

Event Approval Panel Referral Process

Overview

The University of Exeter is committed to Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, balanced with its duty of care to safeguard students, staff and visitors. Speakers and Events play an integral role in the learning environment and are a valuable contribution to the student experience. The University is required to have processes in place to ensure that all events held on Campus or in the name of the University are appropriate and are performed within the boundaries of the law. Refer to the Speaker and Event policy for further detail.

Most events do not raise concern, and can be booked without further referral. This process is designed to review and assess additional controls required for speakers or events that are of concern due to any of the below:

- (i) The content or context of the event; if there is cause to believe that this may give rise to protest or may contain views that are in breach of Human Rights; Equality; Hate Speech; Counter Terrorism or any other legislation
- (ii) A speaker or speakers at the event have given cause for concern previously, either at this or other Institutions or organisations due to extreme views, or any views that may fall under point (i)
- (iii) A speaker or speakers at the event belongs to or has proclaimed support for a proscribed organisation
- (iv) There is evidence that a speaker or event has a following that is likely to cause disruption or protest if the event is hosted

Referral to the Review Panel via Risk Assessment

All speakers and events should be logged by the principle organiser, stored centrally by the University or Student Body handling the booking. Most events will not require a referral. However, if a cause for concern is raised as per the above points, a risk assessment must be completed containing details of the speaker(s) and/or event, with the search results attached and referred to the University Event Referral Panel, which is made up of:

- (i) The Registrar and Secretary
- (ii) The University General Counsel
- (iii) The Risk and Compliance Officer

Role of the Panel

The role of the Panel is to assess the concern and make a decision on whether the event should:

- (a) Go ahead with no further conditions attached
- (b) Go ahead with specific conditions attached
- (c) Refusal – event/speaker cannot go ahead

Decision Making Process

Events may be referred to the panel due to either (a) or (b) below, or a combination of both.

(a) Concern related to a Speaker or Speakers

The principle organiser will research the named speaker to assess whether there is a concern. This includes internet searches of news items, previous events, social media and any organisations that the speaker belongs to.

The panel will assess the evidence and if there is a serious concern, a further referral may be made to the Local Authority or other Institutions that the speaker has attended for advice. **Note:** The final decision rests with the Registrar and Secretary of the University of Exeter. The Local Authority will not make any decisions on speaker bookings, unless the named speaker is legally banned from public speaking.

(b) Concern related to the Content or Context of an Event

This section applies if an event is referred due to the content or context raising a concern, rather than a named speaker. The panel will make an assessment based on the identified concern and external environmental factors that may give rise to further concern.

If there is a serious concern, a further referral may be made to the Local Authority or other Institutions where the subject has been addressed for advice. **Note:** The final decision rests with the Registrar and Secretary of the University of Exeter. The Local Authority will not make any decisions on bookings.

(c) The Decision

- (i) No Concern – Go ahead with no extra conditions applied
- (ii) Concern agreed* – Go ahead with extra conditions in place
- (iii) Concern agreed* – event/speaker refused

Concern Agreed*

If a concern is upheld, the panel will meet to discuss options to allow the event to go ahead. Options include but are not limited to:

- Extra security in attendance at the event
- Extra approval of any event publication (posters/fliers etc.)
- Nominated senior staff members with relevant expertise in attendance to ensure that a balanced view is put forward
- University Press Team informed and prepared for any related media attention
- Specific venue location determined
- Event timing requirements (for example avoiding anniversary dates that are known to be contentious)
- Scripts to be provided in advance of the event

The panel will work with the principle organiser with the aim of allowing the event to go ahead, mitigating any risk to students, staff or visitors. If controls cannot satisfactorily mitigate the risks, the event or speaker may be refused.

If an event or speaker is refused, the panel will document the reason for the refusal to the principle organiser in writing, usually by email. The final decision rests with the Registrar and Secretary.

Appeals

An appeals process exists should the principle organiser disagree with the decision. Appeals should be sent in writing to the University Risk and Compliance Officer, t.tuffin@exeter.ac.uk. This should include the basis for the appeal and evidence to substantiate the view that the speaker/event should go ahead. A review will be undertaken by a nominee of the Provost, independent from the initial referral panel. A final decision will be provided in writing, usually by email.