



Freedom of Speech Code of Practice

Policy last reviewed: July 2026

Approved by: RHUL Council
RHSU Board of Trustees

Published on: Royal Holloway, University of London website

This Code of Practice is available in accessible formats on request from the Governance team.

Please contact: governance.office@rhul.ac.uk

Freedom of Speech Code of Practice

Updated July 2026



1. Scope

- 1.1. Royal Holloway and Bedford New College (known as Royal Holloway, University of London, hereafter 'the University') and the Royal Holloway Students' Union (hereafter 'RHSU') and are committed to securing freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law for our staff, members, students, and visiting speakers.
- 1.2. This Freedom of Speech Code of Practice ("the Code") is intended to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for the staff, members, and students of the University, and for visiting speakers.
- 1.3. The Code applies to all events organised by staff or students that are funded by or use the University and/or the RHSU branding. This includes events held on or off University or RHSU premises, as well as online events delivered via social media or streaming platforms.

2. Principles

- 2.1. Respectful debate and conversation can help us challenge discrimination, intolerance, and harmful attitudes, and build strong, positive communities. We recognise that the sharing of ideas is crucial for learning, critical thinking, engaging with and challenging different perspectives, however unpopular or controversial.
- 2.2. Freedom of speech applies to everyone, which means that people are generally free to speak, write or otherwise express their ideas and opinions, without censorship or interference from the state or public authorities, subject only to narrow exceptions. The right to express views and ideas freely is a fundamental right protected under Article 10 of ECHR, which extends to the expression of views that may shock, disturb, or offend the deeply held beliefs of others, and is an essential part of democracy.
- 2.3. Mindful of its legal obligations, the University will foster an environment in which all members of its academic staff can participate fully. They should feel able, within the law, to be able to question and test received wisdom and to express new ideas, views, beliefs and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves at risk of losing their job or privileges at the University or adversely affecting their likelihood of securing promotion or a different job at the University. Consideration of the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom will extend to the planning and provision of teaching and the curriculum at the University.
- 2.4. All visitors to and members of the University community must be mindful of the following:
 - The right to freedom of speech must be exercised within the law. It is a qualified right (which means that the right to freedom of speech must be balanced against other rights and duties; and that there are certain very

specific reasons or circumstances where limitations on speech can be made by law, e.g. for the prevention of disorder or crime);

- Freedom of speech and academic freedom do not protect statements that unlawfully discriminate against or harass, or incite violence or hatred against, other persons and groups. The University has legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2.5. Relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, or belief (including none), sex, and sexual orientation.

- However, the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 should not be interpreted to undermine freedom of speech and academic freedom. As a result, students' learning experience and the working environment of staff may include exposure to research, course material, discussions or speaker's views that they find offensive, contentious or unacceptable, and this is unlikely to be considered unlawful harassment or discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.
- It is not always easy to draw the boundary between expressing intolerant or offensive views (which are afforded protection under freedom of speech) and unlawful speech. In each situation consideration must be given to the particular circumstances, including the intention of the person making the statement, the context in which they make it, the intended audience, and the particular words and form of communication. A recipient's perception will be taken into account, along with whether it is reasonable for the conduct in question to have had that effect on them.
- The protection of freedom of speech does not extend to allowing a speaker to commit a criminal offence in the course of speaking. It is a criminal offence to stir up hatred on racial or religious grounds, or on the ground of sexual orientation. Offensive or insulting language may also constitute harassment, either under the Equality Act 2010, or if directed at an individual under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.
- Universities are subject to the statutory "Prevent" duty under The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 "to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism", including all forms of terrorism.
- Universities and Student Unions have other legal responsibilities, such as those relating to preventing discrimination, harassment and victimisation and the health, safety and welfare of employees, students, external speakers and visitors. In each case, these need to be balanced with the duty to promote and secure freedom of speech.

2.6. As explained above, the University is subject to the public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 which requires us to have due regard to the need to promote good relations between different communities protected by equality law. In the context of our duties in relation to freedom of

speech and academic freedom, we must consider the potential impact on staff and students who may have one or more protected characteristics.

