

POLICY FOR ORGANISING EVENTS WITH EXTERNAL SPEAKERS

TYPE: Policy

PURPOSE: To inform staff and students of Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford upon Avon College, external/ guest speakers and Conference Centre clients of our policy on organising events involving external speakers. To provide staff with the appropriate pro-forma.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all staff organising events, external/ guest speakers and venue hire clients

RESPONSIBILITY: The Vice Principal HR & Student Services is responsible for this policy. The Director Student Services is responsible for the monitoring of the policy.

LEGAL CONTEXT: the Prevent Duty contained within Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

1 Introduction

Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College (hereafter referred to as the College) is committed to creating an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and where diversity is valued. This policy outlines the procedures relating to events involving the use of external speakers regardless of who is organising these events. This applies, therefore, to those hiring our premises as well as our own employees.

It also details our approach to ensuring that we are protecting both staff and students and the reputation of the College whilst following the legislation that we're responsible for upholding. This policy is written with reference to the Prevent Duty contained within Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The Duty states that specified authorities including Further Education Colleges, in the exercise of their functions, must have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".

This policy applies to all external speakers, including those events where delivery is on-line.

2 Objectives

- To provide an environment where freedom of expression and speech are protected whilst balanced with the need to ensure that our community is free from harm and that incitement to hatred is never acceptable.
- To provide a supportive, inclusive and safe space for students
- To provide clearly defined and effective procedures to ensure that the law is upheld.
- To collaborate with others to reach sound, evidenced judgments about proposed external speakers ensuring that the College can meet their legal obligations
- To encourage and provide a balance of opinion at any academic discussion or debate
- To communicate to all members, volunteers, staff and visitors, that it is our mutual responsibility to comply with equality and safeguarding policy and that both the College and the individual can be held liable if they contravene the law.
- To provide clear instructions for organising an event with external contribution

3 Freedom of speech and expression

Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights that are protected by law. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are not absolute freedoms but freedoms within the law. Universities and colleges have a history of being open to debate and ideas, with students actively involved in pushing the limits of freedom of expression. 'Academic freedom' is a term used to describe the law that allows for open and honest debate in an academic context.

However, we have a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of our staff, students and communities. The freedom to express views needs to be balanced with the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities. We want all of our events, activities and initiatives to be safe, without risk to the College, and within the law.

If an external speaker or their topic of discussion has the potential to go against our conditions for a safe event, we are committed to working together with event organisers and in some cases, external speakers themselves, to make sure that we reach a judgement that is reasonable, informed and within the law.

4 External speakers and their responsibilities

An external speaker, guest speaker or visitor is used to describe any individual or organisation who is not a student or staff member of the College and who has been invited to speak to students and/or staff, or delegates attending a conference in our conference centre facility or in another College room or remotely. This includes any individual who is a student or staff member from another institution. It also includes the main contact from any external venue hire client who is paying to use the College facilities.

An event is any event, presentation, visit, activity or initiative organised by a student group/society, individual or staff member that is being held on College premises or where the College is being represented by a stand on non-College or university centre premises e.g. at an exhibition, school event or fair. It includes events where external speakers are streamed live into an event or a pre-recorded film is shown. It also includes activity being held on College premises but organised by external venue hire clients

All speakers or visitors should be made aware by the person or group arranging the event (by referring visitors to this policy on the College website) that they have a responsibility to abide by the law and the College's policies including that they:

- Must not advocate or incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law
- Are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts
- Must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony
- Must be mindful of the risk of causing offence to or seek to avoid insulting other faiths or groups, within a framework of positive debate and challenge
- Are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the College (available from Director of Student Services or the Vice Principal HR & Student Services).

5 Guidance for College staff and students organising an event with an external speaker or venue hire client

Faculty Managers or the relevant support service manager must be informed of any events that involve external speakers through this procedure. No event involving any external speakers may be publicised or considered confirmed until the speaker has been cleared through the procedure detailed in this policy. This includes advertisement through any social media platform.

The College reserves the right to cancel, prohibit or delay any event with an external speaker if the policy is not followed or if health, safety and security criteria cannot be met.

Any room booking/ event organisation with an external speaker involved must be made no later than 14 days before the date of the event. This is to allow for the organiser to have made adequate safeguarding checks as well as allowing time for alterations to the event if

necessary. Any request made outside of this timeframe will be rejected unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances.

The individual/group organising an external speaker should conduct brief research into the proposed speaker. If in doubt as to the suitability of a speaker, they should refer the decision to the Director of Student Services or the Vice Principal HR & Student Services. Reasons for doubt could be (but are not restricted to) the following: - any person or group on/or linked to the UK Government list of proscribed terror organisations <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2> ; talks by organisations generally considered to be extremist; a speaker who is known to have spoken previously at another institution on a topic that has caused fear or intimidation of students or staff; a speaker accepted in mainstream as being highly controversial; a link or links to any person or group that has been connected with any controversy of a negative or positive nature; a speaker who has significant profile and attracts a following that could create crowd control and health and safety issues; a speaker from a political party during an election period.

