



St George's, University of London Students' Union

Events and External Speakers and Visitors Policy
(for Student-led events)

March 2024

Events and External Speakers and Visitors Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

St George's, University of London Students' Union, (SGSU) wishes to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for all students and staff, and for all persons authorised to be on the institution's premises, including external speakers and visitors. The right to freedom of speech must be balanced with the need to protect people from abuse, for example through the inciting of hatred, and this policy seeks to support that balance in the context of events and external speakers and visitors.

SGSU also wishes to support event organisers to make appropriate considerations and judgements with regards to, for example, the health and safety aspects of event hosting, and safeguarding in cases where children and young people will be present. This policy and the associated procedures seeks to direct this support.

1.2 Scope

The SGSU Events and External Speakers and Visitors Policy (for Student-led events) applies to:

- All registered students of St George's, University of London (St George's)
- All SGSU staff and associated sabbatical officers
- All events (as defined in section 2.1)
- Activities of St George's students taking place away from our premises fall within this Policy's scope if the activities are perceived to be affiliated with SGSU or St George's e.g. through funding or branding.

2. DEFINITIONS UNDER THIS POLICY

2.1 Events

This policy uses the term "event" to refer to any meetings or activities that are organised by:

- St George's Student Union (SGSU) societies
- Individual St George's students
- SGSU staff, for the attendance of St George's Students

(for purposes other than routine social interaction (e.g. meeting up with friends, group revision sessions etc.)

Defined events may include but are not limited to; hosting student society stands or stalls, prayer meetings, conferences, musical or theatrical performances, organisation of charity, or volunteering, student-organised outreach activities, arts or sports events.

This policy applies to any such event that is held on St George's and SGSU premises or that is held on other premises and perceived to be affiliated with the institution e.g. through funding or branding of the event.

2.2 External Speakers and Visitors

For the purpose of this policy, an external speaker or external visitor is defined as any speaker or visitor who is *not* a current member of St George's staff or a currently registered student of St George's. Accordingly, if speaking at an event (either in person or virtually, e.g. via Skype) the following are classed as external speakers:

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- Student alumnus
- Ex- St George's employees
- Current or Ex- St George's NHS Foundation Trust employees

3. SGSU VALUES

SGSU wishes to provide an inclusive learning environment of intellectual rigour where debates flourish and staff and students are able to engage in free-ranging discussions. Therefore every member of SGSU shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, to hold opinions without interference, disability or disadvantage, and to freedom of expression within the law, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas.

Additionally SGSU is committed to creating and promoting a safe campus environment characterised by good relations between staff and students of different backgrounds or beliefs who are tolerant and respectful of each other. The institution aims to ensure that people from all backgrounds, including those from all faiths and none, are afforded equivalent protection from intimidation, harassment and violent behaviour.

Discrimination, intimidation, harassment, intolerance and violence have no place on campus.

4. THE LAW

The Equality Challenge Unit (established to promote equality for staff and students in the Higher Education sector, now part of Advance HE) notes that legislation in this area is characterised by three key themes; Protection of the special status of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Anti-discrimination legislation and promotion of equality, and Provisions that qualify those rights. More detail and the related Acts can be found in the ECU guidance [Promoting good relations on campus: a guide for higher and further education](#) (2013).

The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 amended the Public Order Act 1986 to create offences involved in 'stirring up hatred' (namely the manifestation of hatred that could lead to a public order offence) against persons on religious grounds. The legislation ensures that protection is provided to people against harm because of their religious beliefs or lack thereof. The law does not outlaw disagreement with or disapproval of a particular religious viewpoint, but rather focuses on those who stir up violence and hatred on religious grounds. The main offences cover:

- the use of words or behaviour or display of written material
- publishing or distributing written material
- the public performance of a play
- distributing, showing or playing a recording

The Act also creates a new offence of producing threatening material with a view to using it in a way that is intended to stir up religious hatred. For example, if a student sent an email that could stir up hatred against people of a particular faith, this could constitute a criminal offence under the Act.

5. RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Dignity at Work and Study Policy
- The Student Union's 'No Platform' Policy

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- Prevent Policy
- Timetabling and Room Booking Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy#

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 The Event Organiser

All event organisers assume responsibility for any event organised by them as an individual or on the behalf of the society or group they represent. Event organisers should be aware that SGSU holds them personally responsible for ensuring that their organised event abides by this Policy and does not risk infringement of or non-compliance with the law and/ or SGSU values.

Guidance on facilitating question and answer sessions at events is given in Appendix A. If an event organiser has concerns over their ability to uphold this responsibility they should contact either the Campus Good Relations Group or SGSU for advice.

6.1.1 Liability Insurance

Event organisers are advised to get liability insurance to mitigate against the risk of them or their society being sued by third parties for negligence.

6.1.2 Joint Events

If an event is being organised in conjunction with another body, it is the St George's event organiser's responsibility to ensure that the event complies with this Policy.

6.2 The External Speaker / Visitor

External speakers and visitors are responsible for ensuring that their words or actions will not give rise to an environment in which people will experience, or could reasonably fear – harassment, intimidation, isolation, verbal abuse or violence, particularly because of their:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

6.3 St George's staff and students

When attending student-led events, St George's staff and students, and SGSU staff, are required to uphold SGSU's values as outlined in section 3, namely to contribute to a safe campus environment free from discrimination, intimidation, harassment, intolerance and violence.

Wherever individual SGSU staff and students attend external events in a capacity associated with the institution, they are expected to act in accordance with this Policy and not participate in any action which they would not be permitted to carry out on our campus.

6.4 The Campus Good Relations Group (CGRG)

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The CGRG may be called upon to help the institution make fine judgements about individual proposals for events and external speakers or visitors, namely where a potentially controversial topic or theme is proposed. The CGRG can help event organisers to:

- talk constructively about their proposed event, external speaker or visitor
- consider any possible consequences should a particular event go ahead
- explore different options to avoid any one-sided views

The CGRG may conduct its business by phone or email if it is impractical for it to meet in person and if necessary the CGRG may make its recommendations by majority. If there is no majority, the Chair of the CGRG shall make its final recommendations.

6.5 The Chief Operating Officer

The SU Chief Operating Officer is not involved in the day-to-day approval of events and external speakers and visitors. However, where there is contest and the approval is referred to the SU Chief Operating Officer, the SU Chief Operating Officer's decision is final. SGSU reserves the right to decline any event, external speaker or visitor.

7. PROCEDURE

7.1 Procedure for holding an Event

Permission must be sought for any and all student-led events, as defined in section 2.1

- 7.1.1 Seeking permission to hold an event
Permission to hold the event must be sought by
- i) An individual student

An individual student on behalf of a Student Society Permission must be obtained *before* booking any resources such as the venue, or disseminating any publicity material. Permission should be sought by completion and submission of the Event and External Speaker Request Form.

The completed form must be submitted at least 10 working days before the proposed event to the SGSU President

Any requests submitted less than 10 working days before the proposed event may be refused on that basis.

- 7.1.2 Consideration of an event

Event proposals will be considered by the SGSU President in the first instance. It will be considered whether the proposed event is likely to:

- interfere with the rights and freedoms of others
- affect public safety
- pose a specific risk to children and young person's safety
- lead to disorder or crime
- incite racial or religious hatred
- cause others to fear that violence will be used against them
- lead to an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive

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The vast majority of events proposed will not present a risk or require any discussion and thus will be permitted by the SU President to go ahead. Other events will present a risk, (e.g. a threat to the safety of staff, students or intended audiences, or to the reputation of SGSU and/ or St George's, or to the rights and freedoms of others) and thus will require further discussion.

In these instances, the SGSU President may refer the event proposal to the Campus Good Relations Group, for example in the case of an event exploring a controversial issue. While the institution may be happy to host an event which explores controversial issues it is always keen to ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for debate and the CGRG can help explore different options for this with the event proposer.

The CGRG may suggest that an activity be partly allowed, or fully allowed but under certain conditions. For example if the event proposer wished to show a film on a controversial topic, the CGRG might advise that a debate be organised immediately afterwards with different viewpoints represented to avoid any one-sided view.

