

External Speakers Policy

Owner	Head of Quality		
Version	4.2		
Changes	This policy has been comprehensively reviewed to reflect current legislative and regulatory requirements for the 2026–2027 academic year, including: • alignment with the Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Advice 24 on freedom of speech; • strengthened guidance on balancing the Prevent Duty with freedom of speech and academic freedom; • revised approval, risk assessment and decision-making processes; • updated mitigation measures to ensure they are evidence-based and proportionate; • clarification of responsibilities for organisers and external speakers; • revised approach to security costs; • strengthened governance, record-keeping and audit requirements; and • replacement of the External Speaker Risk Assessment Matrix with an evidence-based assessment framework.		
Approval date	October 2026	Approved by	Board of Directors
Implementation date	October 2026	Date of next review	October 2027
Related internal policy	• Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech • Student Safeguarding, Prevent and Harassment Policy • Student Code of Conduct • Staff Code of Conduct • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy • Data Protection Policy		
Related external policies and regulations	• Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (as amended) • Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 • Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 • Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales • Office for Students Regulatory Advice 24 – Guidance related to Freedom of Speech • Equality Act 2010 • Human Rights Act 1998 • Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR		

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Purpose

This policy provides the framework for the approval and proportionate risk management of external and visiting speaker events at Regent.

Regent is committed to securing freedom of speech within the law for its students, staff, members and visiting speakers, and to protecting academic freedom, in accordance with the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 as amended by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

Regent will also have due regard to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. These duties will be considered together, with a strong presumption that lawful events should proceed and that identified risks should, wherever reasonably practicable, be managed through proportionate mitigation rather than cancellation.

Context

External speakers can enhance the educational experience by introducing diverse perspectives. However, it is crucial that these events do not compromise the safety or security of the Regent community or contravene legal standards. This policy serves to balance its statutory duty to secure freedom of speech within the law with its statutory Prevent Duty.

External speakers and event organisers must comply with the law. Regent will not provide a platform for conduct that is unlawful, including the encouragement or glorification of terrorism where prohibited by law, inviting support for a proscribed organisation, unlawful fundraising for terrorist purposes, unlawful harassment, incitement to violence or hatred, or other criminal conduct.

Lawful speech will not be restricted solely because it is controversial, unpopular, critical, disturbing, offensive to some people, contrary to Regent's institutional position, or likely to attract protest or adverse publicity.

Where lawful expression gives rise to reasonably foreseeable safety, welfare or disruption risks, Regent will consider evidence-based and proportionate mitigation measures so that the event can proceed wherever reasonably practicable.

Principles

When implementing this policy, Regent will:

- secure freedom of speech within the law;
- protect academic freedom;
- fulfil its Prevent Duty;
- make decisions that are lawful, evidence-based and proportionate;

- seek to enable events to proceed wherever reasonably practicable;
- ensure that restrictions are imposed only where necessary and proportionate;
- apply this policy fairly and consistently.

Procedure for organising an event involving an External Speaker

The event organiser should complete and submit the External Speaker Request Form, providing proportionate information about the proposed speaker, the purpose and format of the event, the intended audience, the venue or online platform, and the subject matter to be discussed.

Requests should normally be submitted at least 10 working days before the proposed event to allow sufficient time for proportionate due diligence, risk assessment and event planning. A request submitted with less than 10 working days' notice will not automatically be refused. It will be considered where reasonably practicable, taking account of the time available to complete any essential legal, safeguarding, security or operational arrangements.

The information requested from organisers must be relevant and no more onerous than reasonably necessary for the assessment of the proposed event.

The completed form will be sent to Regent's Prevent Lead, or their nominee, who will act as the principal point of contact for the organiser. For lectures, teaching-related activities and School events, the form will also be shared with the Dean of the relevant School or their nominee. Other appropriate colleagues, including representatives from Security, Safeguarding, Academic Quality, Campus Operations, Information Governance or senior management, may be consulted where the circumstances require it.

