

Robert Gordon University

Management of Speakers Protocol

The University and the Students' Union both support a diverse range of events, clubs and societies at RGU. Both recognize that they have a responsibility to organise events in such a way as to avoid, so far as is reasonably practicable, staff, students or others being subject to intimidation, coercion, victimisation or harassment. As an academic institution, the University must balance its legal duties to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom with the wider context of students and staff welfare and wellbeing.

Apart from its general responsibilities, the University also has a legal duty under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 'to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.' In this respect and in accordance with the guidance issued for higher education institutions in Scotland, the University has established a PREVENT group which is tasked with overseeing the adoption of policy and practice that will fulfil its particular duties under the Act and related guidance.

In order to ensure that its general duties and particular legal duties, in relation to the management of events and speakers, are met, the University has developed a Management of Speakers Protocol which is overseen by the University Prevent Monitoring Group *.

The purpose of this protocol is to enable events, which have speakers, to be organised and proceed with minimum administrative burden but also with appropriate, proportionate due diligence given to the purpose of the event on the campus and the speakers involved.

The protocol has the status of operational policy and so must be followed.

General Guidance

The Timetabling and Room Allocations Team and the Events Operations Manager in Estates are normally the first points of contact to consider requests to host non-teaching events.

The vast majority of events, including academic seminars and guest lectures, are seen as a normal part of the University's day to day activity. Therefore, in most circumstances, reviewing external speaker requests will be straightforward and will be dealt with through normal room booking processes.

BOOKING PROCESS

The normal process for booking an event for any internal or external party is for the Principal Organiser (the person who is booking and taking responsibility for the organisation and running of the event from the customer side) to secure the space through the Timetabling and Room Allocations Team based in Estates. The Principal Organiser of the event must

- ensure that a minimum of 15 working days' notice of the event is given to the Timetabling and Room Allocations Team. Failure to give sufficient notice of the event could in itself be grounds for refusing to permit the event from going ahead or for the speaker from attending campus.
- highlight at the earliest available opportunity any grounds for believing that a speaker may be controversial, may potentially commit a criminal offence or encourage others to do so, or may make requests which are controversial and/or contrary to the university's policies, such as segregation of the audience
- notify the Room Allocations Team and the Student Association immediately where there is any change to the event.

Staff and external bookings

The Room Allocations Team will require basic information in relation to the booking of an event:

- Details of the Principal Organiser of the event
- Details of the event, including subject matter, date, time and venue required
- Details of speaker (s), including name, occupation and associated organisation (if relevant) and title of their speech
- Number of people expected to attend and if relevant any ticketing arrangements
- Confirmation that the event/speaker will not be promoted or advertised until agreement is given to host the event on university premises and the space secured

Additional information about all events will be requested by the Events Operations Manager from the Principal Organiser, utilising the form in Appendix A ([form name](#))

Where an event is booked and the details of the speaker/speakers are incomplete or unconfirmed, it is the duty of the Principal Organiser to notify the Events Operations Manager of the final list of speakers and relevant information by completing the form in Appendix A no later than 15 working days prior to the event.

In most cases the Room Allocations Team or Events Operations Manager will approve the event at this stage. However where there are any concerns about the event this will be referred on to Stage 1 below.

Student Bookings

In the case of student-led events or invitations, responsibility for managing the event lies with the General Manager in the Student Association (SA).

Student events will be booked by student groups accredited through the Student Association, and are agreed in advance by the General Manager of the SA or his/her nominee. The General Manager of the SA will review and approve all requests in principle before the request is submitted.

As with staff and external bookings, the Principal Organiser for the student booking will be responsible for securing the space through the Room Allocations Team. This process includes ascertaining details of any external speakers who are being invited to campus utilising the form in Appendix A, and thus ascertaining the nature of and requirements for the event.

The General Manager of the SA will collate these details and pass them to the Events Operations Manager not less than 15 working days before the event. In most cases, the Events Operations Manager will approve the event at this stage. However where there are any concerns about the event this will be referred on to Stage 1.

