

# Freedom of Speech Policy

November 2024

Surrey Students' Union aims to be the heart of our students' life at the University of Surrey, ensuring our campus is a place in which a diversity of people and opinions are not only accepted but celebrated. We exist to 'provide for the intellectual, cultural, social and physical recreation of our members' as well as to 'foster and encourage the freedom of speech, expression, assembly and association.' Every year we facilitate student-led events where external speakers are invited to broaden the scope of discussion and debate and contribute to the academic and non-academic development of our members.

## What are External Speakers

External speakers are defined as any non-University of Surrey students or staff members who are invited to speak, or participate in an event, on campus or online. If you are planning on inviting multiple external speakers to an event, they must all be approved through this procedure.

## Our Commitment to Freedom of Speech

Surrey Students' Union and the University of Surrey have a shared commitment to the importance of enabling and protecting Freedom of Speech across campus. Furthermore, The Education Act 1986, section 43, places an obligation of universities 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"*.

As a Union, our Charitable Objects are, are the advancement of education of students at the University of Surrey for the public benefit by:

- Promoting the interests and welfare of students at the university of Surrey during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students.
- Being the recognised representative channel between students and university of Surrey and any other external bodies.

- Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.

It is within this framework that the Union is committed to empower and support our clubs and societies to organise invitations for a variety of speakers that stimulate debate and further the non-academic development of our members. We will facilitate events where speakers are allowed the right to express their views and experiences, while differing, challenging and antithetical views are also heard and debated in a safe space.

There are limitations on this commitment set by UK Law that protects individuals and groups from intimidation, discrimination and the incitement of a crime. The Union is bound by a number of different statutes and regulations and must always ensure that freedom of speech is maintained within this legal framework. In order to maintain our duty of care for the health and safety of all staff, students and visitors in particular we will:

- Do all that is reasonably practicable to protect our members from unlawful direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Not allow communication which is threatening, abusive or intended to harass, alarm or distress.
- Not allow communication which targets a person, or group of people based on their skin colour, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender (sexual or identified), age, disability, marriage and civil partnership.
- Reaffirm that it is a criminal offence to incite or encourage others commit a crime, including acts of terrorism.