

External Speakers Policy

Owner	Head of Quality		
Version	4.1		
Changes	The following updates have been made in line with OfS Regulatory advice 24 (published June 2025) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed or amended and statements that could be interpreted as restricting freedom of speech. • Added statement about limits on security costs 		
Approval date	August 2025	Approved by	Board of Directors
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Related internal policy	Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech Student Safeguarding, Prevent and Harassment Policy		
Related external policies and regulations	Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015		

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Purpose

This policy provides a framework for the approval and management of external or visiting speakers at Regent College London. It ensures that all speaking events align with legal requirements and the College's commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment, while also upholding the principles of free speech and academic freedom as mandated under the Prevent Duty.

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 College community or contravene legal standards. This policy serves to balance the College's commitment to freedom of expression with its obligations to prevent extremism.

Speakers and organisations must adhere to the UK's laws concerning free speech and terrorism. They must not promote extremist views or incite violence, hatred, or any form of illegal activity. This includes a prohibition against endorsing or glorifying terrorism, spreading intolerance or hatred, or disrupting social and community harmony.

Procedure for organising an event involving an External Speaker

The External Speaker Request Form should be submitted, capturing details about the speaker, the event, and the nature of the discussion. Organisers must submit the form at least 10 working days before the event to allow for thorough risk assessment and planning.

The completed form will automatically be sent to the relevant individuals, including the College's Prevent Lead (or their nominee) and the Dean of the relevant school for lectures, teaching-related activities, and school events organised by a staff member affiliated with the school.

Upon receiving the External Speaker Request Form, the Prevent Lead (or their nominee) will review the request and conduct an initial risk assessment for the proposed event. This assessment will be based on a predefined risk matrix (Annex A), considering factors such as the speaker's background, the event's topic, the expected audience, and potential media attention. They will determine the level of risk—low, medium, or high—according to the matrix, which will guide the necessary level of checks to be carried out.

Based on the assessed risk level, the event may be:

- a) Approved as planned
- b) Approved with conditions (e.g., additional security measures or changes to the event format)
- c) Denied

The Prevent Lead (or their nominee) will notify the organiser of the proposed Event of his/her decision and the reasons for it within 5 working days of receipt of the External Speaker Request Form.

Approved events are subject to ongoing monitoring to ensure compliance with the stipulated conditions. Any significant changes to event details must be promptly communicated to the Prevent Lead, which may result in a re-evaluation of the event's approval status. If, after approval has been given, there is any proposed material change to an event, including changes to the venue, speakers, or format, the organiser must notify the Prevent Lead (or their nominee) as soon as practicable. The Prevent Lead (or their nominee) will review the request in light of the new information provided and may impose further mitigation measures or withdraw permission for the event to proceed.

To effectively manage risks associated with hosting external speakers, Regent College London may implement the following mitigation measures based on the outcomes of the risk assessment:

- a) Varying the time or location of the event to enhance safety and accessibility.
- b) Appointing a chair to ensure the event proceeds respectfully and within planned parameters.
- c) Including multiple speakers to present diverse viewpoints, especially for contentious topics, promoting a balanced discussion.
- d) Implementing ticketing to manage entry and ensure attendees are pre-registered.
- e) Requiring valid ID at entry to verify pre-registration and manage crowd control.
- f) Opening events to the public to broaden audience participation and ensure transparency.
- g) Reviewing the guest list in advance to preemptively address potential security concerns.
- h) Placing specific conditions on promotional activities to ensure they are appropriate and non-provocative.
- i) Deciding on the suitability of media presence to control public perception and dissemination of information.
- j) Deploying extra security personnel as needed to ensure the safety of all attendees, particularly for high-risk events.
- k) Restricting event attendance to college staff and students or imposing other demographic limitations based on the sensitivity of the topic.
- l) Collecting and analysing feedback from participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented mitigation measures and identify areas for improvement.

External speakers and their responsibilities

For the purposes of this policy, an 'external speaker' is used to describe any individual or organisation who is not a student or staff member of Regent College London, or one of its contracted partners, and who has been invited to speak to students and/or staff. This includes any individual who is a student or staff member from another institution. It

also includes the main contact from any external venue hire client who is paying to use College facilities.

An 'event' is any event, presentation, visit, activity or initiative organised by a student group, individual or staff member that is being held on the College premises or where the College is being represented at another premises e.g. at an exhibition, school event or fair and online. It also includes events where external speakers are streamed live into an event or a pre-recorded film is shown, as well as activities being held on College premises but organised by external venue hire clients.

All speakers or visitors should be made aware by the person or group arranging the event (by referring visitors to this policy) that they have a responsibility to abide by the law and the College's policies including that they:

- a) must not advocate or incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law
- b) are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts
- c) must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony
- d) are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the College.
- e) Within the framework of lawful free expression and robust debate, they are encouraged to engage with other belief systems and groups in a respectful and constructive manner, mindful of the potential impact of their words, while recognising that the expression of opinions, including those that may be controversial or critical, is protected under the law.

Security Costs

The College may pass on the costs of security for using the premises to those arranging the relevant event or meeting in certain circumstances, such as where the costs are wholly disproportionate to the numbers likely to be attending the event and the event could be held in a more proportionate way, or where a visiting speaker could reasonably be expected to have their own security because of the political or state office they hold.

Records, Annual review and Updates

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and compliant with current laws, including adherence to the rules outlined in the Office for Students' guidance on freedom of speech and regulatory advice. The Prevent and Safeguarding Working Group (PSWG) will review records and reports on the operation of this policy. Regular reports on the implementation of this policy, highlighting operational insights and suggesting improvements, will be provided to the Board of Directors.

An audit trail of actions taken must be maintained in all cases. All forms and records are kept centrally and are subject to audit, discussion, and sharing of good practices. Regular reports on the operation of this policy will be made to the Board of Directors.

Annex A

External speaker risk management matrix

Risk Rating	Rating Description (Examples)
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The speaker or guest is a known expert in their field and is not known to be controversial, or to hold controversial views. ii. The speaker or guest's presence on the College premises is not likely to be regarded as provocative in any way. iii. The topic is not controversial nor is it likely to be regarded as offensive by anyone but the speaker may hold a strong position on their topic. iv. Access to the event is limited to the Regent College students and staff only but attendance may be high. v. It is very unlikely to attract adverse media attention or require staff or security presence.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The topic may be regarded by some as controversial and this could be a cause for concern even if attendance is likely to be low. ii. Or the speaker/guest and /or topic are controversial. iii. There may be adverse media attention and a member of RCL staff or security should attend. iv. The speaker has been refused permission to speak at another institution before. v. Attendance at the event is high and is open to externals; vi. The event is being held at an external venue.
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The speaker/guest and or topic are extremely controversial and will definitely attract adverse media attention. ii. The speaker/guest has been refused permission to attend an event at Regent College London and other institutions before. iii. High attendance is expected at the event. iv. The speaker/guest and/or topic may attract protest from other students or outside organisations. v. Security presence would be essential.