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External Speaker Policy and Procedure
Metanoia Institute

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Related policies

- Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression Policy and Code of Practice
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Disciplinary Procedure
- Fitness to Practice Policy (students)
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Code of Ethics and Conduct (with reference to PSRB requirements)
- Code of Conduct for Trustees
- Staff Disciplinary Procedure and Staff Handbook
- Safeguarding Policy
- Prevent Statement

External Reference

Communications Act 2003
 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
 Section 43 of the Education Act 1986
 Education Reform Act 1988
 Equality Act 2010 (including the public sector equality duty)
 Education Act 1994 (not currently applicable as no Students Union)
 Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA)
 Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023
 Human Rights Act 1998
 Charities Act 2011
 Malicious Communications Act 1988
 Online Safety Act 2023
 Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 Public Order Act 2023
 Public Order Act 1986
 Terrorism Act 2000 Terrorism Act 2006

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1. Introduction

The Institute has a vision to lead the way in therapy education and training, cultivating an outstanding, culturally responsible and highly skilled psychological workforce. We aim to nurture a supportive learning environment that fuels growth, sparks creativity, and cultivates critical thinking. Engaging external speakers and organising external events is a crucial part of this aim. The Metanoia Institute also has a legal duty to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for all members of the Metanoia Community and for visiting speakers.

Full details of the legal frameworks governing freedom of speech can be found within the Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression Policy and Code of Practice.

2. Purpose

The Purpose of the policy is to set in place a governing framework for engaging external speakers while ensuring appropriate safeguards. It aims to ensure that, in line with the Institute's Freedom of Speech and Expression Policy, an environment of open and engaging educational debate can be fostered, in which challenge and dissent are not only permitted but expected, while safeguarding all the members of the Metanoia Community and the principles of Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression. 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.

3. Scope

We define an 'external speaker' as anyone who is neither a registered student nor an employee of the Institute, who will be addressing a group during an event. An 'event' is any gathering that is hosted on Institute premises, an external venue or online in the name of the Institute. This includes a speaker addressing a group, including in a teaching, learning or research setting or in the context of co-curricular or extra-curricular activity.

4. Events Procedure

Under no circumstances should an event be advertised or take place if the External Speaker Policy and process has not been followed, or an event has not been approved. Failure to comply with the External Speaker policy may result in the room booking being cancelled, and the organiser may be subject to formal action under the Institute's normal disciplinary processes.

Anyone wishing to invite an external speaker to speak at an MI event, must ensure that:

- This policy and associated processes are followed;
- That an external speaker request form has been submitted at least 4 weeks prior to the event date. The form can be requested from the Head of Marketing and Communications and must be returned to the same;
- That any modifications requested by the Head of Marketing and Communications are put in place in good time, and **before** the event takes place.

Anyone organising an event should be aware that failure to disclose full speaker details when requested may result in an event/booking being cancelled and could result in referral for disciplinary procedures.

The Institute acknowledges that there are occasions where opportunities for speakers arise at short notice, or situations are fast changing. Where it has not been possible to follow these processes in the defined timescale, the Head of Marketing and Communications or their nominee will make a discretionary decision whether to allow the event, agreeing any deviation from this policy and procedure and ensuring that appropriate safeguards are put in place.

4.1 Approval of an event with an External Speaker

In line with its policy on Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression, the Institute has a duty to secure freedom of speech.

Per OfS Regulatory Advice 24, the 'secure' duty does not mean that any speaker has a right to be invited to speak at the Institute. It does mean that a speaker who has been invited to speak at an event should not be stopped from doing so on the grounds of their ideas or opinions.

Metanoia Institute will not interfere with free speech or academic freedom any more than is necessary to ensure that an event can go ahead safely and within the law. The starting position for the institute will be that the event should go ahead, and cancellation or delay will be an option of last resort.

Anyone organising an event must complete the External Speaker Form which includes a consideration of risk.

The form requests the following information:

- a) Expected number of attendees and whether the event will be a member only, invitation only event or open to the general therapeutic community
- b) Declaration of any knowledge of controversy attracted by the speaker or topic in the past
- c) Confirmation of whether the event and speaker are likely to attract media interest – and if so some detail on why?
- d) Confirmation that due diligence on the speaker and past events has taken place.
- e) An assessment of any safeguarding or other risk posed by the speaker to the Metanoia Community based on the available information (High, Medium, Low)

Low Risk events will be allowed to go ahead without mitigation.

Medium Risk events may require mitigations, which could be (but not limited to):

- Ensuring additional staff presence at the event
- Requesting additional information of the content of the event before full approval
- Requiring additional facilitation at the event (e.g. appointing a Chair/facilitator)
- Offering support for students affected by the content of the event

High Risk events might require more significant mitigations including but not limited to:

- Placing a limitation on what attendees may bring to the venue (e.g. banning food/drinks or anything that could be used as a weapon)
- Placing a ban on flags, banners or placards
- Reserving the right to input into communications about the event, before and after
- Delaying the event to allow time for additional safeguards/investigation
- Banning the event (only as a last resort and provided no reasonable mitigations are possible)

On receipt of the form, the Head of Marketing and Comms or nominee will triage the event request and conduct any relevant additional investigation on any speakers deemed high risk.

Final decisions on cancellation of events can only be made by the CEO, or suitably senior nominee within the Executive management team.

4.2 Complaints

Complaints regarding this process or the cancellation of an event or safeguards required for an event should be made informally to the Head of Marketing and Communications in the first instance, who will then refer through to the relevant institutional Complaints or Grievance process.

5. Data Sharing, Monitoring and Review

A log of external speakers will be maintained and made available to the Safeguarding Lead to allow for effective monitoring and effective regulatory reporting (e.g. in line with the Prevent duty).

Data held in relation to external speakers will be managed in line with Metanoia Institute policies and procedures on Data Protection. It may be necessary to share data with external agencies for the purposes of crime prevention and regulatory compliance (e.g. the Prevent duty). Data will only be shared in line with our Sharing Data with Third Parties Policy.

The EDI Committee and Executive will receive regular annual reports on any events requiring additional safeguards and will report to the Board of Trustees by exception on any cancelled events.

The Head of Marketing and Communications is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and supporting procedures and will conduct reviews at appropriate intervals.