Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Management of Events on Campus

Document Control

Responsibility for Policy:	Company Secretary
Approved by and date:	University Council 17th April 2024
Frequency of Review:	At least every three years
Next Review date:	April 2027
Related Policies:	
Minor Revisions:	
EIA:	

1.   Liverpool Hope University is committed to the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom so far as is reasonably practical within the law. The University believes that an attitude of tolerance is essential to enable academic debate of a wide variety of ideas, including some which may be controversial. The University is a welcoming, hospitable and caring community which is aligned with its Christian foundation. It encourages debate of all kind and at all levels, encouraging freedom of speech balanced with respect and the views of all those affected by it.

2.   The University has duties to secure freedom of speech within the law under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. The University also has a duty under Section 26(1) of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism (the Prevent Duty). The University has a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, bullying, harassment or extremism or acts which could incite or promote terrorist activity. The University recognises it has a duty to maintain safety and good order on its premises.

3.   The University recognises all forms of expression within the law and adopts the five core ideas set out in the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) [Guidance Freedom of expression: a guide for higher education providers and students' unions in England and Wales (2019)](#):

4. Everyone has the right to free speech within the law.

   4.1.   Higher education providers should always work to widen debate and challenge, never to narrow it.

   4.2.   Any decision about speakers and events should seek to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression.

   4.3.   Peaceful protest is a protected form of expression; however, protest should not be allowed to shut down debate or infringe the rights of others.

   4.4.   Freedom of expression should not be abused for the purpose of unchallenged hatred or bigotry. Providers of higher education should always aim to encourage balanced and respectful debate

5. **Scope**

   5.1.   This Code and the procedures set out within it are designed to promote freedom of speech and to enable events to proceed when it is safe and legal for them to do so. It should be noted that the use of the term "premises" throughout this Code also includes the University's virtual teaching, learning, meeting and event environments.

   5.2. This Code covers: -

      5.2.1.   the procedures to be followed by members of staff, students or other persons for the organisation of any meeting or other activity, public or private, held within premises which are the responsibility of the University

      5.2.2.   the conduct of such meeting or activity

5.2.3. the steps which the University needs to take to ensure compliance with the Code

5.3. The Code covers all events hosted by staff and students of the University, Liverpool Hope Students' Union and events hosted by client organisations that take place on University premises. The Code extends to events taking place off campus where either the University or the Students' Union is hosting (or co-hosting) an event. This includes venues in the UK or overseas. While the law differs in other countries, all activities led or hosted/co-hosted by the University, irrespective of where they take place, are to comply with this Code unless to do so would breach that country's law. The Code also extends to those events where one or more external speakers are participating in the event by any means of remote access, such as Skype, teleconferencing and audio conferencing.

5.4. The University may (but shall be under no obligation to) allow its premises to be used for events, provided that such events are organised in accordance with this Code and any other terms and conditions the University may impose.

6. Useful Definitions

In this Code, the following words shall have the following meanings:

"**An event**" is any gathering (which would include meetings, events and other activities) conducted, hosted, or sponsored by the University including those organised or managed by the Students' Union and events hosted by other organisations that take place on the University's premises.

"**Event Organiser**" The person, society or group who takes responsibility for organising an event will be referred to as the Event Organiser

"**Responsible Person**" is the person with ultimate responsibility for making decision on whether the proposed event complies with this Code of Practice, and is defined in 8.2

"**External speaker event**" is any event that involves an external speaker addressing a group, including in a teaching, learning or research setting (lecture, conference, seminar) or in the context of extracurricular activity. This does not include meetings held in the normal course of the University's administration or management, provided that (with the exception of the external speaker) they are attended exclusively by Council Members, staff or officers of the University. For events held in a virtual environment this definition extends to content used both synchronously and asynchronously.

"**An external speaker**" is anyone who is not a member of the University community and who is invited to speak at an event in order to provide or disseminate their views, ideas or opinions on a given topic. For example, a guest lecturer, member of a discussion panel, those giving religious addresses or prayer leaders would be an external speaker, a trainer who leads a fitness class would not usually be an external speaker.