- 2.7. Staff and students, both individually and in groups, have an obligation to treat others with respect. All members of the University are responsible for helping to create a community that is free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- 2.8. The University and RHSU will ensure individuals and groups are supported in participating in vigorous debate, even on topics they might find personally uncomfortable or offensive. In respect of external speaker events, the University and RHSU will approach these on the basis that they should proceed, in compliance with the law and this Code, and that individuals and groups will not be denied the use of its premises or facilities based on their ideas, opinions, policy or objectives. The only exceptions to this are [proscribed organisations](#), and the University and RHSU will not host these organisations, speakers connected to these organisations nor speakers who are likely to encourage support for these organisations.
- 2.9. The University and RHSU shall not, as a matter of principle, seek to require an event organiser to meet unusual costs relating to security and/or other health and safety issues related to running the event. In certain exceptional circumstances where, in the reasonable opinion of the University's Chief Operating Officer or other nominated member of the University's Executive Board (having sought appropriate advice) the additional costs would be prohibitive, the University will discuss with the event organiser how best to enable the event to go ahead. This might include a proportionate sharing of some, or all, of the relevant costs, or hosting an event online.
 - Additional security and health and safety costs would be viewed as prohibitive when such costs exceed the equivalent cost of 24 hours of full University security.
 - The University will define, annually, a maximum budget for additional security and health and safety costs associated with events covered by the Code. Once this ceiling has been reached, the organisers of events for which further additional security and health and safety costs are deemed necessary will be required to pay such costs in full, to move the event online, or to postpone the event. This limit will be of the order of the equivalent of 12 x 24 hours of full university security.

3. Requesting the invitation of External Speakers to events on University and RHSU premises (offline or online).

- 3.1. The University's Event with External Speakers Procedure (Appendix 1) sets out the approval process for events within the scope of this Code, which are not an integral part of the day-to-day academic or administrative business of the University, and which will be attended by external speakers.
- 3.2. The Event with External Speakers Procedure will not normally need to be applied to visiting speakers who are contributing to approved academic programmes, research seminars, or similar knowledge-sharing activities that form part of the University's normal day-to-day business.
- 3.3. The University is committed to promoting freedom of speech within the law and academic freedom. Colleagues are encouraged to understand the Procedure's risk-based approach, which is intended to support the respectful exchange of ideas.

- 3.4. Colleagues organising approved academic programmes, research seminars, or similar knowledge-sharing activities that form part of the University's normal day-to-day business within Departments, Research Centres or Professional Services should feel able to call on the Procedure where appropriate, particularly where this would help the Event Lead ensure that the University's legal obligations are met. This may include, for example, obligations relating to the safety and security of visitors, staff and students which may require additional resource that is not available locally.
- 3.5. Staff and students organising events are expected to organise their activities in line with the policies and procedures of the University or RHSU, including but not restricted to the University Events Safety Policy: [rhul-events-safety-policy-v1.1-final.pdf](#) and RHSU risk assessment guidance: [Risk Assessments: What, How, When and Why : Royal Holloway Students' Union](#).

4. Conduct

- 4.1. Attendees at all events, whether attended by external speakers or otherwise, (including those speaking at, chairing, or running the event) are always expected to conduct themselves in accordance with this Code.
- 4.2. We expect that colleagues who are organising academic activities do so with an awareness of the rights of any student or member of staff of the University, or any visitor to the University to freedom of speech.
- 4.3. It is good practice for all external speakers to agree to abide by the provisions of the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and sign the speaker agreement form Appendix 2. This is **mandatory** for all events assessed as **medium or high risk**.

5. Review and Lessons Learned

- 5.1. Annually, the University and RHSU will review the effectiveness of their procedures under the Code and share lessons learned, to better secure and promote freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law for our staff, members, students, and visiting speakers.

6. Related Documents

- 6.1. This Code should be read in conjunction with the following documents, as necessary:

RHUL Events Safety Policy:	rhul-events-safety-policy-v1.1-final.pdf
RHSU risk assessment guidance	Risk Assessments: What, How, When and Why : Royal Holloway Students' Union
RHUL events toolkit	Events toolkit - Royal Holloway Staff Intranet
RHSU events guidance	How to put on an event - A Guide to Event Planning : Royal Holloway Students' Union .
Estates policies and events guides	Founder's Square Policy and Events Guide , The Atrium Events Policy and Booking Guide , The Study Terrace Events Policy and Guide to Booking , The Picture Gallery Events Policy and Guide to Booking

