

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
EVENTS MANAGEMENT
EVENTS AND SPEAKER POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Freedom of expression within the law is central to the concept of a university. To this end, the University seeks to foster a culture which permits freedom of thought and expression within a framework of mutual respect. As part of this, the University has a long and proud tradition of hosting speakers from around the world who come to the University to share their thoughts and insights, and help the University fulfil its vision of transforming the world with greater knowledge and learning.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to set out arrangements for the management of those events which are held under the auspices of the University but which do NOT form part of the University's normal academic or administrative business, so that the University can fulfil its legal obligations with regard to speakers and events, while maintaining at all times its commitment to freedom of thought and expression.

3. PRINCIPLES

- The University recognizes and upholds the fundamental importance of freedom of thought and expression, and does not seek to restrict this fundamental freedom through this policy.
- Where the University, having considered the available information, believes that there is a demonstrable and serious risk that the speaker and/or those at an event may break the law, breach the University's statutory duties, and/or will pose a demonstrable and significant risk to the wellbeing of students, staff or visitors, it may require that certain conditions are met or, in exceptional circumstances, it may refuse to allow the event to go ahead.

4. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all staff and students of the University and to any other person in attendance at any event which has been duly authorised under this Policy.

This Policy applies to any event:

- That is organized by students or staff at the University *and*
- That is held under the auspices of the University (including e.g. a student society), regardless of location *and*
- That is not directly related to the University's normal academic or administrative business.

Family celebrations such as weddings, dinners, parties etc., and corporate bookings such as training events, away days etc. or those made with University partners, such as NHS Grampian, will automatically be deemed to be low risk, and will continue to use existing booking procedures.

Centrally organised conferences, CPD courses, events and festivals are likewise able to continue to use existing procedures. Such events are not required to adhere to the booking arrangements outlined below.

External parties wishing to book University facilities should contact the Conference & Events Team or managers of locally owned space, as appropriate. Staff or students should not request room bookings on behalf of external parties, with the exception of instances where they are hosting an external speaker as part of an event organised under the auspices of the University.

As outlined above, existing booking procedures for external party bookings should continue to be used.

Staff organising those events outlined above which are exempt from this policy must be aware of the University's statutory duties outlined below, and seek advice from appropriate members of staff, including the Head of Security, whenever there are concerns about an event and/or speaker.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The University Secretary has ultimate responsibility for:

- agreeing to the provision of University accommodation for a speaker or event and/or
- granting permission for the University to be associated with an event

although she may delegate authorization of events deemed to be low risk to the Head of Security, the Director of Estates, the CEO of AUSA or managers of locally owned space. In the absence of the University Secretary responsibility rests with the Senior Vice-Principal.

The University's Safeguarding Panel has responsibility for supporting the University Secretary with consideration of events or speakers deemed to be high risk in relation to the University's statutory duties.

The Event Organizer is responsible for assisting the University in its statutory duties by:

- Informing the University of events (s)he is organizing
- providing details of the event / speaker in a timely manner as required
- Implementing any actions that may be required by the University in order to ensure the event runs peacefully and lawfully.

The Event organiser is responsible for submitting accurate and timely room booking requests to the relevant space owner, e.g. Central Timetabling Team (for events in centrally managed space).

The Central Timetabling Team, the owners of locally bookable space, and the CEO of AUSA are responsible for:

- Receiving room booking requests/event notifications.
- Requesting further information from the event organizer as needed.
- Ensuring that requests/notifications are competently assessed and authorized if deemed to be low risk.
- Referring events and speakers requests for which there are concerns to the Head of Security for further consideration.
- Ensuring that a copy of the events and speakers form is retained centrally in line with records retention guidance.

Persons in attendance at events are responsible for complying with the instructions of the event organizer.

6. EVENT AND SPEAKER BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Stage 1 - Submission of a speaker/event request

The Event Organiser must give the University timely notice (wherever possible, at least 10 working days) of any event that will involve an external speaker or for which they require the use of University premises. Notice is to be given by submitting a room booking request to the University Central Timetabling Team or local room managers. The event organiser should

complete the events and speaker form and submit this with the request to provide sufficient information about the event and/or the speaker to enable a short assessment to be carried out. No room bookings will be confirmed until a properly completed events and speakers form has been received.

The form will request information such as:

- Details of the event/speaker, including time and venue
- Overview of the event, subject matter and ticketing arrangements
- Relevant information relating to the speaker
- Likely press or media interest
- Information about how the event will be promoted.

It is expected that most requests will be of low risk, and the event or speaker can proceed as planned. At any stage of these event and speakers procedures, further information may be requested from the event organiser to properly consider any concerns raised.

Events that are to be held off campus but which are held under the auspices of the University should be made known locally to line managers, Heads of School, and/or to CEO of AUSA. Staff may request further information, such as that listed above, to consider whether or not there are any concerns associated with the event. A record of any decision made about such events, including any mitigating action to be taken to allow the event to go ahead safely, should be made.

Stage 2- Review of speaker/event request

The completed forms will be reviewed by local room managers or the Central Timetabling Team. Staff reviewing forms will be provided with a guidance sheet providing advice on when forms should be escalated for further discussion. For all events that are deemed to be low risk, such as routine student society meetings, local room managers or the Central Timetabling Team are responsible for approving room booking requests, and for ensuring that a copy of the form and decision is archived in the central database. It is anticipated that the majority of event and speakers requests will be approved quickly provided that a fully completed form is provided with room booking requests.

