



## **University of Lincoln Students' Union Policy on Handling Events with External Speakers**

### **Introduction**

Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights to be protected and are protected by law.

Open debate is central to the culture of academic freedom, the development of students' ideas and understanding and is protected by an Act of Parliament relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus.

That said, student safety and welfare is at the heart of the University of Lincoln Students' Union (ULSU's) policies and practices.

As such, the freedom to express views can sometimes be tempered by the need to secure freedom from harm for students and communities.

Where there is a potential for these rights to come into conflict in relation to controversial speakers, ULSU is committed to collaboration that will allow the Union to reach sound, evidenced judgments about the organisation or person in question and that allows the Union to meet its various legal obligations.

The President of the Society or Sports team, Campaigns Network or Volunteer Officer, or the Representative in question, who is organising any event is responsible for the activities that take place within their society or group's events.

All speakers will be made aware of their responsibility to abide by the law by providing them with the below briefing, the University and the Union's various policies, including that:

- They must not incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law;
- They are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organizations that support such acts;
- They must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony;
- Within a framework of positive debate and challenge, seek to avoid insulting other faiths or groups;
- They are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the Trustees;

## **Background**

Societies, Sports Clubs, Campaigns Networks, Volunteer Groups and Representatives must notify ULSU of any events that involve external speakers (defined as individuals or organisations that are not part of ULSU or the University) through these procedures. Normally this will be identified on the event form.

No event involving any external speakers may be publicised until the speaker has been cleared through the appropriate procedures as provided in this policy.

The Union reserves the right to cancel or prohibit any event with an external speaker if the procedures provided herein are not followed or if the relevant health, safety and security criteria cannot be met.

### Initial Process (Stage 1)

The Union's event form requires event organisers to:

- Provide the expected number of attendees;
- Confirm whether the event will be a member only, invitation only event or open to the general public;
- Confirm any external speakers' affiliations (specifically where they are political or religious);
- Provide declaration of any knowledge of controversy attracted by the speaker or topic in the past;
- Confirm website details (where relevant) providing further information on the speaker.

All the above information is to be received by the ULSU Department that supports the group in question at least fourteen days prior to the event, as per the below table:

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>Department</b>
Societies and Sports Clubs	Activities Department
Campaigns Network	Employability and Campaigns Department
Volunteer Officers and Representatives	Student Voice Department

Societies, Sports Clubs, or Campaigns Networks can find event forms on the Student Dashboard or can collect a paper copy at the ULSU Reception.

Volunteer Officers and Representatives can collect paper copies from the ULSU Reception.

Any failure to disclose full speaker details may result in an event/booking being cancelled and could result in referral for Union disciplinary action.

On receipt of the form, the ULSU Department that supports the group will pass this to the Activities Coordinator who will check all speakers on Google after first looking at any web link provided and look at the first three pages of results (if any results are found). This information is then recorded on an internal document, in line with Data Protection Legislation, with a link to the most relevant information about the speaker. These ULSU Departments will receive regular training and briefing on controversial speakers and will liaise closely with student societies, religious and cultural groups and University security. ULSU Departments will refer any speaker who may breach any part of this policy to a member of the Senior Management Team.

### Referred Speakers (Stage 2)

Any events with referred speakers will be investigated by a member of the Senior Management Team for decision by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Trustee Board. They will conduct a short investigation into the speaker and the event that, wherever possible, takes representations from the student group related to the booking and from a wide number of concerned student groups, University officials and external bodies.

In making recommendations they will assess risk on the following basis:

- The potential for any decision to limit freedom of speech as per the University's code of practice in pursuance of the 1994 Education Act;
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause the Union to be in breach of its equal opportunities policy;
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause the Union to fail in its wider legal duties;
- The potential for the event going ahead to cause reputational risk to the Union;
- The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to cause fear or alarm to members;
- The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to give rise to breach of peace.

They may make one of the following recommendations:

- On the basis of the risks presented to not permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead;
- On the basis of the risks presented to fully permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted;
- On the basis of the risks presented to permit the event with the external speaker to go ahead on the basis of regulatory steps designed to reduce the risk.