Dignity at Work policy	dignity-at-work-july-2025-final.pdf
Dignity and Respect (students) Policy	30.-dignity-and-respect-policy-v3-jun-24.pdf
Prevent Policy	safeguarding-the-prevent-duty-jan-22.pdf
Acceptable Use of IT Policy	acceptable-use-of-information-technology.pdf
Staff Social Media Policy	social-media-policy.pdf
Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure	JCAUT
Student Conduct Regulations	Student Policies & Regulations Hub
RHSU Constitution and Bye Laws	Constitution
RHSU Social media policy	Social-Media-Policy-2025(1).pdf

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 **Events with External Speakers Guidance and forms**

Appendix 2: **AGREEMENT AND GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL SPEAKERS**

Version Control:

V 1.0	A Bramley	Approved by EB subject to amends
V 1.1	A Bramley	Updated following EB and JEC with amends
V 1.2	A Bramley	Updated following RHSU Trustees meeting. Approved by RHUL Council 9 th July 2026

Policy owner(s)	University Secretary, University, and Chief Executive, Students' Union
Approving Bodies	University Council and the Students' Union Board of Trustees
Approved on	9 th July 2026
Review deadline	July 2027

Events with External Speakers Guidance

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this guidance is to set out the Royal Holloway, University of London, ('the University') and the Royal Holloway Students' Union ('RHSU') requirements for inviting guest speakers to attend or contribute to University and/or RHSU activities, whether on campus or elsewhere (including online).
- 1.2. This procedure should be read alongside the University and RHSU's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice ("the Code"), which is intended to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for the staff, members, and students of the University, and for visiting speakers. In order to fulfil their duties, the university and RHSU have a responsibility to be aware of the context of events that are not an integral part of the day-to-day business of the University and/or RHSU, and which will be attended by external speakers.
- 1.3. This procedure ensures that this responsibility is met, that steps can be taken to enable freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law, that risks have been assessed appropriately, that event organisers explicitly understand their obligations when inviting external speakers to events and that external speakers understand the Code and agree to abide by it.
- 1.4. The University and RHSU will approach this procedure on the basis that events should usually proceed, in compliance with the law and this Code, and that individuals and groups will not be denied the use of their premises or facilities based on their ideas, opinions, policy or objectives.
- 1.5. The document describes the restrictions that may be imposed if it is lawful, necessary, and practicable to enable the event to go ahead without cancellation, and the procedure and criteria that will be used when making this determination.
- 1.6. The University will always ensure that it imposes the minimum restrictions required to manage the identified impact.
- 1.7. The only exceptions to this are [proscribed organisations](#). The University and RHSU will not host these organisations, speakers connected to these organisations nor speakers who are likely to encourage support for these organisations.

2. Scope

- 2.1. The Freedom of Speech Code of Practice applies to all events organised by staff or students that are funded by or use the University and/or the RHSU branding. This includes events held on or off University or RHSU premises, as well as online events delivered via social media or streaming platforms.
- 2.2. This procedure applies to those events that fall within the scope of the Code, which are not an integral part of the day-to-day business of the University and/or RHSU, and which will be attended by external speakers.
- 2.3. External speakers may only be invited by a recognised collective body within the University (e.g. a Faculty, a Department, RHSU or an RHSU recognised society or affiliated group, a University-recognised trades union, a Professional Services Directorate, University Council).
- 2.4. External speakers must not be invited by staff or students acting independently outside of a recognised collective body, for events held in person on University or RHSU controlled land, or for online events linked to the University or RHSU.

Appendix 1

- 2.5. Events organised by students through RHSU or affiliated groups and societies should follow the RHSU events guidance: [How to put on an event - A Guide to Event Planning : Royal Holloway Students' Union](#). guidance note on completing risk assessments which can be found at: [Risk Assessments: What, How, When and Why : Royal Holloway Students' Union](#).
- 2.6. This Event with External Speakers Procedure primarily concerns itself with events led by or on behalf of University staff and the aspects of the event covered by the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, but there are other potential risks associated with holding any event.
- 2.7. Events organised or co-organised by the University, that are held at the University or any other venue and events that are organised by third parties and are held at University need to be properly safety managed. The tools and policies covering this for staff are found at [Event Safety - Royal Holloway Staff Intranet](#).

3. Conditions for inviting external speakers to RHSU events

- 3.1. If you are holding an in-person event, an online event or a hybrid event with an external speaker, you need to follow the RHSU events procedure [How to put on an event - A Guide to Event Planning : Royal Holloway Students' Union](#).
- 3.2. Your request to hold an event with an external speaker should be submitted at least 4 weeks before the event, to the Student Opportunities Team.
- 3.3. It is good practice for all external speakers to agree to abide by the provisions of the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and sign the speaker agreement form Appendix 2. This is **mandatory** for all events assessed as **medium or high risk**, and these forms will be retained by the Student Opportunities Team at RHSU for an audit trail.
- 3.4. Event organisers are responsible for arranging all room booking, catering and security for events.

