

# EXTERNAL SPEAKER CODE OF CONDUCT

## Guidance and legal obligations relating to external speakers at the University of Reading

### Introduction

This code of conduct exists to ensure that all speakers taking part in a University of Reading hosted or run event or activity, on campus or elsewhere, act in accordance with the University's External Speaker Policy.

It is the responsibility of the event or activity organiser (the individual from within the University of Reading e.g. member of staff or student, named in the External Speaker submission) to ensure that:

- this Code of Conduct is communicated to all external speakers (once approved and confirmed via the External Speaker Booking Process)
- that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the requirements within it are upheld during the running of the event or activity.
- they have read and understood the University's External Speaker Policy and approach to the Prevent Duty.

### Freedom of speech

Freedom of speech is fundamental to a University. The Education Act (No 2) 1986 requires the university to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for its employees, students and visiting speakers. The Council of the University therefore requires all employees and students of the University to tolerate and protect the expression of opinions within the law whether or not these opinions are repugnant to them; this obligation is set out in the University's Freedom of Speech: Code of Conduct.

However, whilst the law promotes and protects freedom of speech, it also places limits on those freedoms in order to maintain public order and safety and to ensure that there is no breach of the law. The University recognises that in this context a conflict exists between the laws which promote freedom of speech and those which restrict it and consequently acknowledges that it has a legal responsibility to create a balance between minimising the possibility that extremism or unlawful conduct will arise on campus and ensuring that it meets its legal obligations in relation to securing freedom of speech.

### Legal Context

Universities operate in a complex legal environment and so it is vital that all individuals involved in the external speaker process, including the speakers themselves, understand the legal framework and context that governs this area. Examples of some of the relevant areas of law are given below.

- Private Rights – People are entitled to protection from harassment, defamation and unlawful breach of their human rights, as well as from unfair treatment under equality law. Health and safety law, data-protection and contract law may also be relevant in this context.
- Criminal Law – Hate crimes, harassment, breach of the peace and terrorism all come under criminal law. There is also legislation around public meetings, public processions/assemblies and public order which may be of relevance.
- Public law – Freedom of Speech and some duties under the Equality Act are captured under public law.

## Conduct

The University expects external speakers to act in accordance with the law and not to breach the lawful rights of others.

Set out below are some examples of the University's expectations. Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of unacceptable conduct by external speakers. The University reserves the right to not permit an external speaker to speak at or attend an event, to refuse to permit an event and/or to halt an event at any time if it reasonably considers there may be a breach of the External Speaker Policy or of any legal obligation.

During the course of the event at which he or she participates, no speaker shall:

- Act in breach of the criminal law.
- Incite hatred or violence or any breach of the criminal law.
- Encourage or promote any acts of terrorism or promote individuals, groups or organisations that support terrorism.
- Spread hatred and intolerance.
- Discriminate against or harass any person or group on the grounds of sex; gender reassignment; race, nationality or ethnicity; disability; religious or other similar belief; sexual orientation; marriage or civil partnership; pregnancy or maternity or age.
- Defame any person or organisation.
- Raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the University.

During the course of the event at which he or she participates, all speakers shall:

- Comply with the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.
- Comply with the University's External Speaker Policy.
- Present ideas and opinions, in particular those that may be contentious or potentially offensive, in the spirit of academic debate, being open to challenge and question.
- Follow the University's policy on and instructions relating to health and safety.

## Segregation

Universities have duties under the Equality Act 2010 as education providers, employers and service providers; thus they must not unlawfully discriminate against students, employees and other individuals to whom services are provided.

Segregation by sex is not permitted in any academic meetings or at events, lectures or meetings

provided for students, or at events attended by members of the public or employees of the university or the students' union. Segregation is therefore not permissible for any event covered by the External Speaker Policy and this Code of Conduct. The only exception to this is events that are for the purpose of collective religious worship.

## Version control

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVING AUTHORITY	APPROVAL	START DATE	NEXT REVIEW
1.0	Fiona Blair	Annually	UEB/Council	July 15	Sept 15	
1.1	Fiona Blair/ Vicky Baldwin	Annually	UEB/Council	Sept 17	Jan 18	July 18
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