"**The Conferencing Team**" are the central team who look after internal and external room bookings. For events hosted in the virtual environment, those organising the event should still use the external speaker booking system, as set out in Appendix 1.

"**A proscribed group/organisation**" is an organisation which has been banned from the UK

and placed on the UK government's proscribed groups list[1].

"**controversial**" use of this term in this Code refers to speakers who may be known to hold contentious, even inflammatory or offensive views. Presence on campus may be considered to be divisive and may lead to some people wanting to prevent the event taking place. Such speakers may be subject to adverse media attention. For the purposes of this Code they are recognised as controversial but their freedom of speech within the law is recognised.

7. Conduct of staff, students and other users of the University Premises

7.1. All persons to whom this Code applies are required to observe the principle of freedom of speech whilst on University premises and online and shall show respect and tolerance towards the expression of views, opinions and beliefs of others, even though those views, opinions or beliefs may run contrary to their own personal views, opinions or beliefs.

7.2. All members of staff of the University, students, student union officers, employees and other users of the University premises and facilities (including online) are requested

    7.2.1. to assist the University in securing freedom of speech within the law in the University and to ensure compliance with the Prevent Duty.

    7.2.2. to refrain from conduct which prevents, obstructs or disturbs the orderly conduct of any meeting or activity covered by this Code.

    7.2.3. to not deny or attempt to deny to any other person freedom of speech within the law at any authorised meeting or activity on the grounds of that person's views or beliefs or objectives or a body of individuals, as long as such use is at all times within the law.

7.3. In applying the Code, the University will take account of the general law relating to incitement to unlawful conduct (including racial hatred), unlawful assemblies, the presence of proscribed organisations or individuals, and other similar matters which may require it to have regard to what takes place on its premises. In making decisions, the University will pay particular regard to the advice in the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Guidance Freedom of expression: a guide for higher education providers and students' unions in England and Wales Section 3.

7.4. The following will be taken into consideration to assess the actions required in preparing for and organising an event

    7.4.1. The speaker has previously been known to express views that

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2

may be considered controversial, although it is recognised that views and opinions change and consideration needs to be given to the timeliness of views

7.4.2. The speaker has previously been prevented from speaking at another institution or similar establishment.

7.4.3. The proposed title or theme of the event presents a potential risk that views or opinions expressed by speakers may be controversial; or

7.4.4. The proposed speaker/theme is likely to attract attendance from individuals/groups that have previously been known to express views that may be controversial; or

7.4.5. The extent to which there is a potential threat to the safety of the speaker or others, or to preventing the speaker from attending the event.

8. Responsibility for the Application of this Code

8.1. The Vice-Chancellor appoints the Company Secretary to act on their behalf to ensure compliance with this Code and its review. The Code will be reviewed every three years, unless a change in law requires an earlier review.

8.2. Responsibility for ensuring that activities (including events) comply with this Code shall rest with the following people, who shall be referred to as the **Responsible Person** in the rest of this Code:

8.2.1. For activities organised by a school/department or a service area – the Head of School/Department or Manager/Director of service area.

8.2.2. For activities organised by the Students' Union and its ratified student led groups – the General Manager of the Students' Union

8.2.3. For external bookings – the Head of Conferencing

8.2.4. In any other case, the relevant UEB Member.

8.3. Although the individuals named above have overall responsibility for activities, every person at the University has a duty to ensure that this Code is followed.

8.4. If you are concerned that there may be a breach of this Code then you must report it to the Responsible Person who should seek advice from the Head of Legal Services Governance and Risk where appropriate.

9.   Procedure for the organisation of meetings or other activities within the University

9.1. Standard Events

9.1.1.   Assessment of Academic Conferences

For academic conferences hosted by a School/Service area, it will be sufficient to complete a local assessment for the event considering the risks highlighted in the assessment form in the Appendix. However, if there are any concerns at any time about an individual speaker, or the proposed theme of any such conference then the Event Organiser should liaise with the Responsible Person to agree a proportionate approach to assessing the risks and for escalation in accordance with this Code, as appropriate. The School/Service should maintain a log of invited speakers, together with the conference details.