In deciding whether or not to permit that an event goes ahead, the CGRG may consult with relevant internal or external organisations.

Where the SGSU President considers a different type of risk, they may need to refer the event proposal to someone other than the CGRG. For example, for concerns regarding health and safety aspects of the event they may liaise with the Health and Safety team, or for concerns regarding the safeguarding of children and young people at an event they may liaise with the relevant safeguarding lead.

7.1.3 Decision on proposed events

The decision on whether to permit a proposed event will be conveyed to the proposer of the event by the SGSU President within 5 days of receipt of the proposal form.

A log will be kept by SGSU President of all event proposals received and their outcomes. This is to include reasons behind the decisions in order to demonstrate the concepts of reasonableness and proportionality have been taken in to account.

7.1.4 Appealing a decision

If permission is not given for an event to go ahead, the proposer of the event may submit an appeal to the SU Chief Operating Officer (or their nominee, in their absence). The appeal must be made in writing at least 5 working days prior to the start of the proposed event, and submitted to the

The SU COO will consider the appeal and provide a decision and reasoning in writing to the appellant, within 3 working days of receipt.

SGSU reserves the right to decline any event.

7.2 Procedure for proposing an External Speaker or Visitor at an event

Permission does not need to be sought for each individual audience member or "visitor" to an event. All visitors are expected to behave in a way that upholds the values outlined in section 6.2 however, and visitors can be asked to leave if their behaviour contradicts this.

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Permission must be sought for any external speakers attending any student-led events.

Permission is to be secured as below.

7.2.1 Proposing to host an External Speaker

Permission from the institution must be secured *before* confirming the attendance of the speaker (e.g. on promotional materials).

Permission should be sought by completion and submission of the Event and External Speaker Request Form.

The form requires declaration by the event organiser that they have shared with the proposed external speaker this Events and External Speaker and Visitor Policy. The form also requires declaration by the external speaker that they have received this Policy and agree to abide by this.

The completed Events and External Speaker request form must be submitted at least 10 working days before the proposed attendance to the SGSU President.

Any requests submitted less than 10 working days before the proposed attendance may be refused on that basis.

7.2.2 Consideration of an External Speaker

Upon review of a request form, the institution will need to consider whether the external speaker's contribution, attendance or conduct is likely to:

- interfere with the rights and freedoms of others
- affect public safety
- lead to disorder or crime
- incite racial or religious hatred
- cause others to fear that violence will be used against them
- lead to an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive

In measuring this risk SGSU may consider:

- the speaker's history and the organisation they represent
- the impact such a visit will have on campus
- the impact such a visit will have on community relations and the wider community
- internal policy documents, such as the Dignity at Work and Study Policy and other relevant equalities schemes.

SGSU may make any background checks it deems appropriate, namely an internet-based search and liaison with the University Security Association to review the speaker's history. If any concerns arise as a result of the review, the request may be discussed with the CGRG and in extreme cases, with counter-terrorism. A proposed visiting speaker may be excluded on the grounds of his/her prior conduct, for example for prior denial of free speech to others.

Responses to the request will be issued by the SGSU President in writing, usually within 5 working days of receipt of the request.

A log will be kept by the SGSU President of all external speaker proposals received and their outcomes. This is to include reasons behind the decisions in order to demonstrate the concepts of reasonableness and proportionality have been taken in to account.

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7.2.3 Appealing a decision

If permission is not given for an external speaker to attend, the event organiser may submit an appeal to the Chief Operating Officer (or their nominee, in their absence). The appeal must be made in writing at least 5 working days prior to the start of the proposed event, and submitted to the Chief Operating Officer.

The Principal will consider the appeal and provide a decision and reasoning in writing to the appellant, within 3 working days of receipt.

SGSU reserves the right to decline any external speaker.

7.2.4 Formally inviting an External Speaker

Once the event organiser has received permission to host the external speaker, they must formally invite the external speaker or visitor in writing, enclosing a copy of both this Policy and of the completed and authorised External Speaker request form.

