



Fairfield School of Business

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External Speakers and Events Policy

Version	5.2 Public
Last updated	December 2025
Category	Regulations
Approved by	Board of Governors

Abstract:

The purpose of this policy is to put in place a governing framework for external visiting speakers to ensure that these events provide genuine value and enrichment to taught programmes at Fairfield School of Business, and that our principles regarding Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression are upheld.

Related Policies:

- *Academic Freedom Policy and Code of Practice*
- *Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures*
- *Prevent Duty Policy*
- *Student Safeguarding Policy*
- *Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy*
- *Conflicts of Interests Policy*
- *Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy*
- *Data Protection Policy*

Applicability:

This policy applies to all external speaker events held at Fairfield School of Business (FSB).

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. Fairfield School of Business (FSB) facilitates external speaker events organised by members of its community and the FSB Student Union. These events are intended to allow for the free expression of opinions, exchange of knowledge, and debate of ideas by people from a diverse range of backgrounds, enriching the value of FSB's learning experience.
- 1.2. This policy and its related procedures apply to anyone wishing to organise an external speaker event, whether to be held on FSB's premises, or as an off-campus FSB-branded event or online event.
- 1.3. All external speaker events, including those organised by the FSB Student Union, shall be held under the supervision of FSB staff and must be approved in accordance with this policy and procedure.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. The following definitions are applicable to this policy:
 - 2.1.1. An 'External Speaker' is anybody who is neither a registered student nor a paid employee or a contractor of FSB who is invited to speak on a particular topic at FSB's premises, or an external venue, or online platform where the event is affiliated to FSB, or by third parties in connection with FSB or involving its students.
 - 2.1.2. External Speakers are used to enhance student's learning, and/or provide extra curricula opportunities for students and staff. They should not be used to deliver parts of the regular curriculum of a taught academic programme.
 - 2.1.3. 'Event Organiser' refers to a person or persons primarily responsible for organising the event and liaising with external speakers and FSB. They must follow this policy and be mindful of FSB's [Academic Freedom Policy and Code of Practice](#) and other associated policies.
 - 2.1.4. 'Freedom of expression' is a fundamental right under Article 10 of the Human Rights Act, to hold one's own opinions and to express them freely without government interference. The law also protects your freedom to receive information from other people by, for example, being part of an audience or reading an article.
 - 2.1.5. 'Academic Freedom' is the conviction that the freedom of inquiry is essential to the mission of education, and that scholars should have freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts without being targeted for repression, expulsion from their institution, or imprisonment.

3. External Speaker and Events Policy

- 3.1. The Governors of FSB have due regard for the *Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act (2023)* and other legislation which protects lawful freedom of speech and freedom of expression in Higher Education environments.
- 3.2. FSB's policy for facilitating external speaker events is consistent with the School's stance on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression set out within its Academic Freedom Policy, which states that:
 - i. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression within the law.
 - ii. FSB should always work to broaden debate, rather than narrow it.
 - iii. Any decision about speakers and events should seek to promote and protect the right to freedom of expression.
 - iv. Peaceful protest is a protected form of expression; however, protest should not be allowed to shut down debate, infringe the rights of others, or disrupt FSB from performing its business of operation.
 - v. Freedom of expression should not be abused for the purpose of unchallenged hatred or bigotry.
- 3.3. The School ensures that staff, visiting speakers and students shall have freedom within the law to *question* and test received wisdom and put forward innovative ideas and sensitive, controversial or unpopular opinions without jeopardising their academic or professional standing within the School.
- 3.4. FSB also acknowledges its duty of care to protect staff, students and visitors from the risk of harm, violence, intimidation, discrimination, harassment, and incitement to hatred, violence and the promotion or *glorification* of terrorism.
- 3.5. In support of 3.4, FSB shall have oversight of all proposed external speaker events and shall operate a request and approval process (set out in Appendix A) and may set conditions for external speaker events to take place where any inherent or residual risks are identified; for example, where allowing an event to go ahead as proposed *may* breach our policies or codes of conduct because they create a risk of harm or exploitation or risk a disturbance of the peace. The criteria for assessing the risk of an event is provided in [Appendix A](#).
- 3.6. Event organisers must notify an approved event to the student body, and in particular those who are eligible to attend it. This might be via a prominently posted notice either on *the* premises or online.

