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Freedom of Speech Policy and Code of Practice on for Events, Activities and Meetings.

General principles and legal duties

1. Section 43 of the Education Act 1986 requires universities to uphold freedom of speech for our students, staff and visitors. It requires that within reason, no access to our premises shall be denied to any individual or body on the basis of their beliefs, views, policies or objectives. The Act also places a duty on universities to maintain a code of practice covering the organisation of events where free speech could be a cause for concern.
2. It is the responsibility of every individual registered student or member of RAU or RAUSU staff to take all reasonable steps to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured.
3. The University also values academic freedom, and is committed to promoting free debate and academic enquiry, even when this involves ideas or opinions which are unpopular, controversial or provocative, as in our statement: <https://www.rau.ac.uk/about-us/organisation/public-information/rau-freedom-of-speech-and-academic-freedom>
4. The University will, so far as is reasonably practicable, not refuse permission to access its premises or other location (see 8 below) to any registered student or employee, or individual or group, invited to University events and activities on the grounds relating to a) the beliefs or views of individuals or groups or b) to the policies or objectives of that body.
5. However, the right to freedom of speech must be considered alongside our responsibilities under several other key pieces of legislation not to allow speech or activity which incites hatred or violence, to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, as well as more general responsibilities for health and safety and maintaining good order on university premises. This means that the RAU may have to prohibit or place restrictions on some activities, events or meetings taking place.

Scope and definitions

6. This code covers the actions of all staff on the RAU or RAUSU payroll and all registered students.
7. This code covers events, activities and meetings held for extracurricular purposes, those including alumni and bookings taken internally or externally for any event, activity or meeting taking place on University premises or land, including those for commercial purposes.
8. This code also applies to all events held under the authority or brand of the University, regardless of the location of the event, activity or meeting.

9. The term 'event' is used from this point to refer to events, activities or meetings. Events under this code include both physical and virtual/online events and include speakers or attendees an event using dial-in, video or other technology to participate.

Procedure

10. Each event shall have a designated 'Event Organiser'. The Event Organiser shall be responsible for the conduct of the event. Where the event is an external commercial booking the responsibility to ensure that this procedure is followed belongs to Commercial Services staff who take bookings.
11. The Event Organiser will complete an External Speaker Request Form at least 15 working days before the event is due to be held.
- In the case of events organised by academic staff this form will be passed to the relevant Head of School for consideration and approval.
 - In the case of events organised by RAUSU or other student group the form will be passed to the Director for Students for consideration and approval
 - In the case of bookings taken by Commercial Services the form will be passed to the Director of Commercial Services for consideration and approval.
12. When planning an event the Event Organiser should consider:
- Is there a possibility that violence, harassment, intimidation or verbal abuse may occur?
 - Is there a risk that the speaker may express views which attempt to promote, or draw people into, terrorism?
 - Is the speaker likely to attract a large number of people from inside or outside the University?
 - Is the speaker from a country, region, discipline or group that is likely to attract protest?
- If the answer is yes to any of these questions the Event Organiser should speak to the relevant approving postholder in 11 above before completing the form.
13. If the approving postholder has any concerns the form will be considered by the Deputy Vice Chancellor who will make a final determination.
14. If permission for the event is refused and the Event Organiser feels that this was unreasonable, an appeal may be made within 5 working days to the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor shall consider any representations made and shall confirm in writing to the Event Organiser whether the decision is to be upheld or varied.
15. This procedure is linked to our Prevent processes in order to ensure a more unified system for events bookings and assessment.