



UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING WITH SENSITIVE ISSUES

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UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON
AND
ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

Guidelines for engaging with sensitive issues outside of normal teaching activities

1. Introduction

The University of Roehampton (“the University” or “UoR”) has a very diverse community of students and staff. Its values, listed below, set out a vision for this community as one in which all its members can learn, mature and contribute to society. Realising this vision will involve engaging with controversial issues.

In a diverse institution there are unparalleled opportunities to do this in a constructive way. However, some of the issues are particularly sensitive and the exploration of them must be undertaken with care. Problems sometimes arise when activities are promoted or conducted in ways that knowingly cause offence to others and/or demean people because of their characteristics, their beliefs, their views or their behaviour. At the extreme end of the spectrum, activities may constitute a criminal offence if, for example, they incite hatred on the basis of religious belief or contravene UoR’s duties to comply with the Law, such as recent The Counter Terrorism and Security Act of 2015.

These guidelines have been adopted by both UoR and the Roehampton Students’ Union (RSU). They are intended to help members of the University community tackle sensitive issues in ways that respect the integrity of others and their right to hold views that are different from those of others.

2. Rights, responsibilities and legal obligations

A University is a place where the right to freedom of speech is upheld and cherished. But this freedom must be exercised with respect for, and sensitivity towards, others. In addition, we must comply with relevant legislation in all areas of activity. In terms of sensitive issues this includes, but is not limited to, age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender identity. UoR’s policies on diversity and equal opportunity, harassment and complaints also apply.¹

3. University values

At Roehampton, we are committed to ensuring that all of our students, regardless of their background, fulfil their potential. They become the kind of graduate that employers value: a confident, critical thinker; adaptable, able to work well with people from all walks of life and with an ongoing passion for learning.

The values below give expression to the sort of community UoR aspires to be:

- We challenge, inspire and support our students as individuals, to grow intellectually, personally and spiritually
- We prepare our students to be responsible citizens and leaders in a fast-changing, complex world
- We are committed to serving the needs of local communities and to contributing to the economic, social and cultural success of South and West London

¹ <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/corporate-information/policies/>

- We work to promote social justice through our outreach and teaching programmes, and through research, consultancy and engagement with communities
- We encourage learning, creativity and the arts as ways of nurturing the human spirit and improving the quality of life
- We are engaged in the pursuit of truth through reason, research and debate, based on freedom of thought and expression
- We promote equality, diversity, mutual respect and understanding

4. Guidelines

The following points outline some of the actions that can be taken when organising events and activities in the name of the University or the RSU, whether on or off campus, to ensure that sensitive issues are handled appropriately:

4.1 Form of event

Choose a form of event that will enable different views to be presented and discussed but leave those who are present to make up their own minds. For example, a debate is designed so that one view “wins” and another “loses” so, unless the motion is worded very carefully, it may not be appropriate for a sensitive issue. The same range of views can possibly be expressed through a panel discussion where panellists can have their say and answer questions. People in the audience can contribute but there does not have to be a formal conclusion. Use TV and Radio programmes as models, for example – Any Questions (R4), Question Time (BBC1), Start the Week (BBC1). Alternatively a traditional event with speakers and questions might serve the same purpose.

4.2 Topic and title

Express the topic for discussion or the motion for debate carefully. Try to make sure that it does not build in a presumption in favour of one side of the argument or another, or implicitly cast aspersions on those who take a particular view. It must also avoid inciting hatred. For example “Should the time limit for legal abortions be cut?” provides a way of discussing a sensitive issue in a way that respects all people’s views, whereas “Maintaining the 24 week limit for legal abortions is immoral” casts the same discussion in a less sensitive way.

4.3 Chair

Choose the person to chair a debate or panel with care. The Chair needs to be familiar with the issue in order to moderate the discussion and to ensure that all sides have opportunity to express their views. However, if the Chair is known to have strong views on the subject under discussion, it might be difficult for the participants to have confidence in them, or for the Chair not to let their own views influence the way the discussion is conducted.