The starting presumption is that an event involving an external speaker will be permitted to proceed. Lawful speech will not be restricted merely because the speaker or subject matter is controversial, unpopular, challenging, disturbing or offensive to some people, or because the event may attract protest, criticism or adverse media attention.

Regent will ensure that decisions relating to external speakers are made promptly, proportionately and in accordance with its statutory duties relating to freedom of speech, academic freedom and the Prevent Duty.

Initial assessment

Upon receipt of the External Speaker Request Form, the Prevent Lead, or their nominee, will undertake an initial assessment using the External Speaker Risk Assessment Framework at Annex A.

The assessment will consider relevant and reasonably available information, including:

- a) whether the anticipated speech or activity is likely to be within the law;
- b) whether there is a credible risk of encouraging or supporting terrorism, or of drawing people into terrorism;
- c) the reliability, relevance, context and age of any information about the speaker or organisation;
- d) the nature and purpose of the event;
- e) the expected audience, attendance arrangements and venue or online platform;
- f) any credible risks to physical safety, safeguarding, public order or the orderly conduct of the event;
- g) any reasonable adjustments or accessibility requirements;
- h) the likelihood of protest or disruption and whether it can be managed proportionately; and
- i) the reasonably practicable measures available to enable the event to proceed safely and lawfully.

The assessment must distinguish between verified evidence, allegation, opinion and media characterisation. A speaker's lawful beliefs, ideas, political opinions, religion, philosophical beliefs, associations or previous lawful expression will not, without additional relevant evidence, constitute grounds for refusing or cancelling an event.

Regent will assess events using a proportionate and evidence-based approach that considers both its Prevent Duty and its duty to secure freedom of speech within the law.

Decision-making framework

The assessment may result in one of the following decisions:

- a) Approved as proposed;
- b) Approved subject to necessary and proportionate conditions;
- c) Referred for further assessment or senior decision; or
- d) Not approved, only where the event would involve unlawful conduct or where a substantiated and material risk cannot be adequately managed through reasonably practicable and proportionate measures.

Before restricting, postponing or refusing an event involving lawful speech, Regent must consider whether there are reasonably practicable steps that would enable the event to proceed. Such steps must be considered before a restriction is imposed. The OfS framework requires providers first to determine whether the speech is lawful, then to

take reasonably practicable steps to secure it and only then to consider whether any restriction is legally prescribed and proportionate.

A decision must not be based solely on:

- the controversial, unpopular or offensive nature of a lawful viewpoint;
- anticipated reputational harm;
- adverse media attention;
- objections, petitions or complaints about the speaker's lawful opinions;
- the possibility of peaceful protest; or
- a previous refusal by another institution without examination of the reasons and relevance of that decision.

Any final decision not to approve, to cancel or to postpone an event indefinitely must be made by a suitably senior officer with expressly delegated authority under Regent's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech. The Prevent Lead may approve an event, recommend conditions or refer the matter for a senior decision but should not be the sole final decision-maker for cancellation or non-approval in a significant case.

This reflects the OfS expectation that final cancellation or indefinite postponement decisions should be taken only by a suitably senior authorised official.

Notification of the decision

The Prevent Lead, or their nominee, will normally notify the organiser in writing within five working days of receiving a complete External Speaker Request Form.

The organiser must not advertise, promote or publicly confirm the event until written approval has been granted by Regent.

Where further information or specialist advice is reasonably required, the organiser will be informed promptly of:

- the information required;
- the reasons it is relevant;
- the person responsible for the assessment; and
- the anticipated decision date.

The process will be completed as quickly as reasonably practicable, particularly where the proposed event is due to take place within a shorter timeframe.

The written decision will:

- a) confirm whether the event is approved, approved subject to conditions, referred for further assessment or not approved;
- b) explain the material reasons for the decision;
- c) identify any conditions and explain why they are necessary and proportionate;
- d) identify the person responsible for implementing agreed measures; and
- e) explain how the organiser may request a review of a refusal, cancellation or material condition.

