

Procedures for the Approval of External Speakers for Academic Departmental Events

Please note that these procedures should be used for Academic Departmental events only. For other events, please refer to the appropriate link below:

- Students' Union (including Students' Union Societies), Student-Led and Institutional-Level Events
- Events Managed by Warwick Conferences

If you are uncertain which category your event falls in to, please email guestspeakers@warwick.ac.uk for guidance.

- (a) The University acknowledges that the vast majority of external speakers attending academic departments do so for pedagogic and research purposes within the curriculum. There is not a general expectation that external speakers engaged in routine teaching, learning and research will require University-level approval. However, there may be some events which, due to their subject or the nature of the speaker, may require further consideration to ensure appropriate standards of open and balanced academic discussion. The principal organiser of such academic departmental events (including but not exclusive to: timetabled or extra-curricular teaching, learning and research related activity; public lecture programmes; and academic conferences and seminars) is responsible for making an informed assessment of any potential risks, and for referring any doubts or concerns to the Head of Department (HoD).
- (b) The HoD has responsibility for oversight of departmental events, although they may assign a nominee to undertake this role. Should the role be delegated to a nominee, the HoD must have mechanisms in place to gain assurance that risks are being assessed appropriately.

In order to discharge its legislative duties under the Education (No.2) Act 1986, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, the University is required to conduct a risk assessment in respect of events on campus involving external speakers or University branded event off campus; in particular to ensure that the exercise of free speech remains within the law. The University's obligations in this regard are set out in Regulation 29: Freedom of Speech.

- (c) In determining whether a matter should be referred to the HoD or nominee, the principal organiser should, if possible, consider the following core questions:
- Is there any risk that the speaker may not be able to confirm that they would be able to abide by the principles of freedom of speech as set out in University Regulation 29?
 - Is there a risk that the event could transgress lawful bounds?
 - Has the speaker been refused permission to speak publicly at other educational establishments or organisations, or attracted controversy when speaking at such?
 - Could the subject matter, topic or title be perceived as sensitive by members of the University community, or the general public, or could hosting the event have reputational risks for the University, which would need to be managed?
 - Is the event scheduled to proceed without a designated Chair, or is the designated Chair insufficiently qualified to ensure that balance and challenge is provided?

- Is there a risk of a situation arising in relation to the event in which people might experience harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse, violence or damage to person or property?
- (d) The principal organiser must ensure sufficient time for the HoD or nominee to give consideration to any concerns, and for the University to review the request should the HoD or nominee deem this necessary. If so, and where possible, the University should be notified of the speaker request in question at least three weeks prior to the event, to enable a full risk assessment to be conducted and any mitigating arrangements to be put in place. If it is not possible to provide three weeks' notice, the department should inform the University as soon as practicable via guestspeakers@warwick.ac.uk.
- (e) Where the principal organiser has identified risks associated with the speaker or event as outlined in section (d) above, the HoD or nominee will determine whether the risk(s) can be fully mitigated by the department. The Universities UK publication *External Speakers in higher education institutions*¹ provides some helpful points to consider in this regard.
- (f) If the HoD remains uncertain as to whether the risk(s) can be fully mitigated, or if University-level support is required for arrangements to mitigate the risk(s), they will refer the matter to the Registrar (or nominated representative) for a final decision.
- (g) The University reserves the right to cancel or prohibit any event or conference if the obligations or requirements as set out in Regulation 29 are not adhered to.

¹ Universities UK, *External speakers in higher education institutions*, November 2013 (revised March 2014), pp.21-22, <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2013/external-speakers-in-higher-education-institutions.pdf>