4.4 Speakers

Choose speakers/panel members carefully. In a university it is particularly important to ensure that they have knowledge and credibility in the subject they are speaking about. Never ask someone to speak on behalf of a view that they do not hold or a belief that they do not share. Try to make sure that those in the University who have views on an issue under discussion either choose or are comfortable with whoever is asked to present their side of the argument. For example, in an inter-faith discussion, those speaking on behalf of a particular faith should be chosen by or approved by members of the faith group in the University.

4.5 External speakers

Groups may well wish to invite external speakers for events. It is important to make sure that such people have the knowledge and experience that will make them credible contributors to a discussion at the University and who, themselves, will understand and respect the sensitivities that might arise in a diverse community. It is always useful to research potential speakers to make sure they are appropriate. The University and the RSU can assist in this regard if needed.

4.6 Briefing

Provide all chairs and speakers, whether internal or external, with a clear brief about their role, the topic under discussion, the format of the event and make clear that it should be conducted within the spirit of these guidelines.

4.7 Process

The process highlighted in Appendix 1 is to be followed when thinking about inviting a speaker or planning an event or activity on campus, which is considered sensitive. In making their decision on whether to allow or not allow an event to take place or a speaker to attend, the University and/or the RSU may find it necessary to refer to sources of information outside of the University such as what may be available through the NUS, University networks, or available publically via the internet or relevant websites. It may also be necessary to consult with relevant agencies and seek advice. These may very occasionally include the police or the local Prevent lead for the borough.

4.8 Security

Always inform Security when an external speaker will be arriving and where they will be whilst on campus, and discuss with them whether any special precautions need to be taken.

4.9 Events held off campus

It is very important to follow the guidelines contained within this document if the University's or the RSU's names are in any way being connected to the event or activity being planned.

4.10 Scope

This guidance applies to all events and activities apart from those covered within the core teaching and research activity of the University. It also covers events and activities that may be planned by students or staff or which may be requested by 3rd parties.