Regulatory steps designed to reduce risk may include:

- Requiring that the event be filmed by an independent body;
- Requiring that the event be observed by Union, University or third-party officials;
- Requiring that the event be stewarded or subject to security on the door;
- Requiring that an event promoting a particular view includes an opportunity to debate or challenge that view;
- Requiring that an event closed to society, club or group members only be opened to all ULSU members;
- Requiring that a copy of any speech to be delivered by the speaker be submitted to the ULSU in advance;
- Requiring the External Speakers briefing form to be acknowledged and signed by the speaker.

When considering any regulatory steps designed to reduce risk, their potential to themselves cause risk such as a sense of oppression felt by the imposition of security on the door should be taken into account.

The recommendation will be put to the Chief Executive who will liaise with the President in their role as Chair of the Trustee Board. The Chief Executive's decisions on these matters will be routinely communicated to the Trustee Board.

The decision made will be communicated to the Director of Student Affairs at the University of Lincoln within twenty-four hours of the decision being made.

An annual report on referred speakers will be produced for consideration by the Trustee Board.

All Campaigns Networks, Volunteer Officers or Representatives will be made aware of this External Speakers Policy and their associated responsibilities at their training session when they start in their role.



## **Student Groups Annual Communication**

This email, and the External Speakers Policy, should be sent by the relevant Department to all new Committee members (for Sports & Societies), Campaigns Networks, Academic Representatives and Volunteer Officers at the beginning of the Academic year, and a record of the email being sent to the Activities Manager. Any new Societies, Clubs, Projects, Representatives or Officers must be sent this email upon ratification:

The University of Lincoln Students' Union (ULSU) has policies and procedures regarding external speakers in order to enshrine our commitment to Freedom of Speech, while ensuring that we act in the best interests of our students and in a socially responsible manner. We are committed to facilitating debate and discussion to further the extra-curricular development of our students. Constitutionally, ULSU is committed to Freedom of Speech and to support student societies in inviting external speakers to their events to contribute to the dialogue.

When approving external speaker requests, it is important that we take into consideration any risks associated with the speaker attending the event so that we can work with you to mitigate them. This may require additional support and resources, so the more time we have to prepare the better. Risks we must take into consideration when approving a speaker include student wellbeing and health and safety. We also consider the history of the speaker and any media attention they have received previously. Laws regarding discrimination, incitement and intimidation are considered when reviewing the history of the speaker to ensure that we are not perceived to be providing a platform for illegal activity. We will also consider any particular student groups that may take offence at the invitation of the speaker to an event and will encourage you to contact them in advance to discuss their concerns.

The form you need to complete to request permission for an external speaker can be found in the Activities section of our website. It is important that you include as much information as possible so that ULSU can conduct the necessary checks on the speaker. If the form is submitted incomplete or we feel that you have not been thorough enough, we will send the form back to you to be updated. You must leave two clear weeks to carry out our approval process from the date of submission of a complete and appropriately detailed form, so submitting an inappropriately completed form risks your event being postponed.

While we realise that the bureaucratic burden of forms is not insignificant, we hope that you understand that the information that you provide is important for us to be able to fairly assess each speaker and make a decision that is in the best interests of the students and of ULSU.

Overall, responsibility for all ULSU activity, including Club and Society events, lies with the ULSU Trustee Board.

For more information please refer to the External Speakers policy that is included with this email. If any questions remain, please reply to this email with your queries.

Thank you!



### **Briefing for External Speakers at Events**

Welcome, and thank you for agreeing to speak to our students at a University of Lincoln Students' Union (ULSU) event. ULSU exists with the following objectives.

The objects of the Union are the advancement of education of Students at the University for the Public Benefit by:

- Promoting the interests and welfare of students at the University during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students;
- Being the recognised representative channel between students and the University and any other external bodies;
- providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.

