

External Speaker Procedure

Introduction

Queen Mary, University of London Students' Union (the Union) welcomes many events, a large portion of which host external speakers, held on and off campus by our student groups. Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights that are protected by law. The Union is committed to providing a forum that facilitates this whilst also providing a safe space for our students as student safety and welfare is at the heart of the Union's policies and practices.

The freedom to express views needs to be balanced with the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities. We want all activities hosted by our student groups to be:

- Safe
- Without risk to the reputation to the Union or University
- Within the law
- A positive experience for members and students

All student group events must be inclusive of all members regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or belief/religion.

External Speakers

An external speaker refers to a person or organisation that is not part of the Union, the College or the Barts Trust, who is invited to speak at any student group event on or off campus (Bye Law 15 8.2.4.). This includes guests invited to speak but not physically present and the playing of a pre-recorded speech.

Any affiliated student group event with external speakers, organised in or outside of the Union or QMUL buildings/property is still within the responsibility and liability of the Union.

The President of the group organising any event is responsible for the activities that take place within it. All speakers will be made aware of their responsibility to abide by the law as well as the Union's and QMUL's various policies, including that they:

- must not incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law
- are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote an acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts
- must not spread hatred and intolerance
- must seek to avoid insulting other groups, within a framework of positive debate and challenge
- are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisations without permission from the Union

Initial Process

Student groups must notify the Union of any events that involve external speakers at least 2 weeks (10 working days) prior to the event. Any request made outside of this time frame will be rejected.

Students are advised to submit any request for a speaker that may be high risk with at least 4 weeks notice (20 working days) as this gives the Union and QMUL enough time to investigate the speaker and event, and to take any regulatory steps to allow the event to proceed. If there is not enough time to take necessary safeguarding measures, it is highly likely the speaker and event will be rejected on this basis.

To notify the Union, groups must submit all of the correct information via the room booking and external speaker form within the outlined time frame.

No event involving any external speakers may be publicised or considered confirmed until the speaker has been approved by the Union and QMUL.

The Union and University reserves the right to cancel, prohibit or delay any event with an external speaker if the policy is not followed, or if health, safety and security criteria cannot be met

Any failure to disclose the full details of an external speaker may result in the event/booking being cancelled and could result in disciplinary action.

Replacement external speakers are not usually accepted and will be handled on a case by case basis.

Academic Department Events

The Union encourages Academic Societies to work closely with their respective departments. Some of the most successful societies, who offer a great experience for their members, are those which develop solid working relationships with their Academic and Support Staff.

All student group events must be booked and organised in accordance with the Union's procedures. This is to ensure that all events and speakers are recorded and approved by the Union and communicated to the University as necessary.

A department may support a society to run an event in various ways (e.g. finance or logistics) but any external speaker request must adhere to the formal Union process if it is a society event.

If a department organises an event which a society is helping to promote, it must not be advertised as a society event. The department should therefore assume the obligation to ensure they have followed the correct University process when booking external speakers.

Approving Speakers

This is a two-stage process which is first approved by the Union and then the University.

Completed forms are processed by the Customer Service Team who complete an external speaker risk assessment by checking the information provided by the student, including any links provided as well as searching the internet for information. This search will consist of reviewing the first six pages of the Google results and speakers' social media profiles.

Any speaker request deemed to be low risk will be considered provisionally approved until reviewed by the Executive Officers whom review all requests submitted the previous week the following Monday. A request deemed to be high risk will be forwarded to the Head of Membership and the Student Engagement Manager, or their nominee, who will present it to the officers immediately for investigation and provide guidance.

Reasons an external speaker request is deemed high risk include:

- Any person or group is on/or linked to the UK Government list of proscribed terrorist organisations. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509003/20160318proscription.pdf.
- The likelihood of the speaker's presence at the event may result in a platform for the expression or promotion of extremism or radicalisation as described in the Charity Commission Guidance. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/351342/CT-5.pdf
- The speaker is part of an organisation generally considered to be extremist by NUS, the Union and related searches.
- The speaker is known to have spoken at another institution on a topic that has caused fear or intimidation of students or staff.
- A speaker is accepted in mainstream as being highly controversial.
- A speaker is known to/or likely to cause harm to specific groups of students.
- A speaker has a link or links to any person or group that has, in the team's internet searches, been connected with any controversy of a negative or positive nature.
- A speaker has a significant profile and attracts a following that could cause crowd control and health and safety issues. A speaker can be deemed high profile if the search returns reports of mainstream media coverage (national or regional) and has 10,000+ social media followers.
- A speaker impedes the duty of the Union to be independent from party politics as defined in the guidance on campaigning and political activity by charities. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities-cc9>
- A speaker is on tour.

The Executive Officers and Student Engagement Manager, or their nominee, may conduct a short investigation into the speaker. In making recommendations, they will assess risk based on the potential for:

- any decision to limit freedom of speech as per the University's code of practice in pursuance of the 1994 Education Act
- the event going ahead to cause the Union to be in breach of its own policies
- the event going ahead to cause the Union to fail its wider legal duties
- the going ahead to cause reputational risk to the Union
- the speaker's presence on campus to cause fear or alarm to members of the student body
- the speaker's presence on campus to give rise to break of peace and/or overcrowding issues leading to health and safety fears
- any other factor which is deemed appropriate to take into account

The Executive Officers will then decide to make one of the following recommendations:

- Reject the event on behalf of the Union.
- Fully approve the event, unrestricted on behalf of the Union.
- Approve the event on the basis of regulatory steps designed to reduce risk.

Regulatory steps may require:

- a copy of the speech to be delivered by the speaker and format of the event be sent in advance
- the event to be filmed by an independent body
- the event to be observed by the Union elected officers or staff, or University or third party officials
- the event to be stewarded or subject to security at the expense of the hosting student group
- an event promoting a particular view including an opportunity to debate or challenge that view
- an event open only to society members to be open to all members of the Union
- an independent student or officer to chair or facilitate questions and discussions

When considering any regulatory steps designed to reduce risk, the potential for the step itself to cause risk will also be taken into account.

The Union's will communicate the decision to the student groups and University. In any case, the University may place regulatory or extra regulatory steps for speaker events.

Where the student group disagree with the decision, they shall have the right to submit a complaint in the usual way.