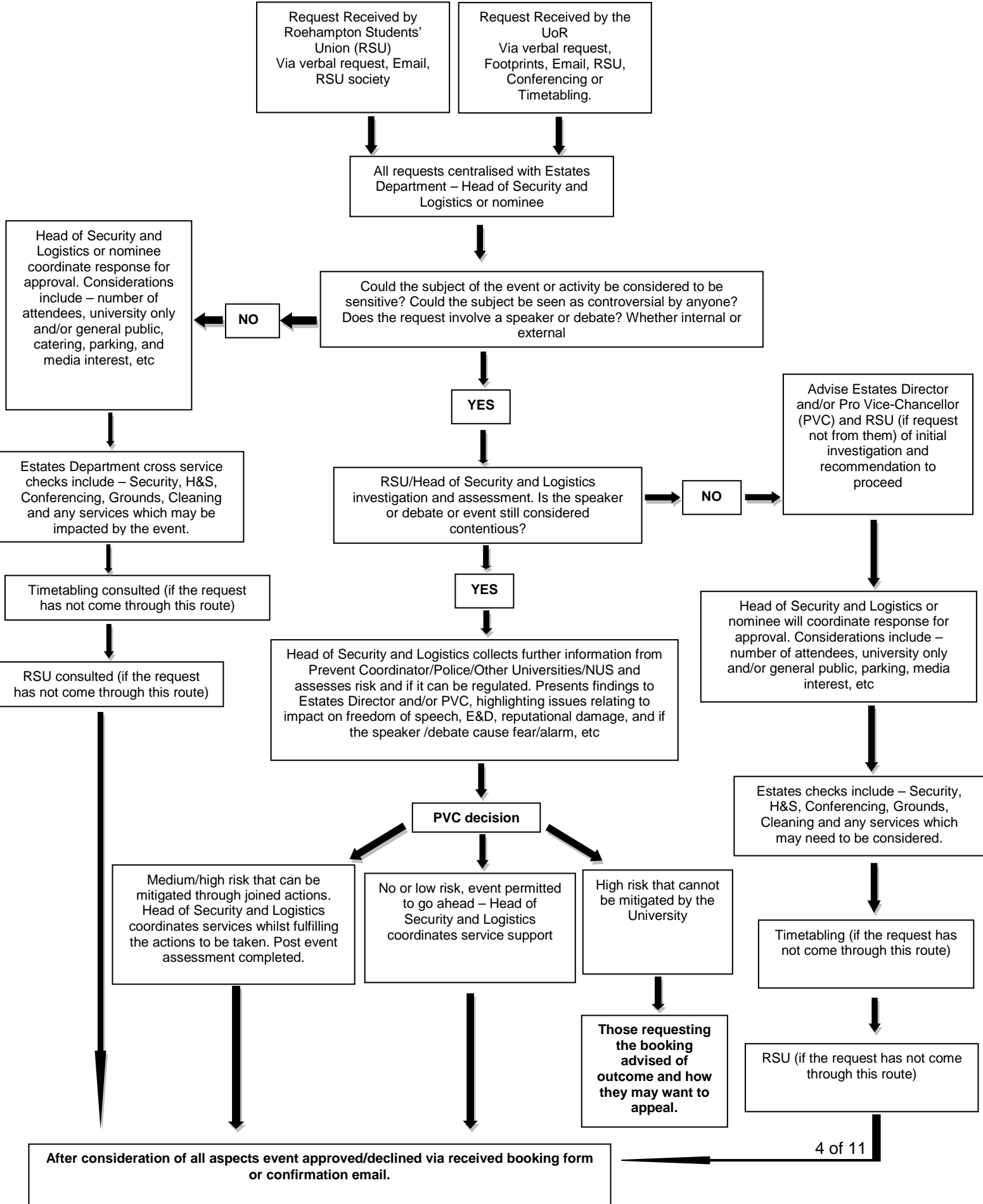
Appendix 1 – Event/speaker approval flow chart

Appendix 2 – RSU Event/ speaker request form (Note: this form can be accessed and completed online [here](#))

Appendix 3 – Staff or general event/speaker/room request form

Updated: June 2018

APPENDIX 1 - Flow Chart for Speakers/Room Bookings/Event Requests considered sensitive



APPENDIX 2 – Event/speaker request form

External Speakers Form

- An 'external speaker' is any individual or organisation who is not a student or staff member of the University or Students' Union and is invited to provide a viewpoint, or to speak publically, at the invitation of the Students' Union (this could include a society, club, committee or Officer).
- This doesn't apply to external trainers or tutors who are invited to teach a skill, rather than provide a viewpoint (e.g. a dance teacher).
- If your society or committee wishes to invite an external speaker as part of your event or activity (either on or off campus) then you are required to submit this form at least 14 working days (2 weeks) in advance. Staff members and Officers must also submit this form if they are hosting any external speakers for any of their events or activities.
- It may take up to 5 working days for the speaker forms to be processed by the Students' Union. Please note that your speaker has not been approved until you have received written confirmation from the RSU that this has been accepted. This will be in the form of an email.
- Societies/Clubs are not permitted to advertise a speaker event until they have received confirmation from the Students' Union that the speaker has been approved, this also include on social media
- Before completing this form, you should read the Students' Union's External Speakers Policy on the Students' Union website.
- This information is required to ensure that the SU is complying with the relevant laws and policies around external speakers.
- Please be as honest and specific as you can at this stage of your planning. If the speaker is deemed to be high risk or controversial, then we will contact you with support and advice to manage the event.

Completed forms should be sent to your society coordinator: societies@roehampton.ac.uk .