A number of our student groups choose to fulfil these objectives by inviting in speakers who can broaden the scope of discussion and debate at events, and we are grateful to those who volunteer their time to contribute to the extra-curricular development of our students.

In allowing speakers to attend ULSU events we approve them based on the understanding that they act within the law and the regulations set by the University and the statutes that those regulations are drawn from. The use of University of Lincoln premises for events that involve external speakers is regulated by the 'University of Lincoln Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech' and these rules are therefore adopted by ULSU in line with our use of their premises for our events. From University of Lincoln 'Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech', relevant clauses include:

'The University lays responsibility on its senior management staff to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that freedom of speech within the law is secured for its staff, students and visiting speakers, and that any activity or event is not obstructed solely because of the views, arguments and opinions which might be expressed during it. This responsibility must be exercised in accordance with the conditions of the Code of Practice.

The University expects officers of the ULSU to be included within this general duty in respect of the policies and activities of the ULSU.

And

The President of the ULSU takes overall responsibility for the activities organised under its aegis

In exercising their responsibilities, the persons named have the authority to refuse or withdraw permission for any event likely to contravene the principles of this Code. Appeals against refusal are heard by the University Registrar or nominee, except in cases of University-level activities where the final decision rests with the Vice Chancellor or nominee.

It is essential to the purposes of University of Lincoln that opportunities for free and open discussion within the law should be safeguarded. Members of The University of Lincoln and all other persons attending meetings held on the premises must behave in a lawful manner and avoid taking any action or using any language which is offensive or provocative. While it is the duty to uphold the aforementioned regulations, it is also our duty to act within the law and protect the safety of our students and staff. Our objective to promote Freedom of Speech is limited only by statute laws that protect individuals and groups of individuals from hate speech. These statutes forbid communication which is hateful, threatening, abusive or insulting and is intended to harass, alarm or distress.

Communication which targets a person based on their skin colour, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion or sexuality is forbidden. It is also a criminal offence to incite or encourage others to break the law. All speakers, as well as event attendees, must be respectful of the beliefs and opinions of others.

The Trustees of ULSU have requested the following of all speakers at University of Lincoln events:

- Speakers must not incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law;
- Speakers are not permitted to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organizations that support such acts;
- Speakers must not spread hatred and intolerance in the community and thus aid in disrupting social and community harmony;
- Within a framework of positive debate and challenge seek to avoid insulting other faiths or groups;
- Speakers are not permitted to raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the Trustees.

If there are concerns raised at any point in the lead up to the event regarding the safety of attendees such as a breach of the peace or a criminal offence the Union will inform the University Registrar, in line with the University Code of Practice, and the Memorandum of Understanding between the ULSU and the University. Conditions may be made before the continuation of the event/event approval. These may include:

- Requesting submission of the speeches in advance of the meeting;
- Limitation on attendees;
- Declaration of attendees in advance of the meeting;
- Stewards to be provided by the organisers;
- Presence of officers of ULSU to ensure good order;
- Limitation on what attendees may bring to the event, which may include banning food or drink or anything that could be used as a missile;
- No banners, flags, placards or similar items being allowed in to the building;
- Alteration of the conduct of the meeting or its facilitation;
- That this form is acknowledged and signed by the speaker.



Organisers would be consulted on these conditions in advance of the event and all speakers notified of the outcome. An event may also be cancelled if there are concerns that the event would risk student safety, violation of health and safety requirements or if the event risked violating the aforementioned laws regarding hatred, discrimination or incitement. ULSU reserves the right to cancel or postpone any event should they have any concerns. We also reserve the right to perform spot checks on events being hosted by ULSU Societies, Sports Clubs, Campaigns Networks, Volunteer Officers or Representatives. If there are breaches of ULSU or the University of Lincoln policies at an event the matter will be referred for disciplinary or legal action.

This briefing document has been provided to ensure all our speakers are aware of the framework we operate within when facilitating external speakers and the measures that may, rarely, be required to support Freedom of Speech at our events. Again, we thank you for agreeing to speak at one of our events.

AG – September 2019