

QS20: External Speaker Policy

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Key Related Documents

Document Name	Location
CPR QS18 Academic Freedom	College website, Policy Hub
CPR QS19 Freedom of Speech	College website, Policy Hub
CPR M1c Prevent Policy	College website, Policy Hub
External Speaker Booking Procedure and Form	Policy Hub

Introduction

Navitas University Partnerships Europe (UPE) embedded colleges operate within host Universities in the UK and in Continental Europe. UK Universities have a long and rich history in welcoming visiting speakers from around the world to campuses. External speakers give students and staff the opportunity to hear relevant opinions and insights from someone other than scheduled teaching staff, thus enriching their overall university experience and encouraging discussion and debate.

Navitas UPE considers an external speaker to be someone who has been invited to speak at an event for purposes that are not a designated part of an academic course of study, research activity or an academic offer. This definition includes pre-recorded, streamed or broadcast materials from a speaker. An external speaker is not a student, staff member, University Partner staff member or a Governor of Navitas UPE, or the wider Navitas Group.

Purpose

This policy sets a governing framework for Navitas UPE staff and students in which to adhere to when scheduling events with external speakers. This ensures that debate, challenge and dissent can continue, whilst safeguarding our institutions and their staff and students. External speakers should be offered the same freedoms of speech and expression as the Navitas UPE staff and students. The policy outlines the context for the approval of external speakers and events. This policy aims to ensure that Navitas UPE event organisers are aware of the framework we operate within when facilitating external speakers and the measures that may be required to support their event. It should be read in conjunction with the associated External Speaker Booking Procedure and Booking Form.

Organising an Event

Anyone organising an event that involves a speaker or speakers to be hosted by Navitas UPE colleges must adhere to the following:

- This policy and associated processes are followed
- All such events have a completed External Speaker Booking Form submitted to the College CDP approval at least 14 days in advance of the event taking place
- Any requested modifications are implemented before the event takes place
- Anyone (staff or student) organising an event that involves an external speaker or speakers to be hosted on their host Universities (on campus or elsewhere or within any of its premises inclusive of Student Unions and, Halls of Residence and external client hosted events) must ensure that our host Universities' External Speaker Policy and Navitas Code of Conduct Guidance for External Speakers in Appendix A are followed
- An event includes any gathering that involves an external speaker addressing a group, including in a teaching, learning or research setting (class, conference, seminar) or in the context of extra-curricular activity
- The person organising the event must:

- Undertake a first assessment of the proposed external speaker (as set out below) and, if there are any concerns, escalate the decision about whether to invite that speaker as set out in the booking process
- Ensure that all speakers are made aware of and given a copy of the Code of Conduct
- Navitas UPE will not, as far as is reasonably practicable, deny access to its premises to individuals or bodies on the basis of their beliefs, views or policies, unless these beliefs, views or policies are unlawful, do not comply with equalities legislation or represent a threat to the safety of staff and students. As per Section 26 (1) of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, “specified authorities” (i.e. Higher Education institutions) have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’

Please note that failure by a member of staff or student to comply with this policy will be treated very seriously and may be subject to formal action under the University’s normal disciplinary processes for staff and students.

Under no circumstances should an event take place if an External Speaker Booking Form has not been completed. Failure to comply with the External Speaker policy will result in the room booking being cancelled and may be subject to formal action under the Navitas UPE normal disciplinary processes.

External Speaker Booking Process

Anyone organising an event as described above must follow the External Speaker Booking Process.

Most external speaker requests will be straightforward and can be handled entirely at a local (departmental) level as highlighted below. However, some may be complex and may require referral to Navitas UPE Academic Registry for further consideration. The referral process will only apply to events or speakers deemed to be higher risk.

Local assessment of proposed external speaker(s)

Prior to the confirmation of any external speaker, the event organiser will be responsible for assessing the speaker against the following set of questions:

Question 1:

Has the speaker previously been prevented from speaking at our host University or another University or similar establishment or previously been known to express views that may be in breach of the Code of Conduct?

Question 2:

Does the proposed title or theme of the event present a potential risk that views/opinions expressed by speakers may be in breach of the Code of Conduct?

Question 3:

Is the proposed speaker/theme likely to attract attendance from individuals/groups that have previously been known to express views that may be in breach of the Code of Conduct?

If the answer to all three questions is 'no':

The event organiser can confirm the external speaker and 'book' them to speak at their event or activity in the normal way (It is required that the external speaker be sent a copy of the Code of Conduct).

If the answer to any of the questions is unclear:

The event organiser must seek guidance from their college CDP (informing Navitas UPE Academic Registry), whose responsibility it will be to further review the speaker(s) against the questions above.

