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External Speaker Procedure			3.0
DEPARTMENT	Group Student Support - Safeguarding		
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EXTERNAL SPEAKER PROCEDURE

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1. Procedure Statement

Activate Learning is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment in which students, apprentices and staff can explore ideas, question established thinking and engage in constructive debate.

Activate Learning recognises its legal duties to protect freedom of speech within the law, including the rights of visiting speakers, alongside its responsibilities for

safeguarding, Prevent, equality, health and safety and the welfare of students, staff and visitors.

A speaker or event should not be restricted simply because a topic or viewpoint is controversial, unpopular, challenging or causes disagreement, where the proposed speech is lawful. However, freedom of speech is not absolute, and Activate Learning must not facilitate unlawful activity, conduct or a sufficiently evidenced risk of it, including threats, harassment, incitement to violence or terrorism, or other criminal conduct.

Activate Learning will therefore take a proportionate and risk-based approach to external speakers and events, seeking to enable lawful events to proceed wherever reasonably practicable and using appropriate measures to manage identified risks.

For higher education activity, decisions will also comply with applicable Office for Students requirements.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to:

- Staff, students or apprentices organising an external speaker or organisation;
- external speakers invited to speak at or on behalf of Activate Learning;
- external organisations delivering sessions, activities or events on any of Activate Learning campuses;
- third parties using Activate Learning premises for activities affiliated with or associated with Activate Learning;
- online events hosted, promoted or facilitated by Activate Learning; and
- Activate Learning affiliated or branded events taking place off-site.

The procedure should be applied proportionately, taking account of the event, audience, subject matter and level of identified risk.

It would not normally apply where a student, apprentice or staff member independently attends an event organised by an unrelated third party.

3. Definitions

- **External Speaker:** A person who is not an Activate Learning employee, apprentice or student who is invited to speak at or on behalf of Activate Learning.
- **External Organisation:** An organisation or individual providing a service, session, activity or event to Activate Learning students, apprentices or staff.
- **Sponsor:** The Activate Learning staff member responsible for organising or sponsoring an event.
- **Hirer:** An external individual or organisation using Activate Learning premises under an agreed hire arrangement.
- **Premises**: Any room, facility, building or area of the estate controlled by Activate Learning

4. Procedure

4.1 Principles

Decisions regarding external speakers should be guided by the following principles:

1. Freedom of speech: external speakers should be able to express lawful views, while events must be managed in accordance with applicable duties relating to freedom of speech, academic freedom, Prevent, safeguarding and equality.
2. Safeguarding: we must protect students, apprentices, staff and visitors from harm.
3. Prevent: consideration should be given to risks of radicalisation into terrorism and terrorism-related activity.
4. Equality: we must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and consider equality and accessibility throughout the process.

5. Proportionality: restrictions should be necessary, lawful and proportionate to the identified risk.
6. Age and vulnerability: the age, maturity, and individual needs of the intended audience should be considered.
7. Least restrictive approach: where risks can reasonably be managed, the event should normally proceed with appropriate controls.
8. Evidence-based decisions: decisions should be based on credible information and identified risks rather than assumptions about a speaker or organisation.

4.2 Due Diligence

The Sponsor is responsible for completing proportionate due diligence before confirming an external speaker or organisation.

This should consider:

- the speaker's identity, background and the organisation they represent;
- the purpose of the event and its educational, enrichment or professional rationale;
- the proposed subject matter and intended audience;
- relevant publicly available information, including credible evidence of previous conduct or activity, restrictions or concerns and the context for these;
- any credible Prevent, terrorism safeguarding, equality, legal or security concerns;
- potential for significant protest, disruption or other operational impact;
- whether additional safeguarding, accessibility or security arrangements are required;
- whether any DBS checks or other suitability requirements apply, based on the nature and frequency of the activity.

Due diligence may include checking relevant previous appearances or activity, including where appropriate information from other organisations or settings that have hosted the speaker. Internet searches should be sufficiently thorough to identify relevant information beyond the first page of results. Information should be

considered in context and, where appropriate, verified through reliable sources rather than relying solely on social media or online commentary.

Where credible Prevent or terrorism-related concerns are identified, the Sponsor must seek advice from the Safeguarding Team before confirming the event.

4.3 Risk Assessment

Where due diligence identifies a potential safeguarding, Prevent, equality, legal, security or significant operational concern (see Appendix 1), the Sponsor must assess the level of risk and refer all medium, high or unmanageable risk concerns to the Safeguarding Team.

This referral should normally be made at least 14 days before the event to allow sufficient time for review and any necessary mitigation planning.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead or Director – Designated Safeguarding Lead will review the information and, where appropriate, consult relevant colleagues or external partners, such as Prevent, Police, Health and Safety, Property and Estates, senior leaders or curriculum colleagues, to determine whether risks can be appropriately mitigated.