7.3 Process for booking the venue on St George's and/ or SGSU Premises

All room bookings of the Student Union spaces have to be processed through the General Secretary- student event organisers can arrange this via email suroombookings@su.sgul.ac.uk

Confirmation of the room booking is **not** approval of the event itself, or of any external speakers or visitors. Approval for an event or for hosting an external speaker or visitor must be sought via the formal processes outlined above.

8. PUBLICISING EVENTS

To ensure transparency all invitations, posters, bookings and publicity material must be in English and it is not permitted to publicise an event solely in a foreign language.

For student events, publicity material should be approved by SGSU before display and dissemination. All approved material will be stamped by the SGSU, making it easy to identify any non-approved publicity materials; any non-approved materials will be removed by cleaning staff. To obtain stamps of approval, material can be emailed to the SU office manager: mcampbel@sgul.ac.uk) who will review the material and if approved can print, stamp and display it. Alternatively, the publicity material can be brought in hard copy to the SGSU Office and reviewed there for stamp of approval, prior to display.

9. TRANSPARENCY OF EVENTS

All staff and students of St George's should be aware that in the interests of openness and transparency, all members of St George's have the right to attend any activities regarded as "events" under this policy and do not need advance permission to do so. SGSU may decide to carry out spot checks on events to establish that they are run in accordance with this policy.

10. SEGREGATION, INCLUDING GENDER SEGREGATION, AT EVENTS

In principle, segregation at events, including gender segregation, is not permitted under this Policy. If an event organiser wishes to facilitate segregation at their event they will require explicit permission from SGSU and should contact the Campus Good Relations Group to request this.

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Should the Campus Good Relations Group ever agree to segregation at an event on any grounds, then the institution will publish the reason for such a decision internally at least 5 working days before the event, so that this decision is open to challenge from St George's staff and students.

11. SECURITY

The SU will consider security requirements when receiving event requests.

Ticketing an event, or asking for a police presence remains an option for increasing security of an event however the institution would prefer to only use these measures as a last resort. If measures such as the hiring of professional security staff or ticketing of an event are required, the costs will in principle fall to the student society organising the event.

12. BREACHES TO THIS POLICY

SGSU expects all St George's students to behave responsibly, abide by this Policy and follow good practice in the procedure under this Policy.

Failure to uphold good practice may involve:

- the content of the event not aligning with the description in the room booking system, or that provided in a verbal announcement, written invitation, or the external speaker and visitor request form
- the invitation of an external speaker without following proper procedure
- views expressed at an event which breach the law
- an event is solely publicised in a foreign language
- any segregation is attempted, including gender segregation, where this has not previously been approved by the CGRG.

Failure to uphold good practice will be considered a breach of this policy.

Any breaches may result in serious consequences. For students this may include referral to St George's for disciplinary action including but not limited to referral to a Fitness to Practice Committee, or expulsion from St George's.

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APPENDIX A

Guidance for facilitating question and answer opportunities at events

The below tips are provided as examples of how event organisers can promote and maintain a safe and inclusive environment at their event, balancing freedom of speech with the need to protect people from abuse.

- Use **methods to be inclusive** for those who are unable to attend, or may feel inhibited to ask questions during the event. For example, invite questions from staff or students to be submitted prior to or during the event via email or social media such as twitter.
- **Plan time** effectively – indicate in promotional material or agendas the time allocation for speakers' presentations and allocate a specific time for a question and answer session
- Identify an impartial **chair** for the event – someone to introduce the speaker, keep the session to time and invite questions from the audience, from a range of participants.
- Plan a **debate** - the following principles might assist
 - Invite a speaker(s) to present the case FOR the topic /argument and a speaker(s) to present the case AGAINST the topic/argument
 - Indicate a set time for each speaker to present
 - Invite rebuttal from each side of equal time
 - Use a chair as above to facilitate debate and to help summarise the key points
 - Provide an opportunity for the audience to respond and possibly act as a jury, and use methods of voting that are not public (i.e. avoid hand raising).

If you feel you require further assistance and support to ensure your event runs in a safe and inclusive manner, you can seek this from St George's Student's Union (for student events) or from the Campus Good Relations Group (for student or staff events).