In the event of referral, one of the following decisions will be made:-

- To not permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead
- To not permit the external speaker to attend the event (if it is a wider event)
- To fully permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted
- To permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead on the basis of regulatory steps designed to reduce risk. These may include observation; independent filming; the inclusion of opportunities to debate or challenge the view being held

In making recommendations, a Faculty Manager, or support service manager may consult on a wider basis with the College's Safeguarding Panel and risk will be assessed on the following basis:

1. The potential for any decision to limit freedom of speech
2. The potential for the event going ahead to cause reputation risk to the College
3. The potential for the speaker's presence on site to cause fear or alarm to students or members of staff **and/or** to give rise to breach of peace

The Request for Prior Approval for an External/ Guest Speaker should be completed via the Events Booking process detailed in section 6 no later than 14 days before the planned event.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff team and students are aware of and support the policy.

6 Events Calendar Protocol

The Events Calendar is a tool to record activities planned at all Campuses plus some College related external activities.

All events that take place on college premises, plus any teaching that involves external speakers and events where there would be large student gatherings (like Graduation), must be approved by EMT.

It is accessed through the Forms section in the Staff Hub on the Intranet under Events Booking.

<https://studentssolihullac.sharepoint.com/sites/EventsBookingandTracking>

Events should be booked a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the planned date, to allow suitable time for approval and/or time for amendments to take place so that the event can then be approved.

What should be included

Events that need to be added to the Events Calendar are (but not limited to):

- Events that involve external visitors coming onto site – including events in the conference room(s), Exhibition Area and Theatre.
- Teaching that involves a Guest Speaker
- Exams
- Governor meetings (Corporation/Audit Committee)
- All bookings for the Link – the Link should only be used if all other possibilities have been exhausted.
- Activities over the weekend; except for the Sports Hall facilities.
- Open Days/Marketing tours/Student Conference
- Fairs/Stalls including those where food being sold or things being made
- Music/VPA Performances
- Fundraising activities
- Large/important Principal meetings (including those with important visitors)
- All activities during College closure weeks in the evening* e.g. half term, this would include all teaching, interviews etc.

*During these periods there is no Duty Manager or reception cover and therefore areas delivering activities would be required to provide Duty Manager cover.

Please note the following:

- Book accommodation with Rooms Allocation before booking your event and requesting approval.
- Ensure you send any requests for room setup etc. including events in the Conference Centre to the Facilities Helpdesk, access to this can be found through the Staff Hub.

- Ensure you liaise with IT, Resources, Reception etc; (as appropriate) regarding any IT / Resource requests/Parking arrangements etc; i.e. audio-visual equipment/support – NB when College is not open to students i.e. in the evening / during the holidays, there will be no IT technicians on site.
- If you are using pre-recorded music as part of your event you **MUST** identify this on the online Events Booking form.

How to complete an online Events Booking form

The completion of the online Events Booking form should be self explanatory, however, should you require any assistance please contact Claire Senior and Andrew Lucas by email.

Approval Process

Dependent on the nature of the event, the approval process will be as follows:

SLT/AP, Student Services, Health and Safety, EMT

Events should not be deemed approved until the notification email from EMT has been received. In exceptional circumstances if more urgent approval is required, please liaise with Claire Senior and Andrew Lucas directly.

Cancellation of an Event

If after approval, an event needs to be cancelled, notification **MUST** be sent through to Claire Senior and Andrew Lucas advising that this is the case, via e-mail only.

NB cancellation of any room, hospitality etc. will not be done during this process. It will be the responsibility of the event organiser to cancel all arrangements accordingly.

7 Additional Guidance for Venue Hire Clients organising an event with external speakers

The Conference Centre Coordinator or the Vice Principal Finance, Facilities & IT, if hire is of rooms outside those of the Conference Centre, will make external venue hire clients aware of this policy and request details of any external speakers. This information should be provided no later than 14 days before the booking goes ahead.

The College reserves the right to cancel, prohibit or delay any venue hire booking with external speakers if the policy is not followed, requested information not produced or if health, safety and security criteria cannot be met.

If in doubt as to the suitability of speakers, the Conference Centre Coordinator or Vice Principal Finance, Facilities & IT should refer the decision to the Director of Student Services or the Vice Principal HR & Student Services.

In the event of referral, one of the following decisions will be made:

- To not permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead
- To not permit the external speaker to attend the event (if it is a wider event)
- To fully permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted
- To permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead on the basis of regulatory steps designed to reduce risk. These may include observation; independent filming; the inclusion of opportunities to debate or challenge the view being held

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