EVENTS AND EXTERNAL SPEAKERS CODE OF PRACTICE

October 2016

1. Purpose

1.1 By law, the University has a duty to promote academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law. The University has established a Policy which affirms the University’s commitment to promoting academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law, as well as specifying circumstances in which academic freedom and freedom of speech might properly be restricted. This code should be applied in the context provided for by the Policy.

1.2 Events and external speakers play a central role in University life, exposing staff and students to a range of views and beliefs and allowing students to develop their own opinions. This Code of Practice details the steps the University will take to promote academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law for events taking place on its campuses and for any events that take place off campus which are promoted under the University’s name. The Code of Practice places a particular emphasis on events where external speakers have been invited to come on to one of the University’s campuses.

2. Scope

2.1 An ‘event’ is any meeting or activity which is organised by a staff or student member of the University or Students’ Union that does not form part of a programme of study leading to an award of the University. ¹

2.2 An ‘external speaker’ is any individual or organisation who is not a student or staff member of the University of Essex or its Students’ Union.

2.3 This Code of Practice applies to all events organised on University campuses (with or without external speakers) and any events that utilise the University’s name off University and Students’ Union premises, including meetings, visiting lecturer events, society events, and events arranged through Event Essex.

2.4 The procedures contained within this Code of Practice must be followed by all staff and student members of the University and the Students’ Union.

2.5 The University reserves the right to cancel any approved events in the light of new information that leads the University reasonably to believe that holding the event might contravene the University’s Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech.

2.6 It is recognised that University campuses have varying operational requirements, and as a result, it is possible with the agreement of the Registrar & Secretary for implementation of this policy to be tailored to the circumstances of individual campuses. Such agreement should be sought on an annual basis, and the relevant campus will be required to nominate a senior officer who should report to the Safeguarding Advisory Group twice annually.

3. Procedure for Organising Events

3.1 The procedure contained within this Code of Practice acts as a light touch process through which assurance can be obtained that events will operate in a manner consistent with the University’s Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech. In order for an event to be authorised, it must be “sponsored” either by a member of University staff or by a designated member of staff of the Students’ Union. The role of Sponsor is

¹ Faculty Convenors may be included as Students’ Union staff for the purpose of event sponsorship related to their role.
distinct from that of Event Organiser. Sponsorship applies to all aspects of the event, including any invited speakers and how the event will be conducted.

3.2 Any staff member of the University or designated member of staff of the Students’ Union or designated third party approved by the Registrar & Secretary can act as an Event Sponsor.

3.3 Event Organisers who are a member of staff of the University can act as their own Sponsor for events which form part of the normal day to day activities of the University.

3.4. By acting as a Sponsor, an individual confirms that:

3.4.1 They are a member of staff at the University of Essex, or a designated member of staff of the Students’ Union, or a delegated third party within the same department as the Event Organiser.

3.4.2 They reasonably believe there are no risk issues identified by holding the event, or inviting the specified external speaker(s), that would conflict with the University’s Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech, this Events and External Speakers Code of Practice, or law.

3.5 When deciding whether to confirm event sponsorship, Sponsors may conduct internet searches on external speakers or request further information about the event from Event Organisers.

3.6 Once sponsorship has been agreed, Event Sponsors must be notified by Event Organisers if any details of the event change, particularly if new external speakers are invited to an event. In such circumstances, the event Sponsor should either re-confirm their sponsorship, or send the event to risk review in light of any changes.

Self-Sponsorship

3.7 Events can be self-sponsored by staff members of the University or designated members of staff of the Students’ Union where the event falls within the normal day to day activities of the University. Such events can be booked without using an online event request form.

3.8 Examples of events defined in clause 3.7 include, but are not limited to: staff meetings; staff conferences; lectures conducted by visiting lecturers as part of a module; one-off or a programme of extra-curricular activities within a department, including, for example, summer schools; and events associated with funded research or knowledge exchange activities.

3.9 The University is assured that Event Organisers of events defined in clause 3.8 are self-sponsored by the Event Organiser.

3.10 If the Event Organiser cannot or chooses not to confirm their own sponsorship in accordance with clause 3.9, they can submit an online event request for review.

3.11 Where there is uncertainty, the Event Sponsor should be the most senior member of staff organising, leading or involved in the event other than as an invited participant.

Sponsorship Review

3.12 Events can be organised by staff or student members of the University or Students’ Union that fall outside of the normal day to day activities of the University. Such events can be booked using the online booking form.

3.13 Examples of relevant events include, but are not limited to: events organised under the Students’ Union’s Societies Guild; events organised through the Chaplaincy; non-timetabled optional lectures and debates not
managed through the department or a central University section; and external events organised through Event Essex.

3.14 For events organised by academic schools/departments or professional services sections, University staff members from the Event Organiser’s department can sponsor the event.

3.15 For events organised by clubs, societies, or start-ups of the Students’ Union, the Societies Co-ordinator or other designated member of staff of the Students’ Union can sponsor the event.

3.16 For events organised by Event Essex, staff from Event Essex can sponsor the event.

3.17 Event Organisers can provide details of their requested Event Sponsor on the online booking form.

3.18 Requested Event Sponsors can take action to confirm their sponsorship, or send the request to risk review no less than 15 calendar days prior to the date of the proposed event.