4. Conditions for inviting external speakers to University events

- 4.1. If you are holding an in-person event, an online event or a hybrid event with an external speaker, you need to follow the University External Speaker procedure.
- 4.2. Your request to hold an event must be formally submitted to your Head of Department/Director at least 4 weeks in advance, copying in governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk.
- 4.3. It is good practice for all external speakers to agree to abide by the provisions of the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and sign the speaker agreement form Appendix 2. This is **mandatory** for all events assessed as **medium or high risk**, and these forms will be retained by the Department and/or Governance Office for an audit trail.
- 4.4. The designated Event Lead is responsible for arranging all room booking, catering and security for events and for following the event safety policy [rhul-events-safety-policy-v1.1-final.pdf](#)

5. Mitigating actions and restrictions

- 5.1. The University and/or RHSU may request mitigating actions or restrictions if it is lawful, necessary, and practicable:
 - To prevent unlawful discrimination against other persons and groups.

Appendix 1

- In the interests of national security or public safety (e.g. to prohibit hoax bomb claims).
- For the prevention of disorder or crime (e.g. to prohibit incitement to violence).
- For the protection of the reputation or rights of others (e.g. as reflected in defamation law and the prohibition on harassment under the Equality Act 2010).
- For preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence (e.g. trade secrets).
- If the views being expressed, or likely to be expressed, constitute extremist views that risk drawing people into terrorism or are shared by terrorist groups and such risk can be effectively mitigated without cancellation of the event.

5.2. It may be necessary for the University and/or RHSU to apply certain proportionate conditions for the event to proceed, to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of our community as well as that of the external speaker. For example, this might include but is not limited to:

- that tickets are issued when a meeting is open to the public.
- that content notes are issued.
- that an adequate number of accredited security stewards be provided by the organisers.
- that the time or location of the event be varied, including moving an in-person event online.

5.3. University operations and security staff reserve the right to attend any and all events approved via this procedure.