Material changes after approval

Once an event has been approved, the organiser must inform the Prevent Lead, or their nominee, as soon as reasonably practicable of any proposed material change, including a change to:

- a) the speaker or participating organisation;
- b) the subject matter or stated purpose of the event;
- c) the venue, date or delivery format;
- d) the expected audience or attendance arrangements;
- e) whether the event will be livestreamed, recorded or opened to the public; or
- f) any sponsorship, funding or external affiliation relevant to the assessment.

A material change will not automatically invalidate the original approval. The Prevent Lead, or their nominee, will consider whether the change affects the existing assessment and whether any additional proportionate measures are required.

Permission may only be withdrawn where:

- a) new and reliable information indicates that unlawful conduct is likely;
- b) a credible and material safety, safeguarding, terrorism or serious disruption risk has arisen;
- c) the organiser or speaker refuses to comply with a lawful, necessary and proportionate condition; or
- d) no reasonably practicable measure would allow the event to proceed safely and lawfully.

The written reasons for withdrawing permission must identify the new information or

changed circumstances relied upon, the mitigations considered and why they were not sufficient.

Mitigation measures

Where a risk is identified, Regent will consider reasonable, proportionate and evidence-based measures to enable the event to proceed safely and lawfully. Measures will not be imposed solely because a speaker or viewpoint is controversial, unpopular or offensive to some people.

Measures may include:

- a) changing the time, venue or format of the event;
- b) appointing a suitably experienced chair or moderator;
- c) using a panel or additional speakers, with the organiser's agreement, where this would help manage an identified risk;
- d) introducing ticketing, pre-registration or proportionate identification checks;
- e) limiting attendance by objectively justified criteria, such as venue capacity, Regent membership, safeguarding or security requirements;
- f) managing media attendance, recording, photography or livestreaming for reasons including consent, data protection, safety or venue capacity;
- g) reviewing attendee information where this is necessary and proportionate for an identified safety, safeguarding or security purpose;
- h) applying proportionate conditions to event publicity to ensure accuracy, lawful conduct, accessibility, safety and data protection;
- i) providing additional trained security or stewarding where justified by a specific and credible risk;
- j) making arrangements for audience questions, contributions and peaceful protest so that different lawful views may be expressed without preventing the event from proceeding;
- k) providing appropriate accessibility, welfare or safeguarding support;
- l) consulting the police, the regional Prevent coordinator or other specialist advisers where there is a specific and evidenced reason to do so;
- m) moving the event online or using a hybrid format where this is the least restrictive way of managing an identified risk;

n) postponing the event for the shortest reasonably necessary period where essential arrangements cannot be completed in time, while seeking an alternative date or format; and

o) completing a post-event review where this would assist with learning, recordkeeping or future event planning.

External speakers and their responsibilities

For the purposes of this policy, an external speaker means any individual or representative of an organisation who is not a current student, employee or contracted partner of Regent and who is invited to speak, present or contribute to an event involving Regent students, staff or members.

This includes:

- a) students or staff from another institution;
- b) guest lecturers, professional speakers, employers and industry representatives;
- c) speakers participating in person, online or through livestreaming; and
- d) speakers or representatives involved in events organised by external venue-hire clients using Regent premises.

An event means any lecture, presentation, seminar, debate, panel discussion, meeting, visit, exhibition, fair, performance, screening or other activity:

- a) held on the Regent premises;
- b) organised, funded, affiliated with, endorsed by or branded in the name of Regent;
- c) held at another venue where Regent is represented;
- d) delivered wholly or partly online; or
- e) organised by an external venue-hire client using the Regent premises.

This includes events involving livestreamed speakers or where pre-recorded material forms a substantial part of the event.

Responsibilities of speakers and organisers

The event organiser must ensure that the external speaker is informed of this policy and any lawful and proportionate conditions attached to the event.