- 3.7. FSB will consider any concerns raised about a proposed or approved external speaker event by members of its academic community, the authorities or the general public. A procedure for reporting these concerns is given in [Appendix B](#).
- 3.8. FSB will require the Associate Dean or designated duty officer at the campus where an event is taking place to attend the event and ensure that it proceeds in accordance with this policy.
- 3.9. Under this policy, Associate Deans or a designated duty officer, will have authority to:
- intervene to discourage inappropriate student or staff behaviour or language and to ensure that all parties uphold Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression
 - Report any inappropriate staff or student behaviour as per the appropriate disciplinary procedures,

ensure that all voices are heard including any opposing or controversial opinions
 - (as a last resort) shut down the event if a breakdown of order has led to a risk of harm or breaking the law developing.
- 3.10. FSB recognises that exposure to diverse and challenging views is a part of academic life; however, no student or staff member will be compelled to attend an external speaker event. Individuals may exercise their right to opt-out on the grounds of conscience, or where the content or nature of the event conflicts with their personal beliefs, values, or identity, or where attendance would cause them distress, particularly in relation to their protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.11. Where an event is due to take place during a student's scheduled learning hours (e.g., a mandatory lecture), they are responsible for discussing the implications of non-attendance with their lecturer or Personal Academic Tutor. Staff members whose role requires them to facilitate such an event but who have a conscientious objection should discuss this with their Line Manager in advance.

Support from FSB for running events

- 3.12. Event organisers may request support from FSB to run the event, which might include (for example):
- monetary support (such as for the payment of speakers' fees or expenses),
 - reservation of School premises or equipment to hold the event,
 - the presence of specific members of School staff at the event,
 - assistance from FSB in promoting the event
 - arrangement of transportation to an off-site location,
 - costs associated with making the event accessible and inclusive.

- 3.13. FSB exercises prudence and economy in its use of public funds and in the management of its finances and facilities; the School may therefore permit an event to take place but decline a request for support where such a request would not be of proportionate or tangible benefit to the interests of FSB's community, or where resources cannot be made available at the proposed time of the event.

Denial of platform

- 3.14. FSB is not obliged to provide a platform to individuals who have no recognised expertise in a field of academic inquiry, nor does it have to provide speaking opportunities to those who wish to promote views that are manifestly at odds with empirically verifiable objective facts.
- 3.15. Furthermore, FSB shall have discretion in refusing an event to take place where it reasonably believes that the risk of breaking the law, or failing in our duty of care cannot be sufficiently controlled.
- 3.16. FSB and its officers will not use clauses 3.13, 3.14 and 3.15 of this policy as means of circumventing its statutory duty under 3.1; a decision to refuse an event will be made with due regard for the official sector guidance on complying with the law and FSB may additionally seek advice from Regional Coordinators at the Department for Education.
- 3.17. Event organisers shall have a right of appeal where they genuinely believe an event has been unfairly or unlawfully refused, cancelled or terminated.

Media

- 3.18. FSB retains the right to approve or reject requests for events to be covered by external media organisations.
- 3.19. FSB may request for its own internal media to cover the event for promotional purposes, in which case all protocols for consent and data protection will be in place; event organisers may refuse this if they wish.

Approval of Events

- 3.20. For an external speaker event to be permitted to proceed, the following must be in place:
- i. The event organiser will have submitted an External Speaker Form to the Vice Principal and the Designated Prevent Lead, in the correct format and ideally no less than two weeks prior to the date of the event. It is recommended that the date of the event is not

confirmed until the speaker has been approved. The form can be found on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or requested from Student Support.

- ii. The Designated Prevent Lead (DPL) will have undertaken due diligence on the speaker(s) and determined whether there is any potential risk of breach of duty of care and if so, proposed conditions for the event to go ahead that would effectively mitigate these risks.
- iii. The Vice Principal will have reviewed the request and the DPL's risk assessment and will have given their approval for it to proceed (in accordance with the criteria in Appendix A), along with any conditions if required. Approval will include any agreed support from FSB in facilitating the event (e.g. use of its facilities or payment of speakers' fees and/or expenses).
- iv. Where conditions are applied, the event organiser will have agreed with the Vice Principal how these will be implemented.