The purpose of the assessment is to identify reasonable and proportionate measures that enable the event to proceed safely wherever possible. These may include:

- staff supervision;
- moderated discussion or Q&A;
- clear event expectations for speakers and attendees;
- age-appropriate arrangements;
- additional safeguarding or pastoral support;
- security arrangements including separate arrangements for protestors and attendees;
- controlled access or registration;
- changes to the event format, timing or location.

Following assessment, an event may be:

- permitted to proceed;
- permitted subject to conditions;
- postponed while further information is obtained; or
- not permitted where there is an evidenced legal, safeguarding, Prevent, security or other material risk that cannot reasonably be mitigated.

Cancellation should be an exceptional measure where the risks cannot reasonably be managed through less restrictive measures.

The final decision to restrict or cancel an event will be made by the Director - DSL. Decisions should be recorded, including the evidence considered, identified risks, mitigation considered and the rationale for the final decision.

4.4 Appeals and Complaints

Where a Sponsor disagrees with a decision, they may request a review by the Group Director of College or provision e.g., Apprenticeships or Online Faculty.

For higher education activity, eligible individuals may also have access to the Office for Students free-speech complaints scheme, including visiting speakers. Further information is available through the Office for Students website.

4.5 Event Management

4.5.1 Onsite Events

For approved events taking place on Activate Learning premises, the Sponsor should ensure that:

- relevant Property & Estates, Health & Safety and Reception arrangements are in place;
- speakers follow visitor and identification arrangements;
- all parties know how to raise a safeguarding concern;

- appropriate event expectations are communicated to speakers;
- security arrangements reflect the identified risk; and
- accessibility and reasonable adjustments are considered.

Where an event involves students or apprentices, the Sponsor should ensure that appropriate supervision arrangements are in place, taking account of the age, vulnerability and circumstances of those attending.

Lawful protest should be accommodated where it can take place safely. Activate Learning will intervene where behaviour becomes unlawful, threatening, abusive or creates a significant and immediate safety risk.

4.5.2 Activate Learning Arranged or Sponsored Events

Where Activate Learning organises, funds, promotes, sponsors or formally affiliates itself with an event, the Sponsor should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the event as a whole.

This should include consideration of:

- the purpose and rationale for the event;
- the suitability of speakers, contributors and organisations involved;
- the intended audience, including the age and vulnerability of students or apprentices;
- safeguarding, Prevent, equality, accessibility and security considerations;
- arrangements for supervision and staff presence;
- venue and event management arrangements;
- arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns, incidents, disruption or protest; and
- any specific requirements arising from the identified risk.

Where the event takes place at an external venue, the Sponsor should also consider the arrangements set out in section 4.5.4.

4.5.3 Online Events

Sponsors should use approved platforms and appropriate access controls, considering the DfE Safeguarding and Remote Education Guidance where relevant.

Arrangements should include, as appropriate:

- secure joining information;
- appropriate access controls for participants;
- staff moderation;
- control of screen sharing, recording, and chat functions;
- agreed recording and data arrangements;
- accessibility and reasonable adjustments; and
- appropriate arrangements for identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns; and inappropriate, harmful or unlawful content.

Where an external speaker is presenting to students or apprentices, additional safeguards should be considered, including appropriate staff oversight and arrangements for responding to concerns arising during the session.

4.5.4 Off-site Trips, Visits and Events

Where Activate Learning organises, funds, promotes, sponsors or formally affiliates itself with an event, trip or visit taking place away from Activate Learning premises, the Sponsor should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place, including consideration of:

- the hosts safeguarding and Prevent arrangements;
- the suitability and security of the venue;
- supervision and staffing arrangements;
- transport and travel arrangements;
- the age, vulnerability and circumstances of students or apprentices attending;
- potential for protest, disruption or other security concerns; and

- arrangements for responding to and reporting safeguarding concerns.

Where applicable, the Trips and Residential Procedure must also be followed.

4.5.5 Events Organised by Hirers

Where an event is organised independently by a Hirer using Activate Learning premises, responsibility for the event, including its speakers, content, attendees, supervision and management, remains with the Hirer in accordance with the terms of the hire agreement.

The Hirer is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for the management and safe delivery of the event, including any applicable safeguarding, security, health and safety and legal requirements.

Activate Learning retains responsibility for the safety and management of its own premises, its own staff and any specific conditions or requirements set out in the hire agreement.

Where Activate Learning becomes aware of a significant concern relating to a Hirer or an event taking place on its premises, appropriate action should be taken in accordance with the terms of the hire agreement and relevant safeguarding procedures.

