

Policy for events and external speakers

Scope:

This policy covers any events outside the College's normal academic activity that are organised on the College premises, or are branded by, funded by, or affiliated with Regent's Park College.

External speakers are defined as speakers invited to attend an event who are not current members of either the staff or student body of the University of Oxford or its Colleges. This includes attendance in a virtual capacity, such as through Skype or other videoconferencing platforms.

Context:

Regent's Park College has a long and proud history rooted in that of the Dissenters, and the rights of academic freedom, freedom of speech and inclusivity and equality are fundamental to the College's mission, teaching and research. Academic freedom and freedom of speech are core components of the College's functioning, where debate, challenge and dissent are not only permitted but expected, and where controversial and offensive ideas are likely to be advanced.

That said, all freedoms have limits imposed by law, in order to protect the rights and freedoms of others and to maintain public order and safety. When organising an event, organisers must consider their duties surrounding: individuals' private rights, protecting individuals from harassment, bullying, defamation and unlawful breaches of their human rights, as well as from unfair treatment under equality law; how they minimise the possibility of extremism or unlawful conduct, including, but not restricted to, incitement to terrorist activity, hate crimes, harassment, and breaches of the peace; and how they will ensure the safety and welfare of their guests, College members, and the General Public.

Policy:

1. Those holding events with external speakers are required to undertake a risk assessment.
2. Those risk assessing events should be aware of their responsibilities to consider the College's duties under the *Prevent* duty (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) within the context of pre-existing rights, including under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Education (No 2) Act 1986 and the Equality Act 2010.
3. Criminal speech is proscribed, including, but not restricted to, incitement to terrorist activity, hate crimes, harassment, and breaches of the peace. The College will not provide a platform for these offences to be committed.
4. The College safeguards the lawful exercise of freedom of speech, and expects that all speakers and attendees are respectful of the beliefs and opinions of others.
5. Speakers and audience alike are reminded of their responsibilities to observe the College's *Harassment and Bullying Policy* and *Single Equality Policy* and to conduct civil academic discussions at all times.
6. The College reserves the right to approve or reject requests for room bookings.

7. The College reserves the right to cancel, postpone or request amendment to any proposed event should risks be identified. The responsibility for fulfilling these conditions rest with the organisers. The College will normally seek to ensure that events or speakers identified as posing a risk will go ahead subject to the agreement of appropriate safeguards. Cancellation of an event will only occur in exceptional circumstances.
8. The raising or gathering of funds is not permitted without written permission of the Fellows.

Procedure:

For academic and non-academic staff:

Staff must complete a paper-based risk assessment, available from Reception, and have it counter-signed by the Dean. This form should be returned to Reception and kept on-file by the Operations Team. No event involving external speakers may be publicised until the speaker and event have been approved.

For students:

All events involving external speakers must be approved in advance by the Dean as part of the standard room booking process. Copies of completed room booking forms and risk assessments are kept on-file by the Operations Team. No event involving external speakers may be publicised until the speaker and event have been approved.

For conferences:

External bodies who hire College facilities for meetings or conferences are required to risk assess their own events. Our *Standard Terms for Event and Conference Services* includes terms relating to freedom of speech and the organiser's *Prevent* duty.

Complaints and appeals:

Any complaints should, in the first instance, be raised informally with the Dean. Formal complaints and appeals may be made to the Principal, who will convene a panel of three Fellows to assess the appeal. Possible complaints requiring investigation may include: being prevented from arranging, speaking or attending an event involving an external speaker; infringements of freedom of speech; or allegations that an event organiser or external speaker has breached terms of this policy or has otherwise acted in a manner contrary to the legislative framework.

Further guidance:

The Dean and Principal can offer further guidance and advice. The Safe Campus Communities website (www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk) offers a number of useful resources.

Review:

This policy will be reviewed annually, unless there are internal or legislative changes that necessitate earlier review.

Appendix 1

External Speakers Checklist:

1. Does the proposed external speaker have links to or represent a proscribed terror group or organisation?
2. Is the event title or subject matter likely to be controversial or cause distress? Will both sides of the argument be presented? Has an event on this topic been run previously by the College or University?
3. Who is chairing the meeting? Are they sufficiently qualified to provide balance and challenge during the event? What is their stance on the topic under discussion and is this likely to impact the smooth running of the event?
4. Has the speaker spoken at this institution or another higher education institution? What is known about them? Are there grounds to suspect that the individual may speak outside the parameters of the law?
5. Will hosting the speaker have public order implications, risk injury to attendees or damage to university or any other property? Is there the potential for serious health and safety issues to arise? Is it likely that the presence of the speaker will prompt protest?
6. Who is attending the event? Will it be open to the public?
7. Will hosting the speaker have reputational risk for the College? Is the event likely to attract media attention? Will the event be advertised on social media?
8. Has the speaker agreed to abide by Regent's values: rigour, community, responsibility, inclusivity and participation? Has the speaker been given a copy of, and agreed to abide by, this and other relevant College policies?
9. What materials will be available at the event? (e.g. leaflets, DVDs, memory sticks)