Ultimately, if the answer to any of the questions is 'yes':

It is the responsibility of the event organiser to submit a referral to Navitas UPE Academic Registry. You must make a speaker referral submission by using the External Speaker Referral Form (the Speaker Policy Review Process provides a detailed overview of the referral submission process and subsequent steps).

The External Speaker Policy and approval process will be continually reviewed and updated in response to legislative changes and other factors. It is the responsibility of those organising events to ensure that they are acting in accordance with the most recent version of the Policy, which will be published by Navitas UPE on respective College websites and the internal Policy Hub.

Managing External Speakers

Any external speaker hosted by Navitas UPE Staff or students (on our host Universities' campus or elsewhere) or to be hosted at the Students' Union and, Halls of Residence, must be aware of, and comply with, the Code of Conduct.

It is the responsibility of the person who is organising the event to ensure that the speaker receives the Code of Conduct and has their attention drawn to its contents.

The protection of freedom of speech does not allow a speaker to break the law or breach the lawful rights of others. All speakers and attendees are expected to act with civility, consideration and respect for others in our colleges, our host Universities and the local community. It should be noted that these provisions do not create a broad right not to be offended; the expression of views which some people may find objectionable, or offensive is not prohibited generally by law.

Event organisers have a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that no enforced segregation by any protected characteristic takes place at any event, unless it is specifically for religious worship or practice or for reasons of health and safety, and that attendees have the freedom to choose where they sit. Event organisers must not knowingly facilitate discrimination by others at the request of an external speaker or an individual attending or wishing to attend an event.

Data Sharing

Where it deems there is a legitimate reason to do so, Navitas UPE Academic Registry reserves the right to share information on the external speakers it has hosted, and/or those it deemed to be a risk, with other relevant agencies.

In accordance with its obligations as detailed in the Navitas Prevent Policy (NPR M1c) , the host College will report any major incidences of concern involving external speakers on campus.

Complaints Procedure

If an individual (staff, student or external visitor) considers there to have been a breach of this Policy, they have the right to make a formal complaint to Navitas UPE Academic Registry:

Academic.Registry@navitas.com

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Navitas UPE Academic Board unless there are internal or legislative changes that necessitate earlier review. The policy was last reviewed on 12 January 2023 and approved as a Chair's action on behalf of the UPE Academic Board.

Appendix A: Navitas Code of Conduct Guidance for External Speakers

This guidance exists to ensure that all speakers taking part in a Navitas UPE hosted or run event / activity, at a Navitas UPE College, campus or elsewhere, act in accordance with the Navitas UPE External Speaker Policy.

It is the responsibility of the event or activity organiser (the individual from within the College e.g. member of staff or student, named in the **External Speaker submission** as the principal organiser) to ensure that:

- this Guidance is communicated to all external speakers (once approved and confirmed by the College CDP)
- all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the requirements within it are upheld during the running of the event or activity

Freedom of Speech

Navitas UPE requires all its employees and students to tolerate and protect the expression of opinions within the law whether or not these opinions are repugnant to them; this obligation is set out in the Navitas UPE NPR QS19 Freedom of Speech Policy.

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. Navitas UPE recognises that in this context, a conflict exists between the laws which promote freedom of speech and those which restrict it. Consequently, Navitas UPE acknowledges that it has a responsibility to create a balance between minimising the possibility that extremism or unlawful conduct will arise on college premises and ensuring that it meets its obligations as outlined in the Freedom of Speech Policy.

Legal Context

It is vital that all individuals involved in the external speaker process, including the speakers themselves, understand the legal framework and context that governs this area. Examples of some of the relevant areas of law are given below.

- People are entitled to protection from harassment, defamation and unlawful breach of their human rights, as well as from unfair treatment under equality law Hate crimes, harassment, breach of the peace and terrorism all come under criminal law Civil legislation and local Council bylaws governing public meetings, public processions/assemblies and public order may be of relevance, including legislation governing health and safety

Conduct

Navitas UPE expects external speakers to act in accordance with the law and not to breach the lawful rights of others.

Set out below are some examples of Navitas UPE's expectations. Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of unacceptable conduct by external speakers. Navitas UPE reserves the right to not permit an external speaker to speak at or attend an event, 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 External Speaker Policy or of any legal obligation.

During the course of the event at which they participate, no speaker shall:

- act in breach of the criminal law
- incite hatred or violence or any breach of the criminal law
- encourage or promote any acts of terrorism or promote individuals, groups or organisations that support terrorism within the UK or abroad
- spread hatred and intolerance

- discriminate against or harass any person or group on the grounds of their sex, gender identity, race, nationality or state of origin, ethnicity, disability, religion and belief (including non-belief), sexual orientation or age
- defame any person or organisation
- raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission from Navitas UPE

During the course of the event, all speakers shall:

- comply with the Navitas External Speaker Policy
- 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 Navitas policy on and instructions relating to security, health and safety