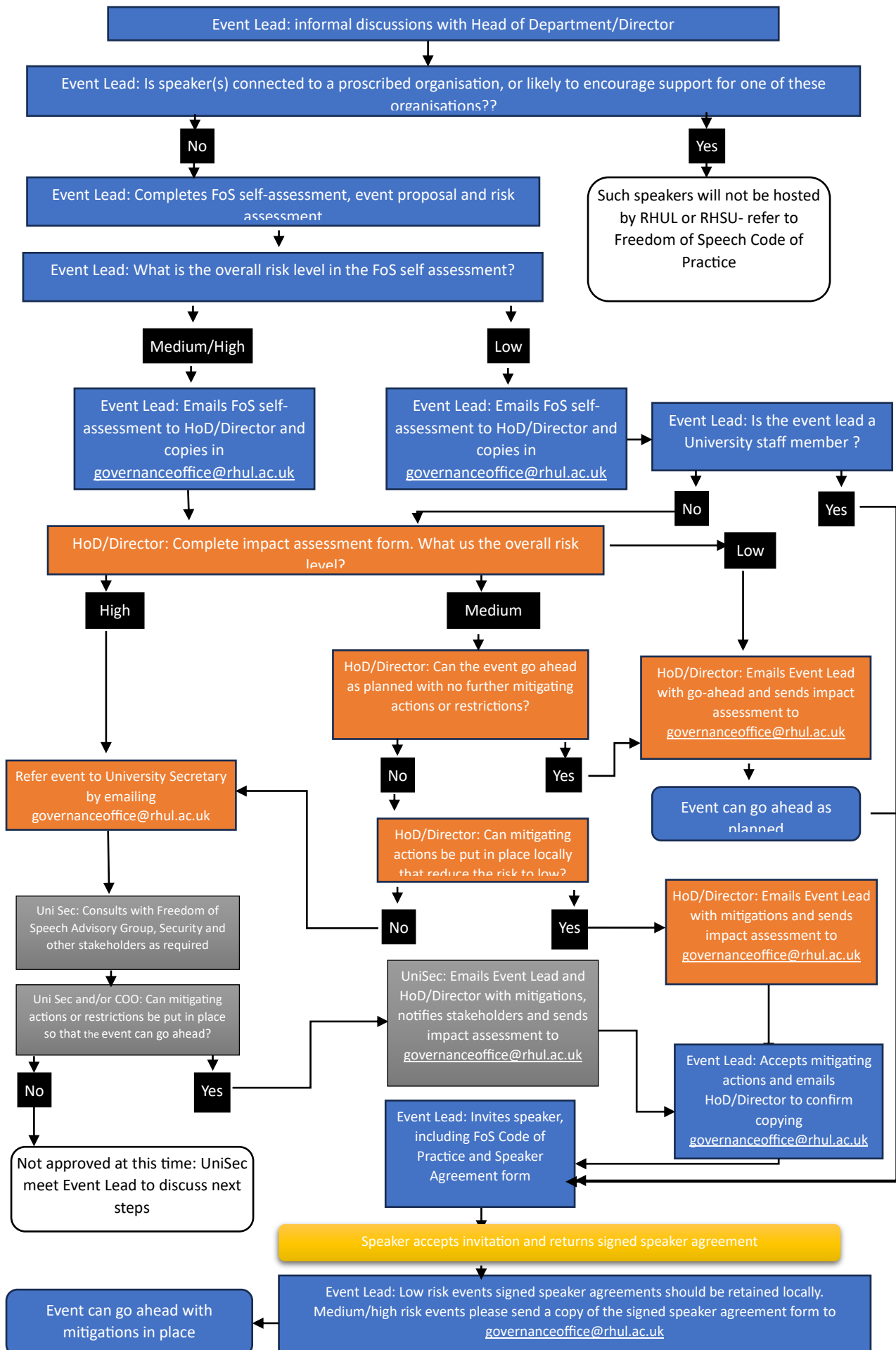
6. External Speaker Risk Rating Matrix

Risk Rating	Rating Description	Mitigation Measures
LOW	• The speaker or guest is a known expert in their field and is not known to be controversial, or to hold controversial views. • The speaker or guest's presence is not likely to be regarded as provocative in any way. • The topic is not controversial nor is it likely to be regarded as offensive by anyone, but the speaker may hold a strong position on the topic. • Access to the event is limited to the University students and staff only but attendance may be high. • It is very unlikely to attract media attention or require security presence	None required, however the rhul-events-safety-policy-v1.1-final.pdf should still be followed for the event.
MEDIUM	• The speaker or guest is known to be controversial. • The topic may be regarded by some as controversial and this could be a cause for concern even if attendance is likely to be low. • There may be media attention • The speaker has been refused permission to speak at another institution before. • Attendance at the event is high and is open to an external audience.	May include: • Varying the time or location of the event to enhance safety and accessibility. • Appointing a chair to ensure the event proceeds respectfully and within planned parameters. • Giving consideration as to whether the event could include multiple speakers with diverse viewpoints, or whether events presenting alternative viewpoints can be or will be hosted by the University at another point in the year. • Ticketing to manage entry and ensure attendees are preregistered. • Deploying extra security personnel as needed to ensure the safety of all attendees.

Appendix 1

Risk Rating	Rating Description	Mitigation Measures
HIGH	• The speaker or guest and/or topic are extremely controversial and is very likely to attract media attention. • The speaker or guest has been refused permission to attend an event at the University and/or other institutions before. • High attendance is expected at the event. • The speaker or guest and/or topic may attract protest from students and/or outside organisations. • Security presence would be essential.	To be determined as part of the Referral Process but may include: • Operating as a closed event and potentially limiting attendance to University staff and students only • Moving an event to an online platform. • Appointing moderators or designated Chair to monitor the speaker's presentation and to intervene if necessary. • Developing a plan for addressing disruptions, including the possibility of stopping the event while in progress. • Hiring additional accredited security and including bag searches as standard. • Liaising with local Police on arrangements for the event.

7. University External Speaker Procedure: Overview



8. University External Speaker Procedure- Step by Step

- 9.1. The event will not go ahead until the external speaker has been approved so please make sure no advertisement or publicity has been released until you have received official confirmation in writing that the event may go ahead.
- 9.2. This procedure only applies to external speakers at events organised by staff or students that are funded by or use the University branding. This will usually be events organised by staff, but may sometimes be student-led.
- 9.3. Where possible, the designated event lead for this procedure should be a member of University staff. If the designated event lead is a student, formal approval must be sought from the Head of Department/Director.
- 9.4. This procedure should be followed for each external speaker associated with an event. For an event with multiple external speakers, this will require multiple assessments. What this does mean is that approval for the whole event is not contingent on the risk associated with one speaker and each speaker can be considered separately.