Where a form identifies that there might be possible concerns to consider, local room managers or the Central Timetabling Team will liaise with the Head of Security (and any other member of staff or relevant external agency, as appropriate) to give further consideration to the risks or concerns that might need to be addressed.

For example, the following points are to be considered:

- Does the proposed speaker have links to or represent an extreme right wing or white supremacist group, or proscribed terror group or organisation as designated by the UK Government?
- What is the focus of the event and might the subject matter or title cause discrimination or distress? Will both sides of the argument be represented?
- Have there been any recent incidents, particularly at an HE institution, linked to the speaker where there have been concerns about the impact of the event on the audience?
- What security provisions are proposed, and are they considered to be sufficient?
- Will hosting the event pose a reputational risk for the university?

As outlined above, further information may be requested from the event organiser to properly consider and discuss any concerns raised.

Stage 3 – Referral to Safeguarding Panel

Should any of the above issues arise, the event should be referred to the University Secretary, as Chair of the University's Safeguarding Panel. She will raise the matter with the [Panel](#), which will consider what practical steps should then be taken to: allow and securely manage; postpone; or cancel the event.

A range of mitigating actions may be offered. These might include:

- Varying the time and location of the event from the original plan
- Requiring a different person to chair the event
- Making the event all-ticket and requiring attendees to show ID
- Requesting an advance copy of any guest list
- Placing restrictions on numbers
- Enhancing security arrangements
- Imposing conditions on how the event is to be advertised
- Mandatory attendance of specified senior university representatives
- Restricting or refusing media attendance
- Imposing an alcohol ban
- Imposing conditions on how the event is run, for example in relation to requests for segregation of the audience
- Requesting a copy of any presentation in advance
- Briefing the chair in advance to make clear their responsibilities under the law
- Restricting what materials are available at the event

Stage 4- Communication of an Event/Speaker Decision

Decisions should be clearly communicated to the organiser of the event, and this will be done as soon as is reasonably practicable, but normally within two weeks of the submission of any request.

Should conditions be required, these should be clearly stated at that point along with a requirement for written agreement before the event will be allowed to take place on campus. A copy of the decision will be archived in the central database in line with records retention guidance.

Where the Panel has refused approval for an event or speaker, the Event organiser may make an appeal against that decision to the University Principal. Requests for a review must be made in writing to the Principal's office no later than 10 working days after receipt of the original decision. The Principal or his nominee will hear the appeal as soon as is reasonably practicable. The Principal's decision will be final.

7. DEFINITIONS

Centrally Bookable University space – a collection of teaching, meeting and event spaces for which bookings, subject to approval by the relevant authorizing department, can be requested by all staff and students

Event – a planned public or social occasion. As identified above, only events which do NOT form part of the University's normal academic or administrative business or do not fall within one of the exemptions listed above, are within scope of the policy.

Event Organiser – a current student or member of staff who is responsible for oversight and management of the planned event. An event organiser must be a named individual.

External Speaker – an individual who is not a current:

- student;

- member of staff;
- member of University Court; or
- holder of an honorary position at the University who is invited to speak at a University event.

Held under the auspices of the University-an event is deemed to be held under the auspices of the University if:

- Regardless of who is organising it, it takes place on University-owned premises (including premises leased to AUSA) or
- Regardless of where it takes place, it is organised in the name of the University or one of its departments, including University-supported groups such as AUSA-affiliated student societies or AUSA-affiliated sports clubs.

Locally Bookable University space – a collection of teaching, meeting and event spaces for which bookings, subject to approval by the relevant authorizing department, can be requested by staff and students associated/attributioned to the department in question

Owner of locally bookable space: the member of University staff with responsibility for authorizing use of that space.

Statutory Responsibilities – the University's responsibilities with regard to events and speakers are governed by a wide range of legislative requirements including:

- The duty to have particular regard to the need to ensure freedom of speech, including its obligations under the Human Rights Act (1998)
- The duty to protect academic freedom (Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005)
- The duty to prevent people being drawn into terrorism (Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015)
- The duty (Terrorism Act, 2000) not to arrange or assist in arranging a meeting in the knowledge that the meeting is to support the activities of a proscribed organisation, or is to be addressed by a person who belongs or professes to belong to a proscribed organisation
- The duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination against certain groups, and advance equality of opportunity between groups, (Equality Act 2010)
- Obligations under criminal law e.g. with regard to use of threats, incitement of violence, inflaming religious or racial hatred
- Obligations under charities law, i.e. whether the proposed activity is consistent with the University's charitable objects
- A general duty of care to students, staff and visitors, including avoiding placing students, staff or visitors in situations that may expose them to risks to their health and safety.

Room Booker - any member of staff outwith the Central Timetabling Team who uses University systems to request a room booking for an event.

Metadata	
Title	Events & Speakers Policy
Author	Ashley Powell, Policy & Planning Adviser, Planning
Owner	Advisory Group on Business Continuity & Resilience
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Audience	Staff and students
Related Documents	Events and Speaker Form; Guidance for the review of event and speaker forms; Room Booking FAQs
Subject / Description	A statement detailing the University's procedures in relation to event and speaker management.
Equality Impact Assessment	An equality impact assessment is underway for this procedure, and further consultation will be undertaken with the Advisory Group on Equality & Diversity. A known concern is the unfair application of such procedures which may negatively affect a particular community group or equality protected characteristic.
Section	Planning
Theme	Events management; security; health, safety and wellbeing; equality and diversity