STAGE 1 - Referral to Dean of Students and Director or Estates (or delegate)

If the information supplied through the normal booking process detailed above suggests that there are issues that might require additional consideration, or if the Events Operations Manager has any concerns these will be discussed with the Dean of Students and the Director of Estates or delegate in the first instance. The Dean of Students and the Director of Estates will consider whether the topic or speaker is likely to breach the law, or otherwise pose significant risk to the wellbeing of staff and students or to the legal/reputational interest of the University.

In assessing this, a range of considerations will be taken into account e.g. *inter alia*:

- The overall nature and purpose of the event e.g. presentation, debate, campaign , internal and external audience etc
- The event focus or subject matter
- Who is attending the event i.e. internal/external audience, restricted or open to the public generally
- The intention or not to have balanced representation of both sides of a debate, argument or topic
- Background of proposed speaker e.g. political or other affiliations; any extreme or controversial links etc.
- Reports and feedback where the speaker has previously spoken at the University or any other higher education institution
- The background and relevant experience of the person chairing the meeting and any political or other affiliations, extreme or controversial links etc.
- Security considerations, including public order and health, safety and welfare issues
- What materials (such as leaflets, memory sticks, etc.) will be available or distributed at the event, with what content and for what purpose.
- Potential for reputational risk to the University

The above list is indicative and is not exhaustive.

The Dean of Students and Director or Estates (or delegate) will normally either approve or not approve the event, with or without conditions, or, if there are outstanding concerns that require escalation for decision, refer this on to stage 2.

STAGE 2 – Referral to Prevent Monitoring Group

Following Stage 1, if there are any continuing concerns about the nature of the event, these should be referred by the Director of Estates and/or Dean of Students to the Chair of the University's Prevent Group. The Chair may take a decision directly, consult with others as appropriate before doing so, including consultation with the Principal where that is necessary. This may be done by meeting, by electronic or other means. The Chair may approve, place conditions on approval, or not approve the speaker.

STAGE 3 – Communication of a speaker/event decision

Decisions will be communicated in writing by the Chair of the Prevent Group to the Principal Organiser of the event and the Event Operations Manager, normally within 10 working days of the initial submission of any request.

OUTCOMES

Request Approved

The event can go ahead as originally requested within the form ([name](#)) at Appendix A.

The University reserves the right to review a decision to approve a request made at any stage throughout the process should further relevant information emerge which could impact on that decision, or if a change is notified.

Request Approved, with Conditions

Where the University approves the request subject to certain conditions being met, these will be clearly stated in writing to the Principal Organiser on the decision letter, along with a requirement for written acceptance of the conditions, which must be submitted by return. All conditions must be met in order for the event to be allowed to take place on campus.

The University reserves the right to satisfy itself that compliance with any conditions is being observed, and to make arrangements for monitoring or attending the event as deemed appropriate.

Request Refused

If the request is to be refused the decision letter will clearly state the grounds on which permission is being denied.

The decision at this stage is final.

During the event

Insofar as is reasonably practicable, the chairperson and the Principal Organiser have a duty to ensure that the audience and speaker conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.

In the case of unacceptable conduct, the chairperson or Principal Organiser should issue appropriate warnings, and if the unacceptable conduct continues, takes steps to remove the person(s) concerned from the meeting, supported by Facilities staff and, if necessary, the police.

In this instance, if necessary, an appropriate Senior Manager (e.g. Head of School/Dean, General Manager of the SA, or other individual who usually would be connected to the event) should be informed in order to provide guidance and support. This individual will be responsible for reporting the incident to the PREVENT group.

The Chairperson and/or Principal Organiser shall have the option to stop or to cancel the event if required.

Principal Organisers will be issued with guidance on the reporting structure and process to be adopted in the event that the speaker / the event itself requires last-minute cancellation or to be stopped.

*** Membership of the University Prevent Monitoring Group**

CORE MEMBERSHIP
<i>Executive Director of Human Resources (Chair)</i>
<i>Director of Estates & Property Services</i>
<i>Dean of Students</i>
<i>An Academic Representative</i>
IN ATTENDANCE
<i>University Solicitor</i>
<i>General Manager of the SA</i>
<i>Head of Campus Services</i>

Date Guidance Issued

FINAL DRAFT 3-26/1/16

Review Date

TBC