SPEAKER AND EVENTS CODE OF CONDUCT

## Introduction

This code of conduct exists to ensure that all Events as defined in the Freedom of Speech and Prevent Policy for Events, run by the University of Reading or hosted on the University’s Premises (as defined in the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice), including online events, within the UK, are designed and delivered in accordance with the University’s Freedom of speech and Prevent Policy for Events.

It is the responsibility of the person organising and/or responsible for the Event to ensure that:

* This Code of Conduct is communicated to all External Speakers (once approved or confirmed via the Review Process for Events involving External Speakers and where required through the Event Notification Process )
* all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the requirements within it are upheld during the running of the event or activity; and they have read and understood the University’s Freedom of Speech and Prevent Policy for Events, Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and the approach to the Prevent Duty.

(\* If a referral to the Events Compliance Panel has been made, the person organising and/or responsible for the Event is the person named on that form.)

## Freedom of speech

Freedom of speech is fundamental to a University. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 requires the University to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for its employees, students, Council members and visiting speakers. The University therefore requires all employees and students of the University and visiting speakers to the University to behave with courtesy towards each other including to those who hold lawful views they may find to be abhorrent or offensive; this obligation is set out in the University’s Freedom of Speech Code of Practice.

However, whilst the law promotes and protects freedom of speech, it also places limits on those freedoms in order to maintain public order and safety and to ensure that there is no breach of the law. The University recognises that in this context a conflict may exist between the laws which promote and protect freedom of speech and those which lawfully restrict it and consequently acknowledges that it has a legal responsibility to create a balance between minimising the possibility that extremism or unlawful conduct will arise on campus and ensuring that it meets its legal obligations in relation to securing freedom of speech.

## Legal Context

Universities operate in a complex legal environment and so it is vital that all individuals involved in the organisation of Events, including speakers themselves, understand the legal framework and context that governs this area.

Free speech includes lawful speech that may be offensive and/or hurtful to some, however unlawful speech is not legally protected.

Examples of unlawful speech include, but are not limited to,:

Speech that constitutes unlawful discrimination and Harassment

Criminal offences including but not limited to:

1. Hate Crimes
2. Support of, or inviting or encouraging support of a Proscribed Organisation
3. Public Order Offences
4. Speech that constitutes defamation

## Conduct

The University expects Event organisers, attendees and speakers, both internal and external, to act in accordance with the law and not to breach the lawful rights of others.

Set out below are some examples of the University’s expectations. Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of unacceptable conduct. The University reserves the right to not permit a speaker to speak at or attend an Event, to require modification of Event materials including promotional, materials, slides, videos and handouts) or refuse their use, to refuse to permit an Event and/or to halt an event at any time if it reasonably considers there may be a breach of the Events Policy or of any legal obligation.

No Event or speaker should operate in a way that:

* Is in breach of the criminal law.
* Incites hatred or violence or any breach of the criminal law.
* Encourages or promotes any acts of terrorism or promotes individuals, groups or organisations that support terrorism.
* Discriminates against or Harasses any person or group on the grounds of sex; gender reassignment; race, nationality or ethnicity; disability; religious or other similar belief; sexual orientation; marriage or civil partnership; pregnancy or maternity or age.
* Defames any person or organisation.
* Raises or gathers funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the University.

All Events and speakers shall:

* Comply with the University’s Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.
* Comply with the University’s Freedom of Speech and Prevent policy for Events .
* Present ideas and opinions, in particular those that may be contentious or potentially offensive, in the spirit of academic debate, being open to challenge and question.
* Follow the University’s policy on and instructions relating to health and safety.

## Segregation

Universities have duties under the Equality Act 2010 as education providers, employers and service providers; thus they must not unlawfully discriminate against students, employees and other individuals to whom services are provided.

Segregation by sex is not permitted in any academic meetings or at Events, lectures or meetings provided for students, or at events attended by members of the public or employees of the University or the students’ union. Segregation is therefore not permissible for any Event covered by the Freedom of Speech and Prevent Policy for Events and this Code of Conduct. The only exception to this is events that are for the purpose of collective religious worship.

## Version control

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| VERSION | KEEPER | REVIEWED | APPROVING AUTHORITY | APPROVAL | START DATE | NEXT REVIEW |
| **1.0** | Fiona Blair | Annually | UEB/Council | July 15 | Sept 15 |  |
| **1.1** | Fiona Blair/ Vicky Baldwin | Annually | UEB/Council | Sept 17 | Jan 18 | July 18 |
| **1.2** | Fiona Blair | Annually | UEB/Council |  | July 2019 | July 2020 |
| **1.3** | Fiona Blair / Vicky Baldwin | Annually | UEB/Council |  | July 2024 | July 2025 |
| **2.** | University Secretary | Every 3 years | UEB | May 2025 | August 2025 | August 2028 |