Step 1. Initial discussion

The Event Lead should begin by having informal discussions with the relevant Head of Department or Director about the proposed event.

Q1: The Event Lead should consider whether the speaker is:

- connected to a proscribed organisation; or
- likely to encourage support for a proscribed organisation.

Step 2. Proscribed organisation check

If the answer to Q1 is yes, the **speaker should not be hosted**- refer to the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice.

If the answer to Q1 is no, continue with the process.

Step 3. Freedom of Speech self-assessment

The Event Lead must complete the following:

- Freedom of Speech self-assessment

The Event Lead should then identify the overall risk level from the Freedom of Speech self-assessment.

The possible outcomes are: low, medium or high risk

Step 4. Low-risk events

1. If the Freedom of Speech self-assessment identifies the event as low risk, the Event Lead should email the Freedom of Speech self-assessment to the relevant Head of Department or Director, copied to: governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk
2. The Head of Department or Director should then reply to the Event Lead confirming that the event may go ahead, copied to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk
3. The event may then go ahead as planned- go to **Step 11**.

Step 5. Medium or high-risk events

If the Freedom of Speech self-assessment identifies the event as medium or high risk, the Event Lead should email the Freedom of Speech self-assessment to the relevant Head of Department or Director, copied to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk

Appendix 1

The Head of Department or Director must then complete the impact assessment form and determine the overall risk level.

Step 6. Impact assessment outcome: low risk

If the Head of Department or Director determines that the impact assessment risk level is low, the Head of Department or Director should email the Event Lead confirming that the event may go ahead, copied to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk and including the impact assessment

The event may then go ahead as planned. Go to **Step 11**.

Step 7. Impact assessment outcome: medium risk

If the Head of Department or Director determines that the impact assessment risk level is medium, the Head of Department or Director should consider whether the event can go ahead as planned with no further mitigating actions or restrictions.

1. If the event can go ahead as planned, the Head of Department or Director should email the Event Lead confirming that the event may go ahead, copied to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk and including the impact assessment

The event may then go ahead as planned. Go to **Step 11**.

2. If the event cannot go ahead as planned without further action, the Head of Department/Director should consider whether mitigating actions can be put in place locally that would reduce the risk to low. If local mitigations can reduce the risk to low, the Head of Department/Director should email the Event Lead with the required mitigating actions copied to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk and including the impact assessment.

The event may go ahead if the Event Lead accepts and implements the conditions and confirms to the Head of Department/Director by email copying governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk. Go to **Step 11**

Step 8: If local mitigations cannot reduce the risk to low- escalate

The Head of Department or Director should consider whether mitigating actions can be put in place locally to reduce the risk to low. If they cannot, the Head of Department or Director should notify the Event Lead and escalate to the University Secretary by emailing the impact assessment to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk.

Go to **Step 9**.

Step 9. Impact assessment outcome: high risk, or medium risk that cannot be mitigated locally

If the Head of Department or Director determines that the impact assessment risk level is high, the event must be referred to the University Secretary. The referral should be made by email to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk, including the impact assessment.

The University Secretary will then consult as required with:

- the Freedom of Speech Advisory Group (FoSAG);
- University Security; and/or
- other relevant parties.

The University Secretary and/or the Chief Operating Officer will consider whether mitigating actions or restrictions can be put in place so that the event can go ahead and update the impact assessment accordingly.

Step 10.

Appendix 1

If the event can proceed, subject to mitigations or restrictions, the University Secretary should email the Event Lead with the required mitigating actions copied to the Head of Department/Director and copied to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk and including the updated impact assessment.

The event may go ahead if the Event Lead accepts and implements the conditions and confirms to the Head of Department/Director by email copying governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk.

Step 11

The Event Lead can now invite the speaker, copying governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk including the:

- Freedom of Speech Code of Practice; and
- Speaker Agreement form.

The speaker must accept the invitation and return the signed Speaker Agreement.

The Event Lead should ensure that signed Speaker Agreements are

1. held locally for low risk events
2. copied to governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk if events were rated as medium or high risk.

Step 12: Event cannot proceed at this time

In very rare occasions it may not be possible to approve an external speaker because suitable mitigating actions or restrictions cannot be identified.