Name of Society/Club/Group/Organisation submitting booking request	
Your Name	
Contact Email	
Contact Number	

Date of Event		Start Time	
Location of Event		End Time	

Speaker Details

Name of Speaker	
Organisation	
Position Held	
Contact Email	
Contact Number	

Please provide some background information about the speaker and their organisation.

Why did you choose them to talk at your event?

(Please fill in with as much detail as possible)

Event Name	
Aims and objectives of event:	1) 2) 3)
What topic will be covered by this speaker?	
Will this speaker be debating/presenting a specific view point in this event?	
Does this speaker have an affiliation? E.g. Religious/political/campaigning?	
Please include links to the speakers website and social media links	
Is there any fee associated with booking this speaker? (How much? Please mention if this is for travel)	
Please declare any knowledge of controversy attracted by the speaker or topic in the past	
Will the event be chaired? If so,	

who will chair the event and do they have the necessary skills or training to hold this position?	
Is this event/speaker likely to attract media interest – if so why?	
Any other information you think we need to be aware of?	

Who is this event aimed at?

- Society/Club Members All Students General Public

Is this event ticketed?

- Yes No

How/where is this event being advertised?

- Society Social Media Society Web Page RSU Events Calendar
- Media/News outlets External Speakers Social Media/ Website External Organisations Social Media/ Website
- Posters around University Posters around Roehampton

Other:

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For Administrative Use Only:

To be completed and signed off by Community or Opportunities Manager.

Date Completed Form Received:	
The RSU Staff Member Recipient:	

Any information about the event uncovered through research which might be important for assessing event:

Decision:

- Approved
- Approved with modifications
- Rejected
- Deferred

Justifications & Modifications

Booking confirmed Yes/No?	Date:
Initiator contacted Yes/No?	Date:
Security Advised Yes/No?	Date:.....

Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix 3 – University event/speaker/room request form

Event Request Form

Room Booking Policy

All room booking requests need to be submitted to the Student Union Vice President Activities at least a week in advance

Please note this is a request and any event cannot go ahead until it has been approved and you have been given confirmation by e-mail or by telephone.

Contact Details:

Principal Organiser of Event.....

Status.....

Phone No.....

Email Address.....

Signed: Request Date.....

Event Details:

Name of the Event.....

Date of the Event.....

Start Time.....Duration.....

Purpose of Event:

Location/Room Requirements:

Preferred Campus.....

Specific Requirements.....

Speakers

Name..... Occupation.....

Internal/External (Please state either internal or external).....

Topics being discussed:

Purpose of Event:

Audience (Please state yes or no for who will be attending)

Internal..... External..... Total Number of People.....

Catering Requirements:

Internal (Catering from the University catering department please state YES or NO).....

External (Would like to provide your own food/drink please state YES or NO if yes please give details of the type of food and drink you would like to offer)

.....

(Please note in most circumstances people are not allowed to provide their own food and drink. In cases where exceptions are made this form will be forwarded on by the Timetabling Manager to the Director of Estates for approval)

Security- security must be Notified in advance of any Event

Will Your Event Need Security on site? How Many?

.....

Charges

If you are charging people for the event/catering or anything else then please state below:

.....

.....

Additional Details (Please add any other details about the event)

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.....

.....

DEPARTMENT USE ONLY

Authorisation:

Comments by Dean of School or Equivalent: (i.e. President RSU, Head of Dept etc.)

.....
.....
.....

Name:

Signature:

Capacity:

For Department of Estates Use Only

Authorised by Timetabling Manager Yes/No?

Signature:Date:
Timetabling and Space Manager

Referred to: Director Estates Yes/No?

Signature:Date:
Director Estates

Booking confirmed Yes/No? Date:

Initiator contacted Yes/No? Date:

Security Advised Yes/No? Date:.....

Catering Request forwarded Yes/No? Date:.....

AV Request forwarded Yes/No? Date:

Date: June 2018