

Speaker Approval Policy

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Introduction

The Speaker Approval Policy should be interpreted and applied in conjunction with the Values and Principles outlined in the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom.

In accordance with its legal obligations, the University maintains a general expectation that all speakers will have the opportunity to express their views, ideas, and opinions on campus. However, the University must also give due consideration to its other legal responsibilities, including but not limited to, preventing discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, as well as ensuring the health and safety of students, staff, visitors, and visiting speakers.

The University may take action to facilitate the inclusion of diverse voices in a debate, particularly voices from underrepresented and marginalised groups.

When making decisions under this Policy, the University will apply the following principles:

- 1. Whether the speech is lawful;**
- 2. What reasonably practicable steps can be taken to secure lawful freedom of speech; and**
- 3. Whether any restrictions are prescribed by law, necessary and proportionate in accordance with the University's legal obligations, including under the European Convention on Human Rights.**

Scope

This policy applies to the following scenarios:

1. External speakers invited by Schools and/or Research Office and/or Institutes to the University as part of the approved academic curriculum or research business.

2. Any other activity featuring a speaker invited by any member of staff or student, to be held either on University premises or digital platforms or in the University's name.
3. Any activities featuring a speaker, held on University-leased YSJSU premises or digital platforms or in YSJSU's name.
4. Activities, whether commercial or otherwise, featuring visiting speakers to be conducted on University-managed premises overseen by internal departments or groups, as well as those organised by external clients and booked through the University's Events team.

Meetings or activities may encompass a variety of activities, such as public lectures, student societies, meetings, debates, protests, vigils, career fairs, and conferences, including those conducted in an online format.

This policy covers matters related to speakers. It does not cover other Events-related administration, including completion of the Events Request Form. To complete this, contact should be made directly with the Events Team.

Internal Speakers invited as part of the academic curriculum or research business

When an internal speaker is invited to participate in a University activity as part of the approved academic curriculum or research business, no risk assessment or approval process is required.

External Speakers invited as part of the academic curriculum or research business

When an external speaker is invited to participate in a University activity as part of the approved academic curriculum or research business, it is likely that completion of the Speaker Request Form will not be required.

In the first instance, the responsible member of staff must conduct a [local risk assessment](#) local risk assessment. This will be used evaluate any possibility that a speaker may:

- violate the law or infringe upon the legal rights of others; and/or
- prevent the University from fulfilling its other legal obligations, including but not limited to preventing discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, as well as safeguarding the health and safety of students, staff, visitors, and visiting speakers.

If the local risk assessment identifies a reasonable expectation or anticipation that either or both of the above may take place, the member of staff is required to notify their Head or Dean of School, Head of Research Office or Director of Institute and submit a [Speaker Request Form](#) to obtain approval for the visiting speaker in advance. Requests for an external speaker must be made at least 15 working days before any planned activity and the activity must not be advertised until permission to hold it has been granted. Earlier notice is always helpful in the case of activities that Activity Organisers consider could be high risk.

In other cases, the member of staff should store the completed local risk assessment and inform their manager as per standard processes. Any changes to the local assessment must be documented.

If an external speaker is returning, is presenting on the same subject matter and has been approved within the last 12 months, a Speaker Request Form will not be required.

Schools, Directorates, the Research Office and the Institutes must keep a local record of all external speakers invited to be involved in an activity under the remit of the approved academic curriculum or research business.

Advice can be sought from the University Secretary and Registrar, if required.

Other circumstances involving internal speakers

Anyone seeking to organise a meeting or activity covered by scenarios 2-4 in the scope above, where the speaker is internal (i.e. a current member of staff or current student), should consider the following questions to determine whether the completion of a Speaker Request Form is required:

1. Is the meeting or activity part of business that would reasonably be considered a routine part of the University's or YJSU's life?
2. Is the internal speaker intending to draw on their direct academic or professional expertise?