Responsibility for events

- 3.21. Fairfield School of Business is ultimately responsible and accountable for the lawful conduct of external speaker events held on its premises and/or in its name, and for the safety and wellbeing of those that attend them.
- 3.22. The Designated Prevent Lead is responsible for conducting due diligence on proposed external speakers to assess whether there would be any risk of breach of duty of care if the event is authorised.
- 3.23. The Vice Principal of FSB has delegated responsibility for the approval of all external speaker event requests and any conditions in accordance with the procedures set out in Appendix A. They will also liaise with staff to arrange for any agreed special support for the event. These responsibilities may be delegated to someone with suitable seniority.
- 3.24. Event organisers are responsible for planning, promoting and overseeing their events in accordance with all agreed conditions. Any external speakers on campus should be accompanied at all times and there should be at least one designated member of staff present throughout the event. They are also responsible, within reason, for the conduct of their events whilst on the premises: for example, they must ensure that external speakers do not:
 - incite hatred, violence or call for the breaking of the law,
 - encourage, glorify, or promote any acts of terrorism including individuals, groups or organisations that support such acts,
 - gather donations for any external organisation or cause without express permission of FSB to do so.

- 3.25. The Associate Dean and security staff responsible for overall security of events held on their campuses in accordance with FSB's operations and security policies.

Segregation of seating at events

- 3.26. Compulsory segregation, including on the grounds of gender, at events under the jurisdiction of this policy is explicitly prohibited.
- 3.27. FSB will not interfere with the freedom of attendees to sit in the location of their choosing at events, but organisers must not enforce any segregated seating (refer to FSB's [Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)).
- 3.28. FSB will follow guidance set out by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).

Sharing information about an external speaker

- 3.29. From time to time, FSB may need to share information about an external speaker with other institutions or relevant authorities, this may be because:
- i. due diligence on the speaker, or their conduct during an approved event has indicated there is a risk to the safety or wellbeing of individuals or communities,
 - ii. an external speaker has broken the law,
 - iii. another institution or organisation has contacted FSB to enquire about an external speaker which FSB has previously hosted as part of their due diligence.
- 3.30. FSB complies with all applicable data protection laws and the procedures for sharing information about individuals outlined in the School's [Data Protection Policy](#) will therefore apply; where in doubt about externally sharing any information about individuals that is not already in the public domain, the School's Data Protection Officer should be consulted.
- 3.31. Where serious concerns have been raised about an individual, FSB will engage with regional DfE Prevent Coordinators, the Office for Students, and other local authorities; the legal basis for sharing information will be the discharge of public function, namely reporting of unlawful (or suspected unlawful) activity.

4. Failure to comply

- 4.1. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action under the relevant discipline policy and procedures for the individual(s) concerned. For students this includes

taking action under our Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. For staff this includes taking action under the relevant disciplinary procedure.

5. Review and Update

- 5.1. This policy and the related procedures will be reviewed annually by the Designated Prevent Lead and the Vice Principal to ensure it remains effective and in alignment with all applicable laws and guidance.
- 5.2. Changes to this policy will be ratified by the School's Board of Governors.

Appendix A – External Speaker Request Approval Process

Any staff member or registered student organising an external speaker or event must follow this procedure.

1. Requesting an External Speaker

Anyone requesting an external speaker event must complete an External Speaker/Events Request form and submit it to:

- the Designated Prevent Lead Prevent@fairfield.ac; and
- the Vice Principal: giedrius.zilionis@fairfield.ac

The form must be submitted **at least 2 weeks before the proposed date of the event**. The Vice Principal may reject the request if there is not sufficient time to prepare for or promote the event.

The request will be notified to the Student Union President.

Any request for monetary assistance from FSB (such as external speakers fees or expenses) should be given as an itemised breakdown in the form and submitted along with any additional information (e.g. pricelists, quotes, etc.)