9.1.2.   Events that form part of normal academic course provision

In relation to events that contain an external speaker, but that form part of a normal course provision and, as such, only have students registered on that course and relevant staff in attendance, it will be sufficient for the School to complete a local assessment for these events considering the risks highlighted in the assessment form in the Appendix. The School should simply maintain a log of invited speakers, together with the course details. However, if there are any concerns at any time about an individual speaker, or the proposed theme of any such event then the Event Organiser should liaise with the Responsible Person (i.e. the Head of School) and agree a proportionate approach to assessing the risks and for escalation in accordance with this Code, as appropriate.

9.1.3.   Events organised by the Students' Union

The Students Union will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this Code for all events managed by them and must follow the procedure in this Code. They will, as part of the Students' Union room booking and speakers' procedure, undertake the local assessment with/on behalf of the student coordinator considering the risks highlighted in the assessment form in the Appendix. If a referral to the Company Secretary is required, the General Manager will be responsible for making the submission with/on behalf of the student coordinator. The General Manager should maintain a log of invited speakers, together with the event details.

9.2.   Events organised by the Conferencing Team

The Conferencing Team will be responsible for implementing a system to support any other external events with proposed external speakers in accordance with this Code. They will undertake the local assessment in accordance with this Code with/on behalf of the client using Appendix 1. If a referral to the Company Secretary is required, the Head of Conferencing will be responsible for making the submission with/on behalf of the Client. The Conferencing Team should maintain keep all completed Appendix 1 forms.

9.3.   A booking will be confirmed by the Conferencing Team only if

9.3.1.   There is a named Event Organiser and Responsible Person.

9.3.2. The Event Organiser is going to be present at the event

9.3.3. Appendix 1 has been fully completed

9.4. The Conferencing Team are satisfied with the responses provided in Appendix 1 (who may take advice and guidance from the Head of Legal Services, Governance and Risk). The Event Organiser must not less than 14 days before an event

9.4.1. contact the Conferencing Team to provisionally log the event

9.4.2. undertake a local assessment of the proposed external speaker(s) as set out in Appendix 1 and if there are any concerns, escalate the decision about whether to invite that speaker as set out below in 9.4.

9.4.3. ensure that all proposed speakers are provided with a copy of this Code and are made aware of their responsibility to comply with the law.

9.5. Local Assessment of Speaker

9.5.1. The Event Organiser must answer the questions in Appendix 1.

9.5.2. If the answer to all questions is NO: the Event Organiser can confirm the event and any external speaker and 'book' them to speak at their event or activity and promote this in the normal way. A failure by a member of staff or student to comply with this Code, and/or answer these questions to the best of their knowledge and in an honest and reasonable manner, will be treated very seriously and may be subject to formal action under the University's normal disciplinary processes for staff and students.

9.5.3. If the answer to any of the questions is UNCLEAR/YES: The Event Organiser must seek guidance from the Responsible Person, whose responsibility it will be to further review the event/speaker(s) against the questions above. The event must not be advertised, or promoted until it has been authorised under this Code.

9.5.4. This further review will require the Responsible Person, in consultation with the Event Organiser, to undertake a more detailed risk assessment of the speaker and the event by checking both the speaker and the topic on Google, looking at the first three pages of web results and accessing any relevant web addresses given, and checking any standard social media platforms (such as Instagram and X). If the Responsible Person believes that the event or speaker will not result in an infringement of this Code, they may authorise the

event at this stage but should always seek guidance from the Head of Legal Services, Governance & Risk or Company Secretary before doing so.

9.5.5. If the answer to any of the questions is YES or remains UNCLEAR: the Responsible Person should contact the Company Secretary for approval, or the DVC & Provost for matters relating to speakers engaged by an academic member of staff.

9.5.6. If the Event Organiser has at any time reason to believe the answers to any of these questions has changed to YES/UNCLEAR the Event Organiser must notify this to the Responsible Person without delay. If permission has been granted, but is subsequently withdrawn, the Event Organiser must immediately cancel, stop advertising, publicising and promoting the event.

9.5.7. The Responsible Person shall ensure that a record of all referrals made to them under this Code, and the decision made in each case is kept up to date and is easily accessible.

