



External Speakers Policy

Roehampton Students' Union is supportive and encourages our societies and officers in co-ordinating events, activities and debate. The invitation of external speakers can enhance the success of events, discussions and debates. This policy aims to maintain an environment where the rights of 'freedom of speech' and 'freedom from harm' can co exist. RSU is committed to the student welfare and safety and this policy aims create a safe environment where students can go about their lives free from prejudice, discrimination, physical harm and verbal abuse.

Preamble

1. Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights to be protected and are protected by law.
2. Open debate is central to the culture of academic freedom, the development of students ideas and understanding and is protected by an act of parliament relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus.
3. That said student safety and welfare is at the heart of the Union's policies and practices.
4. As such, the freedom to express views can sometimes be tempered by the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities.
5. Where there is a potential for these rights to come into conflict in relation to controversial speakers, RSU is committed to collaboration that will allow the union to reach sound, evidenced judgements about the organisation or person in question and that allows the union to meet its various legal obligations.
6. The President of the society organising any event is responsible for the activities that take place within their society's events.
7. All speakers will be made aware of their responsibility to abide by the law, the university and the union's various policies, including that:
 - They must not incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law
 - They are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts
 - They must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony
 - Within a framework of positive debate and challenge seek to avoid insulting other faiths or groups
 - They are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisational or cause without express permission of the trustees

Background

8. Clubs and Societies must notify the Union of any events that involve external speakers (defined as individuals or organisations that are not part of the Union or the University) through these procedures.
9. No event involving any external speakers is permitted to be publicised until the speaker has been cleared through the appropriate procedures as provided in this policy.
10. The Union reserves the right to cancel or prohibit any event with an external speaker if the procedures provided herein are not followed or if the relevant health, safety and security criteria cannot be met.
11. The Union reserves the right to deny a platform to racist and fascist individuals and groups by debating them as part of the no platform policy in the usual channels. It will be for the Trustee Board to determine processes that responsibly identify individuals and members of groups that fall within the no platform policy and where this judgement is made the event will automatically not be approved.

Initial process

12. The Union's external speaker request form requires event organisers to provide:
 - Expected number of attendees
 - Confirm whether the event will be a member only, invitation only event or open to the general public
 - Confirm any external speakers' affiliations (specifically where they are political or religious)
 - Declaration of any knowledge of controversy attract media interest – if so why?
 - Confirmation of website details (where relevant) providing further information/links on the speaker through social media outlets.
13. Any failure to disclose full speaker details may result in an event/booking being cancelled and could result in referral for union disciplinary action
14. On the receipt of the form the Societies Intern will perform a background check on all speakers on Google (after first looking at any web link provided) and look at the first three pages of results(if any results are found). This information is then noted on the sheet including a link to the most relevant information about the speaker.
15. The Societies Intern will review the completed spreadsheet twice weekly. They will refer any speakers that may require further exploration to the General Manager. They will provide 5 hyperlinks to the most relevant Google results for any speakers that are cause for concern. All others will be considered to be approved.
16. The Student Societies Intern will receive regular training and briefing on controversial speakers and will liaise closely with the student societies, religious and cultural groups and University security.

Referred speakers

17. Any events with referred speakers will be investigated by the External Speakers Referral Panel (Student Union President, Student Union General Manager, Student Societies Intern and any appropriate UR representation) for decision on behalf of the Trustee Board.

18. The External Speakers Referral Panel will conduct a short investigation into the speaker and the event, wherever possible, takes representations from the students society related to the booking and from a wide number of concerned student groups, university officials and external bodies.

19. In making recommendations they will assess risk on the following basis:

- The potential for any decision to limit freedom of speech as per the university's code of practice in pursuance of the 1986 Educational Act
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause the union to be in breach of its equal opportunities policy
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause the union to fail in its wider legal duties
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause reputational risk to the Union
- The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to cause fear or alarm to members of the student body
- The potential for the speakers presence on campus to give rise to breach of peace

20. They may make one of the following recommendations

- In assessing the risk to not permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead
- In assessing the risks to fully permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted
- In assessing the risks presented to permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead on basis of regulatory steps designed to reduce risk

21. Regulatory steps designed to reduce risk may include:

- Requiring that the event be filmed by an independent body
- Requiring that the event be observed by union, university or third party officials
- Requiring that the event be stewarded or subject to security on the door
- Requiring that an event promoting a particular view includes an opportunity to debate or challenge that view
- Requiring that an event closed to society members only be opened to all members of the union
- Requiring that a copy of any speech to be delivered by the speaker be submitted to the union

22. When considering any regulatory steps designed to reduce risk, their potential themselves to cause risk (for example, the sense of oppression felt by the imposition of security on the door) should be taken into account.
23. The recommendation of the External Speakers Panel will routinely communicate this to the University Secretariat and RSU Trustee Board. Where members of the Trustee Board disagree with the decision they can call an extraordinary meeting in the usual way.
24. Where the society in question disagrees with the decision made they shall have the right to appeal which will be considered by the President.
25. An annual report on referred speakers will be produced by the Student Societies Intern for information and consideration by the Trustee Board.

Passed by Student Union Council November 2012