The University Secretary should meet with the Event Lead to discuss next steps. This might include, for example, postponing the event to enable mitigating actions to be put in place.

9. Summary of responsibilities

9.1. Event Lead

The Event Lead is responsible for:

- initiating informal discussions with the Head of Department or Director;
- checking whether the speaker may be connected to or supportive of a proscribed organisation;
- completing the Freedom of Speech self-assessment, event proposal and risk assessment;
- emailing the assessment to the Head of Department or Director and copying the Governance Office;
- accepting and putting in place any required mitigating actions;
- inviting the speaker where appropriate;
- issuing the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and Speaker Agreement form;
- ensuring the signed Speaker Agreement is returned before the event proceeds. For medium or high risk events they are also responsible for sending the signed Speaker Agreement Form to the decision-maker that agreed the event could go ahead, i.e. Head of Department, Director or Governance Office.

9.2. Head of Department or Director

The Head of Department or Director is responsible for:

- reviewing the Freedom of Speech self-assessment;
- completing the impact assessment where required;
- determining the overall risk level;
- approving low-risk events;
- identifying and communicating mitigating actions where required;
- referring high-risk events to the University Secretary;
- ensuring the impact assessment is sent to the Governance Office.
- Ensuring that the relevant documentation is retained for an audit trail, particularly for medium and high risk events.

9.3. University Secretary

The University Secretary is responsible for:

- reviewing high-risk referrals, and medium-risk events where there are insufficient local mitigating actions to reduce the risk to low;
- consulting with the Freedom of Speech Advisory Group, Security and/or other relevant parties as appropriate;
- deciding whether mitigating actions or restrictions can enable the event to proceed;
- confirming where an event is not approved at this time;
- meeting with the Event Lead to discuss next steps where an event cannot proceed.

9.4. Governance Office

The Governance Office should be copied into relevant correspondence and receive completed assessments using governanceoffice@rhul.ac.uk. This is the first point of contact for questions about this process. The Governance Office is responsible for:

Appendix 1

- Co-ordinating the review of high high-risk referrals, and medium-risk events where there are insufficient local mitigating actions to reduce the risk to low;
- Supporting communications about the Code;
- Retaining documentation for the audit trail and reporting to the Freedom of Speech Advisory Group, Executive Board and Council and its Committees.

10. Criteria for Impact Assessment:

- 10.1. An External Speaker Impact Assessment form should be completed for each External Speaker considered under this procedure
- 10.2. A brief background check will be conducted into the External Speaker's history. This can be as simple as an internet search. The purpose is to establish if any restrictions are required as set out in sections 5 and 6.
- 10.3. The request will also be assessed to determine the extent to which restrictions and/or managing actions may be needed to enable the event to go ahead:
 - To prevent unlawful discrimination against other persons and groups.
 - In the interests of national security or public safety (e.g. to prohibit hoax bomb claims).
 - For the prevention of disorder or crime (e.g. to prohibit incitement to violence).
 - For the protection of the reputation or rights of others (e.g. as reflected in defamation law and the prohibition on harassment under the Equality Act 2010).
 - For preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence (e.g. trade secrets).
 - If the views being expressed, or likely to be expressed, constitute extremist views that risk drawing people into terrorism or are shared by terrorist groups and such risk can be effectively mitigated without cancellation of the event.

RHUL Freedom of Speech Self-Assessment- for Completion by Event Lead**Background**

Name	
Department	
College/University ID	
Email address	
Phone number	
Date and time of event	
Duration (hours)	
Title of event	
Speaker name	
Organisation represented	
Any other organisations speaker is associated with (whether or not they are representing them at the event)	
Has the speaker spoken at an event at RHUL / RHSU previously?	
Topic of talk/title of talk	
Has the speaker previously spoken at events where there have been incidents of protest, public disorder, illegal activities, significant publicity or where permission to speak has been refused?	
Will the event be recorded and if so, how will the recording be distributed?	
Proposed venue/streaming platform	
Anticipated number of attendees	
Purpose of the event (e.g. Careers, research, Knowledge exchange, Teaching, training, Graduation, Other (please state))	
Please provide draft copy of advertising for the event e.g. email, social media posts. If not yet available, say not available.	