9.6. Appeal

9.6.1. If an organiser, or any member of the University's staff or student body, has any concerns about a meeting or event or is dissatisfied with the decision of the Company Secretary they may write to the Vice Chancellor setting out clear reasons for their concerns and requesting a reconsideration of the decision. The appeal should be lodged at least 7 working days prior to the date of that the event is due to take place. Where the event relates to a particularly controversial speaker or sensitive subject matter, the decision may require longer than 7 working days to arrive at a conclusive decision. It may therefore be necessary to postpone the event pending a decision by the Vice Chancellor. The decision of the Vice Chancellor will be final.

9.6.2. The University reserves the right to withdraw an event booking, if it receives further information at any time that leads it to believe that the law will be infringed or if it believes conditions for the event will not be met.

9.7. If a student feels the University does not uphold the principles of freedom of speech, they may follow the Student Complaints Procedure [link]. Staff who have similar concerns should contact Personnel to discuss the matter.

10. Training

Guidance and Training will be provided on a proportionate basis in response to identified need.

External Speaker and Event Booking Form

Organiser details

Name of organiser	
Telephone number	
Email	
Department/ School Responsible person	
Proposed venue	
Date of event	

Speaker details

Name		
What organisation does the speaker represent or speak for?		
Has a check been completed of the speakers social media / website?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Will the speaker's talk, the audio and/or visual content be wholly in English?	☐ Yes	☐ No
If no, please state language(s)		
Has the spoken at the University or Students' Union previously?	☐ Yes	☐ No
If yes, please provide details		

Considerations

	Yes	No
Are they representing an organisation proscribed by the UK government? https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version		

Are they likely to breach UK laws on hate speech? https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/freedom-expression-guide-higher-education-providers-and-students-unions-england		
Are they likely to raise concerns under the Prevent duty guidance in terms of encouraging violent extremism or terrorism, or drawing people into terrorism? https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales		
Under the Equality Act 2010, gender segregation at meetings and events is not normally permissible. Please indicate whether the proposed meeting, event or activity is to be segregated by gender. Note: If the answer is yes, the Responsible Person should consult with the University's Legal Department to establish whether a sufficient basis exists for exemption from the Act		
Is the subject of their talk or the organisation they represent likely to mobilise significant opposition such that there might be a risk to safety or the public or members of the University/ Students' Union community?		
Is there any evidence that this has been the case on other occasions?		
Does the speaker, or the organisation they represent, have a controversial profile in the media?		
Is the event likely to attract a heightened media interest?		
Is the event likely to attract unusual interest or unusually large numbers?		

Organiser's Declaration

- I have read the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Management of Events on Campus
- I confirm that I have submitted this external speaker event form with the permission from a Head of School, Head of Department or USET member.
- I have completed this form to the best of my knowledge and understand the form will only be considered where all information donated (where applicable) is provided; and
- I understand that the University reserves the right to refuse permission for events and external speakers on University premises following the completion of due diligence, risk assessment and health and safety assessment.
- I understand that any variation* to the arrangements for external speakers or an event should be notified to the Estates Services Manager or the Students' Union in sufficient time to enable the University to assure itself that the revised arrangements are satisfactory

*Examples could be additional speakers attending the event, change in audience or topic, addition of guests to the event who take on a speaking role, addition of visual content.

Sign:	**Date:**

Freedom of Speech Flowchart

Event involving external speaker proposed

→ **Standard Events**

→ **External Speaker Events**

Standard Events branch

- **Academic Conferences**
- **Academic Provision**
- **Students' Union**

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Local Assessment by *Responsible Person answering *Considerations* Questions in Appendix

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- **All answers are "NO"**
  - ↓
  - **Event is arranged and logged with UEM/SU Manager**

- **At least one answer is "YES" or "UNCLEAR"**
  - ↓
  - **Advice is sought from Company Secretary**

External Speaker Events branch

Event Booking form Completed by Conferencing and signed by the Organiser

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- **At least one answer is "YES" or "UNCLEAR"**
  - ↓
  - **Advice is sought from Company Secretary**

- **All answers to *Considerations* are "NO"**
  - ↓
  - **Event is arranged and form logged with Conferencing**

*see 8.2 of the FoS Code