



External Speakers and Events Policy

September 2025

**Version 1.1
Approved by the Board of Governors**

Introduction

The Vantage College (“Vantage” or “College”) is committed to academic freedom and welcomes visiting speakers to its campus. Such speakers bring great diversity of experience, insight and opinion, enriching our events and activities and sparking discussion and debate among our students, staff and visitors alike.

The purpose of this policy is to set in place a governing framework for events with external speakers to ensure that in this College debate, challenge and dissent can continue, while safeguarding our College and its staff and students.

The policy outlines the context for the approval of external speakers and events. This policy aims to ensure that event organisers are aware of the framework we operate within when facilitating external speakers and the measures that may be required to support their event. This policy applies to all staff, students, governors, the Student Union and visiting speakers.

In implementing this Policy, the College has regard to its statutory duties to secure and promote freedom of speech within the law, including those arising under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, and the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. Where applicable, the College will act in accordance with the regulatory expectations of the Office for Students.

An ‘event’ may be one that is hosted virtually, on College premises or at an external venue in the name of the College.

Organising an Event

Anyone organising an event that involves a speaker or speakers to be hosted by the College must ensure that this Policy and the prescribed procedures are followed.

Anyone organising an event as described above must follow the External Speaker Booking Process detailed below.

Assessment of Proposed External Speaker

Assessment of risk will include consideration of the safety of the speaker, attendees and College reputation. A potentially high-risk event may include where the speaker or topic of the event is political, religious or controversial in any way. Assessment of risk is holistic and includes consideration of potential risks to the speaker, attendees, organiser and the institution. Risks could be physical or reputational. The potential risks of the event not going ahead would likewise need to be considered.

Anyone organising an event that involves a speaker or speakers to be hosted by the College must ensure that:

- This policy and associated processes are followed;
- All such events have a completed External Speaker Booking Form (Appendix 1) submitted to the College's Dean for approval at least 14 days in advance of the event taking place, however, if an event or speaker are potentially high risk, organisers should allow the College 21 days' notice in order to ensure that there is adequate time to plan for the event.

Approval of an Event with External Speaker

In allowing events to take place, the Vantage will assess the event and speakers. This assessment will be based on the understanding that all events will be held in accordance with this Policy, the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy and all other relevant rules and regulations.

In deciding whether to approve an event, the College will consider:

- Its duty of care to its staff, students and visitors to ensure freedom of speech with reference to the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 (section 43);
- Preventing people from being drawn into terrorism with reference to the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015;
- Its obligation to prevent individuals from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010; and
- All other relevant legislation.

Where a proposed speaker or event presents potential high risks and/or possible reputational damage, the request will be referred to the CEO for approval. They will seek advice and guidance from relevant internal and external stakeholders.

Decisions to approve, refuse, or impose conditions on events will be based solely on lawful grounds and will be proportionate, evidence-based, and necessary in the circumstances. Where risks can be mitigated through reasonable conditions, the College will normally seek to enable the event to proceed rather than refuse permission.

Managing Events

Event organisers have a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that no enforced segregation by any protected characteristic takes place at any event, unless it is specifically for religious worship or practice or for reasons of health and safety and that attendees have the freedom to choose where they sit.

Event organisers must not knowingly facilitate discrimination by others at the request of an external speaker or any individual attending or wishing to attend an event. The protection of freedom of speech does not allow a speaker to break the law or breach the lawful rights of others. It should be noted that these provisions do not create a broad right not to be offended. The expression of views which some people may find objectionable or offensive is not

prohibited generally by law and students should be able to confront and debate opinions and ways of thinking which may be different to their own.

The College recognises that the expression of lawful views, including views that may be controversial, unpopular, or offensive to some, does not in itself justify restriction or refusal. This Policy will be applied in a manner that does not unlawfully restrict freedom of speech or academic freedom.

Complaints

Failure by a member of staff or student to comply with this policy will be treated seriously and may be subject to formal action under the College's normal disciplinary processes.

In the event that a member of staff, student or visitor considers there to have been a breach of this policy, they have the right to make a formal complaint.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every year, unless there are internal or legislative changes that necessitate earlier review. Proposed changes to the policy will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and ratified by the College's Board of Governors.

Appendix 1

External Speaker Booking Form

This form should be completed by any individual wishing to invite an external speaker or other external representatives to campus for an event. It is not to stop such a person coming to speak or an event taking place. It is instead to ensure that the correct arrangements can be put in place to allow such an event to take place safely.

All forms must be submitted by email 14 days prior to the planned date of the event and one form must be submitted for each speaker wishing to attend.

Name of Organiser:

Contact Email:

Contact Telephone Number:

Event details:

Date of Event:

Title of Event:

Planned Event Venue:

Speaker details: Please give as much detail as possible.

Please include information about the speaker's position and organisations they're affiliated with, the subject they will be speaking about and any other information you think we need to be aware of.

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Office Use Only

Authorised By:

Signed:

Date:

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