External speakers and visitors must comply with applicable law and relevant Regent policies. In particular, they must not:

- a) encourage or incite violence, terrorism or other criminal activity;
- b) encourage, glorify or prepare acts of terrorism where this would constitute an offence under the law;
- c) invite support for a proscribed terrorist organisation or undertake fundraising for terrorism;
- d) make threats, unlawfully harass others or intentionally encourage unlawful hatred or violence;
- e) disrupt the event or prevent others from exercising their lawful freedom of speech; or
- f) raise or collect funds for an external organisation or cause without Regent's prior written permission.

External speakers are expected to comply with reasonable arrangements concerning safety, safeguarding, accessibility, data protection and the orderly conduct of the event.

Regent recognises that lawful speech may be controversial, unpopular, challenging, critical or offensive to some people. Such expression will not, without more, constitute a breach of this policy.

Speakers may robustly criticise ideas, beliefs, religions, political positions, institutions or Regent policies, provided that their conduct remains within the law and complies with any necessary and proportionate event conditions.

Speakers and attendees are encouraged to engage constructively with different viewpoints. However, this expectation will not be used to prevent or restrict the lawful expression of controversial or strongly held opinions.

Security Costs

Regent will determine any security requirements on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the nature of the event, the assessed risks and the measures necessary to enable the event to proceed safely.

Security costs will not be passed to an organiser or speaker solely because of the lawful views, opinions or subject matter of the event.

In exceptional circumstances, Regent may require an organiser to contribute towards additional security costs where this is objectively justified and proportionate. This may include where:

- a) the organiser requests arrangements requiring security beyond Regent's normal

provision;

b) the costs are wholly disproportionate to the scale of the event and a more proportionate alternative has been offered; or

c) the speaker would reasonably be expected to provide their own security because of the public office or official role they hold.

Any decision to require a contribution towards security costs will be made on a case-by-case basis, supported by written reasons and consistent with Regent 's duties relating to freedom of speech, academic freedom and the Prevent Duty.

Records, Annual review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier where required, to ensure it remains effective and compliant with current legislation, Office for Students (OfS) requirements, Prevent Duty guidance and other relevant regulatory or legal developments.

The Prevent and Safeguarding Working Group (PSWG) will monitor the operation of this policy, review anonymised records and trends, identify areas for improvement and make recommendations where appropriate.

An audit trail of all decisions and actions taken under this policy must be maintained. This includes completed External Speaker Request Forms, risk assessments, decisions, conditions applied, correspondence and any incidents arising from events. Records will be retained securely in accordance with the Regent's Records Retention Schedule and Data Protection Policy.

Regular reports on the operation of this policy, including trends, significant cases and any recommendations for improvement, will be provided to the Board of Directors.

Regent will periodically review whether the implementation of this policy continues to support freedom of speech within the law while meeting its statutory Prevent Duty and safeguarding responsibilities.

Annex A

External speaker risk management matrix

Risk Rating	Rating Description (Examples)
Low	i. The event presents no identified safeguarding, security or Prevent concerns. ii. The speaker and topic are lawful and there is no credible evidence of risks associated with terrorism or unlawful activity. iii. Attendance is expected to be manageable within normal arrangements. iv. No additional mitigation measures are required beyond normal event management.
Medium	i. The event requires additional planning or proportionate mitigation to manage identified risks. ii. There is a reasonable possibility of protest, disruption or increased security requirements that can be managed. iii. Attendance is expected to be high or includes external participants. iv. Additional measures such as ticketing, a chair, security or changes to the venue or format may be appropriate to enable the event to proceed safely.
High	i. There is credible evidence of a significant safeguarding, security or Prevent-related risk. ii. There is a credible risk of unlawful conduct, serious disruption or threats to the safety of participants that cannot be adequately managed through normal arrangements. iii. Senior management consideration is required to determine whether further mitigation would allow the event to proceed safely and lawfully.

Important: A speaker or topic will **not** be considered medium or high risk solely because it is controversial, unpopular, likely to attract protest, media attention or criticism. Risk assessments must be based on objective, relevant and reliable information and consider whether any identified risks can be managed through reasonable and proportionate mitigation measures.