4.6 Managing Concerns During an Event

If concerns arise during an event, the Sponsor or supervising member of staff should:

1. assess whether there is an immediate safety or safeguarding concern;
2. intervene where necessary to prevent unlawful or unsafe conduct;
3. pause or modify the event where proportionate;
4. seek advice from a senior colleague or Safeguarding Team where required;
5. remove access to the event where an individual is behaving unlawfully or creating an immediate safety risk;

6. ensure students/apprentices and staff have access to appropriate support where distressing or sensitive issues have been raised;
7. record and report safeguarding or Prevent concerns promptly.

Where an event is stopped or significantly restricted, the Sponsor should record the circumstances and rationale.

4.7 Safeguarding and Prevent Reporting

Safeguarding concerns should be reported through Activate Learning's Safeguarding – Reporting a Concern Procedure.

- Email: safe@activatelearning.ac.uk
- Telephone: 01865 550401
- Form [internal staff only]: Record of Concern Form
- In person and followed up in writing.

Where appropriate, the Safeguarding Team will liaise with Prevent partners, Police and other agencies in accordance with the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and applicable information-sharing requirements.

Serious security incidents, including significant disorder, unauthorised intrusion or threats to safety, must also be reported through Activate Learning's Incident Report.

5. Compliance

All decisions under this procedure must comply with applicable:

- safeguarding legislation and guidance such as Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Prevent Duty requirements;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- freedom of speech and academic freedom duties;

- data protection legislation;
- health and safety requirements;
- relevant OfS requirements for registered higher education provision;
- Activate Learning policies and procedures.

6. Feedback

Questions or feedback on this procedure can be directed through Activate Learning's Customer Compliments, Comments and Complaints process.

7. Review

This procedure will be reviewed every three years, or sooner where required following changes to legislation, statutory guidance, Prevent or OfS requirements, relevant safeguarding learning, or significant incidents.

8. References

- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
- Safeguarding – Reporting a Concern Procedure
- Trips and Residential Procedure
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Prevent Duty Guidance: Guidance for Specified Authorities in England and Wales
- Political Impartiality in Schools - GOV.UK
- Hosting Speakers on School Premises - Educate Against Hate
- Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook - GOV.UK
- Safeguarding and Remote Education - GOV.UK
- Proscribed Terrorist Groups or Organisations - GOV.UK
- Education (No. 2) Act 1986

- Regulatory advice 24: Guidance Related to Freedom of Speech - Office for Students

Appendix 1: External Speaker Assessment of Risk

This matrix supports staff (sponsors) to conduct an initial self-assessment of risk when inviting or hosting an external speaker/event. It should be used alongside the due diligence requirements set out in this procedure.

Risk Level	Criteria (indicators)	Required Actions
Low Risk	Clear educational/curriculum rationale; reputable speaker or organisation; no identified safeguarding, Prevent, legal or security concern; manageable audience.	Sponsor completes proportionate due diligence and records the event. Normal visitor and safeguarding arrangements apply.
Medium Risk	Sensitive or controversial subject matter; limited information about speaker; significant external interest; anticipated protest; concerns raised about previous activity; audience includes particularly vulnerable learners; potential Prevent or equality considerations.	Inform the Safeguarding Team (DDSL and/or DSL) at least 14 days in advance. Consider additional controls and document the decision.
High Risk	Credible evidence of potential unlawful activity, terrorism-related concerns, serious safeguarding risk, significant security risk, or risk that cannot readily be managed through routine controls.	Event must not proceed until reviewed by Director - DSL. Formal multi-disciplinary risk assessment to determine whether the event can proceed and what controls are required.
Unmanageable	Evidence that the proposed activity would involve unlawful conduct or a significant risk that cannot reasonably be mitigated.	Event must not proceed in its proposed form. Decision and rationale must be recorded and communicated to the Sponsor.

Questions for Sponsors

Purpose and audience

- What is the educational, enrichment or professional purpose?
- Who is the intended audience?

- Does the audience include learners under 18 or learners requiring additional safeguarding support?
- Is the content appropriate for the age and context of the audience?

Speaker / organisation

- Who is the speaker?
- Who do they represent?
- What relevant public information is available?
- Are there credible concerns relating to terrorism, proscribed organisations, safeguarding or unlawful activity?

Content

- What is the speaker expected to discuss?
- Could the topic involve controversial, sensitive or distressing issues?
- Could the event create a risk of unlawful discrimination, harassment, threats or violence?
- Are there Prevent-related concerns?
- Can those concerns be managed through proportionate controls?

Event management

- Could protest or disruption reasonably be anticipated?
- What arrangements are required to keep the event, attendees and lawful protesters safe?
- What staffing, supervision or security is required?
- Are online moderation arrangements required?
- Are accessibility arrangements required?

Mitigation

- Can the event proceed safely with additional controls?

- Is there a less restrictive alternative to cancellation?
- If lawful speech is being restricted, what is the legal basis and why is the restriction proportionate?

Decision

- What evidence has been considered?
- What risks have been identified?
- What mitigation has been considered?
- Why is the proposed decision necessary and proportionate?