

Canterbury Christ Church University

Advice to Principal Organisers

Steps to be followed in Organising an External Speaker to a Specified Event

The following procedures are to be used when it is contemplated inviting an external speaker to a 'specified event'.

This is an extract from the [Code of Practice](#) prepared as a summary of steps to be taken.

There is also a [Flow Chart](#) to help determine whether an event is a specified event and the actions to be taken.

How does this relate to the Freedom of Speech?

Canterbury Christ Church University is an academic community of staff and students. Central to this concept, and the University's values as a Church of England Foundation, is the ability of all its members freely to challenge prevailing orthodoxies, query the positions and views of others and to put forward ideas that may sometimes be radical in their formulation, and the University recognises all forms of expression under the law.

What is a 'specified event'?

A 'specified event' which is one involving an external speaker; and where.

- (a) the speaker has previously been known to express views that may be considered controversial, although it is to be recognised that views and opinions change and consideration needs to be given to timeliness; or
- (b) the speaker has previously been prevented from speaking at another University or similar establishment, but the decision of another institution does not bind the University in its decision-making; or
- (c) the proposed title or theme of the event presents a potential risk that views or opinions expressed by speakers may be considered controversial; or
- (d) the proposed speaker/theme is likely to attract attendance from individuals/groups that have previously been known to express views that may be considered controversial; or
- (e) the extent to which there is a potential threat to the safety of the speaker or others, or to preventing the speaker from participating in the event.

What are controversial views and speakers?

Some external speakers are known to hold contentious, even inflammatory or offensive, views.

In some cases, their very presence on campus may be considered to be divisive and may lead to attempts by other groups to prevent the event taking place. Such speakers might include those subject to adverse media attention; or associated with a campaign or political pressure group; or a member of a group whose views may be deemed as being discriminatory or inflammatory to others.

Such speakers are regarded as controversial speakers, but their freedom of speech within the law is recognised.

Step 1 Appointment of a Principal Organiser

The first step is to identify an appointed 'Principal Organiser' for each event involving an external speaker. The Principal Organiser has responsibility for ensuring the request meets the University requirements.

Step 2 Undertaking Due Diligence

The Principal Organiser is to undertake due diligence, taking appropriate advice within and outside the University.

The reason for undertaking due diligence is to identify factors that need to be considered in ensuring freedom of speech within the law, and to establish that the University would be acting within the law in inviting an external speaker, and to provide the basis for planning the event.

It is important that potential problems are identified at the earliest opportunity. The Principal Organiser is expected to highlight at the earliest opportunity any grounds for believing that an external speaker may be controversial.

Step 3 Review of a request for an external speaker event

To allow for timely arrangements, the Principal Organiser is to complete and submit the [External Speakers Planning Form](#), following consultation with any relevant Schools or professional services departments, to the Timetabling and Rooming team within Registry **at least four weeks in advance**.

Step 4 Request for a specified event

The Principal Organiser is to inform the Timetabling and Rooming team within Registry of a specified event.

It is important to allow appropriate time to obtain relevant background information to enable an informed decision to be made on whether the specified event is likely to proceed and under what circumstances.

It is recognised there is a distinction between (a) making the decision in principle relating to the holding of a specified event and inviting an external speaker and (b) agreeing a specific time and date for the event according to the schedule of the external speaker.

No specified event is to be advertised or held until approval has been given.

Circumstances Under which an External Speaker Request might be refused

There may be circumstances, where after full consideration of possible mitigating actions, there are grounds for the General Counsel, after consultation with the Principal Organiser and taking appropriate advice, to refuse a request for an external speaker.

If a refusal is related to the date or timing there is an expectation that consideration is given to rearranging the event to take place at on a different date.

Step 5 Room Bookings for an External Speaker Request for a Specified Event

Any event to be held or to take place on premises managed by the University or CCCU Students' Union requires prior booking through the appropriate agency in accordance with the booking requirements.

The Principal Organiser is to consult with the following as soon as possible before the proposed date of that event

- the Security Manager, if there are security considerations; and/or
- the Corporate Communications Manager, if there is to be any University publicity for the event.

Step 6 Event Organisation

Health and safety obligations need to be taken into account, particularly if there are concerns about the potential safety of individuals involved in a speaker event (whether they are speakers, students, staff or visitors).

Where an event is a specified event, the Principal Organiser will need to complete a [Health and Safety Risk Assessment](#).

Step 7 Review an external speaker decision on the basis of new information

Sometimes decisions may have to be reviewed on the basis of new information or material changes occurring to the planned event, for example a change in speaker, increased risk of disorder or information from the police or community.

This new information may determine whether the event is cancelled or whether further mitigating actions are required to address the new risks.