**Risk Review**

3.19 If a staff Event Organiser/self-sponsor, or requested Event Sponsor, cannot confirm their sponsorship in accordance with clause 3.4, the event request can be sent for review via the online room booking form.

3.20 Risk reviews will normally be conducted by the University’s Security Manager or nominee, who will make a recommendation for consideration and decision by the Registrar & Secretary or nominee. The Registrar & Secretary may seek guidance on individual cases from members of the University’s Safeguarding Advisory Group and USG, but not including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor who has an independent role in the appeal process set out in section 6 below.

3.21 Each referred booking request will be reviewed on an individual basis; risk reviewers will communicate review outcomes to Event Organisers within 10 working days.

3.22 After considering the potential risks associated with a booking request which might conflict with the University’s Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech, risk reviewers can enforce three possible outcomes:

3.22.1 The event request is refused, and the event may not proceed; or

3.22.2 The event request is approved with conditions imposed to help minimise any potential risks; or

3.22.3 The request is approved and no conditions are imposed.

3.23 Should a risk reviewer conclude that an event poses a significant risk, they should refer to the Registrar & Secretary or nominee who will then decide if the event can go ahead. The Registrar & Secretary, in their capacity as chair of the Safeguarding Advisory Group, may seek guidance from USG whenever it is deemed appropriate to do so.

3.24 If a risk reviewer approves a request with conditions imposed, Event Organisers can choose to agree to these conditions for their event to proceed.

3.25 Compliance with any imposed conditions will be monitored during events.

3.26 Should Event Organisers choose not to agree with any imposed conditions, the event request will be refused and the event will not be able to proceed. This decision may be subject to appeal.
4. Online event requests and room bookings

4.1 Normally, bookings for all events should be made by the Event Organiser using the online booking form, detailing the subject matter and any invited external speakers.

4.2 Normally, such event requests should be made at least 15 calendar days prior to the event by the Event Organiser.

4.3 Event Organisers can advertise and promote their events and the presence of external speakers once event sponsorship has been confirmed.

4.4 The University will normally record events with external speakers via the lecture recording service, so University members that were unable to attend the event in real time can experience it. Event Organisers may request that individual events not be recorded.

5. During and after an event

5.1 If event circumstances change substantially at short notice or even at the last minute before or during the event, such as a change of external speakers, or changes to event topics, a review of the adapted request still needs conducting.

5.2 Such changes may be possible and allowed to proceed providing sponsorship can be confirmed in light of these changes.

5.3 In such circumstances, the University may, at its discretion, require a greater level of scrutiny to review the event before it proceeds.

5.4 Notwithstanding the procedures outlined above, occasionally things may not go to plan with an event. Unexpected circumstances may occur during the course of an event which might result in contravention of the University’s Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech.

5.5 If Event Organisers or attendees feel uncomfortable or unable to maintain control at an event in such scenarios, they can contact the University Information Office, who may choose to implement appropriate contingency measures.

5.6 In the event of unexpected disruption to an event, the University reserves the right to take action subsequent to the event under the University’s established disciplinary procedures.

6 Appeals Process

6.1 No appeals can be made against a decision to refuse an event for external events organised through Event Essex, or against requested Event Sponsors who do not confirm their sponsorship.

6.2 Other than in the circumstances described in clause 6.1 above, Event Organisers can appeal against a refusal Risk Review outcome if they reasonably believe the outcome was achieved unfairly, by submitting a full explanation for the grounds of appeal, in writing, to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, at least 5 working days prior to the date scheduled for the event.

6.3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will endeavour to conclude consideration of the appeal within 5 working days, and if the appeal is successful, will conduct a Risk Review of the event request, notifying the principal Event Organiser of a final review outcome. The decision of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in relation to any event request will be final.
6.4 Any other concerns in relation to this Code of Practice or the procedures contained within it should be raised through the University’s official concerns and complaints procedure. This can be found at: http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/complaints.aspx.

7 Disciplinary and Legal Action

7.1 Any breach of the provisions and/or procedures set out in this Code of Practice may lead to disciplinary action.

8 Information Sharing

8.1 The University may seek external advice when conducting Risk Reviews and share event information with partners. Where this takes place it will be carried out within the law.

9 Alignment with other University policies

9.1 In line with the University’s Equality and Diversity Framework and Sub-Strategy, the segregation of event attendees that leads to discrimination will not be permitted. This includes segregation based on age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation, in line with the Equality Act 2010. The University will not allow event attendees to be segregated by request, through force, coercion or intimidation.

10 External Events Sponsored by the University

10.1 ‘External sponsorship’ is where the University does not run or manage external events, but associates its name and/or reputation with it. The appropriate external sponsorship forms must be completed before the external event takes place.

10.2 With external sponsorship, the spirit of this policy should be followed, but for the avoidance of doubt, members of University of Essex staff approving external sponsorship will act as the External Event Sponsor, and should carry out basic risk assessments as a minimum.

10.3 Should an External Event Sponsor feel unable to carry out the minimum risk assessments, or confirming their sponsorship, they should refer to the University’s Security Team, who will treat external events in an equal manner to internal events.