away from University and their Students' Union premises.

The procedures outlined in this Code of Practice must be followed by all staff and student members of the University of Essex, the University of Essex Students' Union and the University of Essex Faith Centre.

The University reserves the right to withdraw any prior approval of an external speaker in light of new information that leads the University to reasonably believe that the external speaker might contravene their policies or the law.

3. Procedure for External Speaker Notifications

All event organisers must notify the University that an external speaker has been invited to an event by completing the online form. The event organiser must include in the form all information that they are aware of and which the University will require for their review.

As a condition of inviting an external speaker to an event, and by submitting the online notification form, the event organiser is asked to declare that:

- They have provided the correct information to the University so that the University can fully consider possible risks associated with having this speaker at an event. Consideration will be given to, but not be exclusive to, physical and reputational risks;
- They have read this Code of Practice and the Policy and that they will share these with their external speaker(s) prior to their arrival at the event so that they are aware of our policies and arrangements;
- Should there be a change of topic or should the speaker have been replaced or can no longer attend the event, that they will notify the University. If the event organiser invites a replacement or additional speaker, they will submit a new form.

In order to allow sufficient time for the form to be reviewed, the form must be completed no less than 15 working days prior to the event, unless there are reasonable circumstances where this timeframe cannot be met.

4. Procedure for External Speaker Approvals

The procedure for reviewing the submitted form may vary depending on whether the event organiser is a staff or student member.

Reviews will normally be conducted by the Compliance Manager (Safeguarding) or nominee, who will consider possible risks associated with the speaker, including physical or reputational risks and the risk that the external speaker could contravene University policy or the law.

The outcome of the review will be communicated to the event organiser within 5 working days of the forms submission. The outcome of the review will either be that:

- the external speaker has been approved.
- the external speaker has been approved, but conditions are imposed by the University. These conditions may include, but not be limited to:
 - the event is recorded using the University’s ‘Listen Again’ facility and the external speaker will be subject to the Listen Again Lecture Capture Service: External Speakers Agreement;
 - that the Compliance Manager (Safeguarding) or their nominee inform University Security of the event so that further security requirements can be arranged;
 - for the Students’ Union to circulate the ‘House Rules’ at the beginning of the event so that attendees are aware of expectations of conduct during the event;
 - that the Students’ Union, with the support of the University, appoint an impartial Chair whose knowledge and experience is relevant to the topic or requirements;
 - that a staff member of University, the Students’ Union and/or Multi-Faith Chaplaincy will be present at the event;
 - that the event is ticketed using a recognised ticketing mechanism which meets the requirements of the event, such as Eventbrite (public) or essexstudent.com (current students only);
 - that the event organiser will seek written consent that the external speaker has received, understood and agreed to the University policies and other documentation set out in point 3 and any other specified documents;
- the external speaker has been refused.

Should the Compliance Manager (Safeguarding) or nominee conclude that the external speaker poses a significant risk, they will refer to the Registrar and Secretary or nominee, who will consider the review and any proposed conditions and who will decide if the external speaker can be allowed to attend the event.

An event organiser may appeal a review outcome if they believe that the decision was reached unfairly. The event organiser should submit a detailed explanation for the grounds of appeal by email to externalspeaker@essex.ac.uk.

5. Before an event

An external speaker may not be confirmed until the event organiser has been informed of the outcome of the review.

The University understands that circumstances relating to an external speaker notification may change, even at the last minute. In this case it is the responsibility of the event organiser to inform the University, or the relevant member of Students’ Union staff immediately if there is:

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- a change in the arrangements which may lead to the contravention of University policy or the law.
 - a change in external speaker or their topic.

If the University considers there to be a significant change in risk, the review outcome may be revised.

6. During an event

If, during the event, the event organiser or an attendee considers that the external speaker is contravening University Policy or the law, or if there is a physical threat to those attending the event, they must inform University Security immediately.

7. After an event

If, after an event, it comes to light that the external speaker contravened University policy or the law, or if there was a significant risk to the University, its members or guests, then the University may conduct a post-event review, the outcome of which may result in the University taking formal disciplinary action.

Title	External Speaker Code of Practice
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