

Important guidance for booking speakers on campus

The University of Southampton is committed to academic freedom and for our staff and students to have the opportunity to engage with a wide range of thought-provoking opinions and perspectives. Our commitment to discussion and critical thinking is a fundamental principle of our institution. We regularly invite a wide range of speakers to our campuses and each year we run successful programmes of talks across all our faculties.

The following guidelines have been drawn up to assist staff and students when organising talks, seminars and lectures on campus, and to form a checklist for successful planning. They also include important information to ensure that these events comply with the University's **Code of Practice to secure freedom of speech within the Law** ("the Code of Practice") <http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/freedom-speech.html>.

Events planning checklist for lectures and talks

Individual members of staff and students across the University will from time to time be responsible for organising events involving visiting speakers. When planning for lectures and talks you will need to consider the following:

• Booking of speakers (see note on Code of Practice below)
• Subject of talk/focus of event
• Room bookings
• Date and time
• Equipment requirements
• Costs
• Audience
• Invitations
• Advertising via Sussed and social media
• Special guests
• Risk Assessment
• Security
• Publicity

Events guide and toolkit for staff

An online guide and toolkit to assist University staff with general event planning has been produced by the Corporate Events team in Communications and Marketing. This is available on Sussed at: <http://www.resource1.soton.ac.uk/commsmarketing/resources/events/toolkit.html>
Staff can also contact the team via events@soton.ac.uk for further help and guidance.

The Events pages on Sussed contain a range of examples of work undertaken for previous events, which will help you create your own documents, invitations and schedules. These include examples of an invitation, reply card, budget template, event schedule and summary template, event guest list template, joining instructions and risk assessment.

Events guidance for students

SUSU's guidance for students wishing to organise events is available at <https://www.susu.org/groups/admin/howto/internalexternalevent>
<https://www.susu.org/groups/admin/howto/speakers>

The Code of Practice to secure freedom of speech within the Law

When booking talks, staff and students are required to assess whether their event might require special consideration under the University's "Code of Practice to secure freedom of speech within the Law".

The University believes in free and open discussion. For this to be achieved, it requires all concerned to display tolerance and avoid needlessly offensive or provocative action and language.

Our aim is to make the process of compliance as straightforward as possible, to ensure that events can take place as planned. It is very rare that events cannot proceed. However, if insufficient notice is given of events that fall into the category of "designated activities" under the Code of Practice, there is a strong likelihood that they may have to be postponed, notwithstanding that this may entail additional costs to the department or faculty concerned.

Key questions to consider when booking talks:

- Is there any possibility of a situation arising in which people might experience harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or violence?
- Is the speaker likely to express controversial views/likely to express views that may attract protest?
- Is the speaker known to hold controversial views /known to hold views that may attract protest?
- Is the speaker from an area where the geo-political situation may attract protest?
- Is the subject matter relating to an area where the geo-political situation may attract protest?
- Is the subject matter, topic or title controversial or likely to evoke a strong emotive response if advertised to the general public?

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the above questions, the organiser of the event should follow the guidelines in the Code of Practice and apply for the event to be classified a "designated activity". Responsibility for overseeing "designated activities" lies with the "Responsible Officer*", or his or her nominee. The organiser should also consider what arrangements might need to be put in place to ensure the safety of participants and others in the general area, and to ensure there is no threat to public order.

Procedure for adhering to the Code of Practice:

1. Check that you have read and understood the provisions of the Code of Practice.
<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/freedom-speech.html>.
2. Consider whether your event should be classed as a "designated activity" under the University's Code of Practice. If you are in any doubt, you should submit the form for assessment. You may be asked to provide information as to how your assessment was reached. *Having your event classified as a "designated activity" does not necessarily mean it will become more complicated.*
3. Designate a "Principal Organiser" who will be responsible for ensuring that the organisers comply with the Code of Practice. *Unless otherwise advised, it will be assumed that the Principal Organiser of an event will be the individual making the room booking.*
4. Make a request to the Responsible Officer* for consideration of a "designated activity" by completing [this form](#) (link to form).
5. Email a copy of the completed form to speakers@soton.ac.uk as far as possible in advance of the event, and no less than 15 working days before it takes place.
6. As the Principal Organiser you should provide the information listed in the Code of Practice about the speaker and the nature of the activity, the venue and preparations for the event. Completion of the form (4) will address these questions.
7. The Responsible Officer may ask for further arrangements to be made by the organising team to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice and the law. As an example, these could include one or more of the following arrangements:

- a. Briefing the University's Security team;
- b. Ensuring additional security staff are on duty;
- c. Booking an alternative more appropriate room;
- d. Changing the date, time and length of the activity;
- e. Appointing a Chair and/or requiring that a debate take place with speakers holding opposing views;
- f. The event being ticket or invitation only;
- g. Ensuring an adequate number of stewards are available, in addition to any University security staff that might be required to maintain safety and order; or
- h. Briefing the University's media relations team, so they are aware in advance of any possible press interest.

Timescales

- Please ensure you brief relevant colleagues as soon as possible about future events.
- Where designated events are concerned the responsible officer needs to be informed at least 15 working days before an event.
- Security should be alerted as soon as possible after the responsible officer gives approval.

Why adherence to the Code of Practice is important

The University has a duty in law to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members of University staff, students and visiting speakers. This includes a responsibility to ensure that the use of University premises is not denied to any individual or group on the grounds of the belief or views of that individual or any member of that group.

At the same time, the right of freedom of expression is subject to laws for the protection of national security and public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime or for the protection of the rights of others.

These guidelines are designed to assist event organisers in making suitable arrangements to ensure that events take place as scheduled and in safety.

For further details consult the Code of Practice <http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/freedom-speech.html>

*Responsible officer: Registrar or their nominee/s

University of Southampton – Hosting a designated activity under the Code of Practice to Secure Freedom of Speech process