Self-assessment:

With reference to the External Speaker risk matrix below: what level of risk do you assess the event as, and why?	
Are there any concerns that the event might breach the RHUL/RHSU Freedom of Speech Code of Practice?	
Is it likely that the event will attract media interest?	
Is it likely that the event will attract a large gathering, which might have health and safety or crowd control implications?	
Are there any known security threats/issues?	
Does the speaker have their own personal security arrangements? (if not known, put not known- do not approach speaker at this point)	
What consideration have you given to minimising noise disruption and the impact on other people on campus?	

Risk Rating	Rating Description
LOW	- The speaker or guest is a known expert in their field and is not known to be controversial, or to hold controversial views. - The speaker or guest's presence is not likely to be regarded as provocative in any way. - The topic is not controversial nor is it likely to be regarded as offensive by anyone, but the speaker may hold a strong position on the topic. - Access to the event is limited to the University students and staff only but attendance may be high. - It is very unlikely to attract adverse media attention or require security presence
MEDIUM	- The speaker or guest is known to be controversial. - The topic may be regarded by some as controversial and this could be a cause for concern even if attendance is likely to be low. - There may be adverse media attention and security should attend. - The speaker has been refused permission to speak at the University or another institution before. - Attendance at the event is high and is open to an external audience.

Appendix 1

Risk Rating	Rating Description
HIGH	• The speaker or guest and/or topic are extremely controversial and will definitely attract adverse media attention. • The speaker or guest has been refused permission to attend an event at the University and/or other institutions before. • High attendance is expected at the event. • The speaker or guest and/or topic may attract protest from students and/or outside organisations. • Security presence would be essential.

External Speaker Impact Assessment form- for completion by Heads of Departments/Directors

Date of Event:		Title of Event:	
Organising group / department:		Speaker Name	
Designated Event Lead name		Designated Event Lead email	
HoD/Director name		Decision and Date.	

Restrictions on freedom of speech may be imposed if it is lawful, necessary, and practicable for the following legitimate purposes:

- To prevent unlawful discrimination against other persons and groups.
- In the interests of national security or public safety (e.g. to prohibit hoax bomb claims).
- For the prevention of disorder or crime (e.g. to prohibit incitement to violence).
- For the protection of the reputation or rights of others (e.g. as reflected in defamation law and the prohibition on harassment under the Equality Act 2010).
- For preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence (e.g. trade secrets).
- If the views being expressed, or likely to be expressed, constitute extremist views that risk drawing people into terrorism or are shared by terrorist groups and such risk can be effectively mitigated without cancellation of the event.

Please refer to the external speaker risk rating matrix to assess risk level.

Appendix 1

Area of Risk	Risk Level Low/Medium/High	Consultation e.g. with Security Services	Notes	Proposed Risk Mitigations
Speaker represents or is associated with an organisation proscribed by the UK government				
The speaker may include speech amounting to a terrorism related offence				
The speaker may cause or incite violence, hatred, personal harassment, alarm or distress				
Due to the talk subject, speaker, the organisations they are associated with, or the organisers of the event - the event may attract heightened media interest which may lead to potential issues around capacity				
The talk subject, speaker, the organisations they are associated with, or the organisers of the event – have attracted controversy and/or may mobilise significant protest				
Other (please state)				

AGREEMENT AND GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL SPEAKERS

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College (known as Royal Holloway, University of London, hereafter 'the University') and the Royal Holloway Students' Union (hereafter 'RHSU') and are committed to securing freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law for our staff, members, students, and visiting speakers.

The Code applies to all events organised by staff or students that are funded by or use the University and/or the RHSU branding. This includes events held on or off University or RHSU premises, as well as online events delivered via social media or streaming platforms.

Our responsibility extends to ensuring that external speakers understand the code and are mindful of the following:

- The right to freedom of speech must be exercised within the law. It is a qualified right - which means that the right to freedom of speech must be balanced against other rights and duties; and that there are certain very specific reasons or circumstances where limitations on speech can be made by law, e.g. for the prevention of disorder or crime.
- Freedom of speech and academic freedom do not protect statements that unlawfully discriminate against or harass, or incite violence or hatred against, other persons and groups.

External speakers must agree to the following terms and conditions in relation to the above event:

- Not to incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law.
- Not to encourage, glorify or promote any acts of extremist behaviour including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts.

University and/or RHSU representatives and/or security stewards have the right and responsibility to interrupt and/or stop the presentation for any violation of this agreement.

I have read these guidelines and the Code, and agree to abide by them.

Name of Visiting Speaker:

Event name and date:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____