2. Due Diligence

Upon receipt, the Designated Prevent Lead (DPL) will research any available information about the proposed speaker(s) and any organisations they represent or are affiliated to, in order to determine the amount of risk. This may involve:

- reviewing the title and subject matter of the event,
- visiting the speaker's website (if there is one) and reviewing any public social media postings, blogs or articles,
- researching any other online information about the speaker, including reviews, news articles or other sources,
- consultation with the Department for Education's regional Prevent Coordinators or Local Authority Prevent partners and safeguarding agencies,
- consultation with other academic institutions who are known to have hosted the speaker, or have dealt with the company they represent,
- checking if the person is affiliated with any proscribed organisations listed here: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2>)

- Checking any organisations, charities, professional memberships, voluntary positions, or special interest groups that the speaker, or their organisation, is affiliated with

The amount of risk of the event will be considered where due diligence undertaken indicates:

- that the topic to be discussed is potentially sensitive in nature
- any potential for controversy regarding the topic to be discussed or regarding the external speaker
- the potential for any decision to limit freedom of speech as per FSB's Academic Freedom Policy and Code of Practice,
- the potential for the event going ahead to cause FSB to be in breach of our Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy,
- the potential for the event going ahead to cause FSB to be in breach of any other policy or our wider legal or regulatory duties (for example, safeguarding, anti-corruption and bribery, data protection, or legislation relevant to safety in the workplace),
- the potential for the speaker's presence on campus to cause a breach of the peace,
- The speaker will be collecting donations from attendees or offering attendees to sign contracts at the event.
- the risk of the speaker having any access to staff or student data or any of FSB's Intellectual Property
- any real or perceived conflicts of interests
- the potential for any negative reports in the press or other media
- Any other area of risk identified with the event

Where any risk has been identified the DPL may recommend to the Vice-Principal any mitigating action that should be applied, either prior to or during the event, as a condition of the event going ahead. Where due diligence suggests that there is no/low risk, the DPL may recommend that it proceeds under normal operations and security protocols, and in alignment with this policy.

3. Authorisation

Once the DPL has completed their assessment of risk, the Vice Principal will consider the request with regard for the following criteria:

- The level of risk identified by the DPL, including any residual risk once any proposed mitigations are applied,
- The DPL's proposed mitigations are feasible,
- The event is genuinely beneficial to the academic, professional or cultural interests of the student body,
- The speaker is a credible and has verifiable expertise in their professed field
- The event does not conflict with the delivery of programmes or other important events that cannot be rescheduled,
- The planed event does not exclude anyone who has a legitimate interest in attending,
- The event accords with FSB's policies and regulations,
- That a refusal to allow the event to go ahead would be in breach of our Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech obligations,
- Whether any requests for financial or other support from FSB to run the Event are reasonable, affordable and proportionate to the tangible benefits,
- Any concerns raised by the Student Union have suitably been addressed.

The Vice Principal may decide:

- to approve the event and special support as requested.
- to approve the event subject to conditions.
- to approve the event but with restrictions on the support provided by FSB to facilitate the event.
- to refuse the event to take place

Where an event has been approved:

- i. The Vice Principal will work with the appropriate staff to ensure that and agreed support for the event is provided in good time, and that an Associate Dean or designated duty officer will be in place, who will be briefed about the event beforehand.
- ii. The Event Organiser will promote the event in accordance with this policy.
- iii. The Vice Principal will respond to any concerns raised about the event by members of FSB's community, the authorities or the general public and may reconsider the decision of approval where any new information not considered at the due diligence stage is put forward.
- iv. Where conditions apply, the Vice Principal will check prior to the event taking place whether these have been fulfilled by the event organiser. The Vice Principal may cancel the event at short notice if conditions have not been met.

Where a request for an event has been refused:

- v. The Vice Principal will clearly indicate why the event cannot go ahead and (where appropriate) may suggest modifications to the event that would allow it to proceed.
- vi. Where the event has been approved but a request for special support as per ___ has been declined; the Vice Principal will suggest alternatives to enable the Event Organiser(s) to hold the event.

4. Appeal of refusal

Event organisers may appeal a decision to refuse the event, to imposed conditions, or refusal to provide requested support for an event.

In the first instance, the Event Organiser should seek informal resolution with the Vice Principal to discuss the outcome and the reasons for the decision.

If no satisfactory resolution can be reached, the event organiser is entitled to submit a formal appeal in writing to the Principal of FSB. This should include the basis for the appeal, the desired outcome and any evidence to substantiate the appeal.

Every effort will be made to conclude an appeal before the date the event is to be held but this cannot be guaranteed. In the event that an appeal is successful, but the proposed event date has passed or is no longer feasible, an alternative date will be agreed. As above, it is recommended that the date of the event is not confirmed prior to the approval of the speaker.

Where a formal appeal is lodged, the Principal will establish a panel to consider the substance of the appeal. This will be conducted in line with the FSB's protocols for appeal meetings; the panel membership should not include any individual who has been involved in the case prior.