If the answer to both of these questions is yes, no form is required. If the answer to either or both of these questions is no, a [Speaker Request Form](#) must be completed. Requests for an internal speaker must be made at least ten working days before any planned activity and the activity must not be advertised until permission to hold it has been granted.

Advice can be sought from the University Secretary and Registrar if required.

Other circumstances involving external speakers

Anyone seeking to organise a meeting or activity covered by scenarios 2-4 in the scope above, where the speaker is external (i.e. anyone other than a current member of staff or current student), must complete a [Speaker Request Form](#). The person submitting the form is the Activity Organiser for the purposes of this Policy, unless otherwise agreed with the University. Requests for an external speaker must be made at least 15 working days before any planned activity, unless there are compelling reasons to request a shorter timeframe. The activity must not be advertised until permission to hold it has been granted. Earlier notice is always helpful in the case of activities that Activity Organisers consider could be high risk.

If an external speaker is returning, is presenting on the same subject matter and has been approved within the last 12 months, a further Speaker Request Form will not be required.

University policies in addition to this Code of Practice and Policy, including health and safety procedures, should be considered and complied with when organising an activity on University premises involving an external speaker.

Speaker Request Form - process

In considering Speaker Request Forms and associated risk assessments, the University will apply the following structured assessment framework:

1. Is the speech or activity "within the law"?
2. What reasonably practicable steps can be taken to secure lawful freedom of speech and academic freedom?

3. Are any proposed restrictions prescribed by law, necessary and proportionate in the circumstances?

The University will seek, wherever reasonably practicable, to facilitate lawful speech through mitigations and event management measures before considering restriction, postponement or cancellation.

The Events team will review the Speaker Request Form and consider whether it is expected that any of the following risks may occur:

- The views expected to be expressed by a speaker contravene the law;
- The speaker is expected to seek to incite breaches of the law or disturbances to the peace;
- The event is expected to involve the suppression of the right to hold or express opposing opinions;
- The speaker and/or the represented organisation advocates or engages in violence or non-violent extremism to promote political, religious, philosophical, or other beliefs;
- The views expected to be expressed promote illegal organisations or purposes, including those listed on the government's list of proscribed terrorist groups or organizations;
- The activity or event is expected to lead to harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse, or violence directed at individuals or groups on the basis of protected characteristics or protected beliefs;
- It is in the interest of public safety, disorder prevention, or crime prevention, or for the protection of individuals lawfully present on University-controlled premises, that action is taken;
- Insufficient (i.e. not in line with this Code of Practice and associated policies) notice has been given;
- Necessary mitigations will not prove possible to implement; or
- Security and other costs are too great and cannot be managed in accordance with this Code of Practice.

If none of these risks is likely to occur, no further action is required, and the Events Teams will complete an 'Outcome of Risk Assessment' for file.

If any of these risks is likely to occur, the Events Team will request a risk assessment from the Activity Organiser. This will be used to evaluate the extent of the risk in more detail.

If the risk assessment identifies a reasonable expectation or anticipation that either or both of the above may take place:

- the Activity Organiser may be asked to provide additional information; and/or
- advice from relevant colleagues, including the institutional Prevent Lead, the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisor, campus security, the Students' Union, or others, may be sought; and/or

- external organisations, such as the police and external Prevent Leads, may be consulted; and/or
- input may be sought from relevant communities and organisations.

Following that, the Decision Marker will be asked to determine next steps in accordance with the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. In doing so, the Decision Maker will document:

whether the speech is considered lawful;

- the reasonably practicable steps considered to enable the activity to proceed;
- any mitigations proposed; and
- the reasons why any restrictions are considered necessary and proportionate.

This decision will be communicated in writing to the Activity Organiser. A record must be maintained of all requests and an 'Outcome of Risk Assessment' completed.

Complaints and Appeals

For information regarding complaints and appeals in relation to this policy, see the Complaints and Appeals section in the [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#).