The Vice Principal will give a rationale for their decision to the panel, which will then consider all the evidence presented to it. The Panel may consult with individuals within or external to FSB as it sees fit and will have access to legal counsel if necessary.

The panel will agree one of the following

- Refusal upheld
- Appeal successful with mitigations
- Appeal successful without mitigations

The decision rendered by the Principal's Panel Meeting shall be final.

Appendix B – Raising concerns about an External Speaker Event

External speaker events and off-campus events will be publicised with sufficient time for the members of FSB's community to respond. Students who wish to raise a concern about an approved event should contact their Student Union Coordinator or the SU President. Staff who want to raise a concern should speak to their Line Manager.

Concerns raised about an approved event will be forwarded to and reviewed by the Vice Principal, the DPL and the Student Union President, who may seek to meet with those raising concerns, and the event organiser to discuss the matter further.

As a result of these discussions, the Vice Principal may elect to

- Authorise the event organiser to proceed with the event as approved; or
- Reconsider the approval in light of new information, as per the process in Appendix A.

Any students raising concerns who are not satisfied with the outcome of the Vice Principal's decision should use the FSB Student complaints Procedure at Stage 2; 'Raising a Formal Complaint' (the discussions above will have constituted Stage 1). Staff should submit complaints through the staff complaints procedures.

Appendix C – Legal Framework

This policy and procedure has been drafted to comply with the following legislation:

The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 (section 43(1)) places a statutory obligation on Higher Education Providers in England and Wales to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers.

This duty ‘within the law’ extends to ensuring ‘so far as is reasonably practicable, that the use of any premises of the establishment is not denied to any individual or body of persons on any ground connected with (a) the beliefs or views of that individual or of any member of that body; or (b) the policy or objectives of that body.’

Under section 43(3), the School is also required to issue, and keep up-to-date, a policy of practice on freedom of speech, setting out the procedures to be followed by students and staff in connection with the organisation of meetings and activities which fall within any class specified within this policy, together with the conduct required of staff and students in connection with such meetings and activities.

For the purposes of the Act, the School’s duty extends to Student Union activities.

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA) makes it clear that all universities and colleges which register with the Office for Students (OFS) must uphold the existing laws around freedom of speech and follow the OFS’s regulatory framework. Under the framework the governing bodies of registered universities and colleges should take ‘such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured within the provider.’⁴ HERA also includes a general duty for the OFS to protect institutional autonomy including academic freedom.

The Education Reform Act 1988 (section 202) (reinforced by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017) makes clear that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions.

The Public Order Act 1986 creates criminal offences relating to public order; to control public processions and assemblies; to control the inciting of racial hatred or on the grounds of religion or of sexual orientation.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 creates both civil and criminal offences for harassment and makes provision for protecting persons from harassment and similar conduct.

The Human Rights Act 1998 Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion); Article 10 (freedom of expression); and Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association).

The Equality Act 2010 requires the School, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between diverse groups.

The Terrorism Act 2006 creates offences relating to the encouragement of terrorism and dissemination of terrorist publications, including publishing.

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 requires “specified authorities” to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act (2023) makes provision in relation to freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education institutions and in students’ unions; and for connected purposes.

Document governance

Document owner*	Dean of Teaching and Learning
Consulted parties**	Designated Prevent Lead, Quality Manager, Vice Principal
Next update due	September 2026
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**Responsible for updates to this content.*

*** To be consulted on updates to this content.*

Versions

Version no.	Description of Changes	Approved by	Date
1.0 - 3.0	Original version and subsequent updates.	Board of Governors	Jan 2017 Sep 2017 Mar 2018 Sep 2018
3.1 – 3.2	Revised procedural guidance for vetting speakers, added concerns reporting procedure, subsequent update annual review (no changes)	Board of Governors	Sep 2019 Sep 2020
4.0 – 4.1	Updated with clarified definitions of academic freedom and freedom of expression	Board of Governors	Mar 2022
5.0	Substantial rewrite to align with new legislation. Revision of procedure to ensure objectivity of appeals process.	Board of Governors	Jan 2024
5.1	Minor updates (job titles and consulted parties).	Board of Governors	Oct 2025
5.2	Minor updates to all sections	VP	Dec 2025