



### Freedom of Speech and Visiting Speakers Policy 2021/22

#### 1. Introduction, context and ethos

- 1.1 As a College we want to make sure that we provide the best education and opportunities to learn through effective engagement with external speakers and organisations.
- 1.2 Violent and non-violent extremism in the context of terrorism is of great concern within our liberal democracy where freedom of speech is quite rightly considered a fundamental right. The UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees the right to freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. The same convention also requires the prohibition of any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.
- 1.3 The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty<sup>1</sup> describes the College's responsibility for preventing extremism 'there is an important role for further education institutions...in helping prevent people being drawn into terrorism, which includes not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views that terrorists exploit...  
'...In order to comply with the duty all further education institutions should have policies and procedures in place for the management of events held on their premises...'

#### 2. Terms and definitions

- 2.1 The term 'External Speaker' is used to describe an individual or organisation who is not a student or member of College staff.
- 2.2 Presentation for the purpose of this document should be read to include all talks, debates, workshops and speeches.
- 2.3 Extremism: The Government's Prevent Strategy<sup>2</sup> (2011) describes extremism as: vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Also included in the Government's definition of extremism are calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. In the absence of a UK legal definition of extremism, this College guidance document uses the Prevent definition as a starting point to identify and mitigate risk to the public.

#### 3. Organising an External Speaker and Visitor Protocols

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<sup>1</sup> See Prevent Duty Guidance for Further Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/prevent-duty-guidance-for-further-education-institutions-in-england-and-wales>

<sup>2</sup> See Prevent Strategy [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf)

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- 3.1 All events organised on behalf of the College with external speakers including those off site are captured in this guidance.
- 3.2 All staff wishing to organise an external speaker or organisation to come in and speak to students must first discuss this with their line manager.
- 3.3 It is the duty of all staff to follow the College's established Visitor Protocol for external speakers and ensure that all visitors are pre-booked, sign in at the appropriate reception area, wear visitors passes and are supervised at all times whilst on site.
- 3.4 It is the responsibility of the staff member, supported by their line manager, to appropriately research the speaker or organisation before agreeing to allow the external speaker to address students.
- 3.5 Extra care should be given to speakers or organisations that make first contact.
- 3.6 An agreement with the speaker and organisation they represent should always take place before the event in which the outline of the presentation is discussed and both parties understand the purpose and boundaries of the presentation. The speaker should be fully informed of the need to use appropriate language to address students and the educational level of students they will be addressing.
- 3.7 Where a presentation is likely to be distressing to some students, the staff member should inform the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Manager to make sure members of staff from the Student Advice team can assist with any student affected by the issues discussed. All students will be made aware beforehand if they do not wish to attend.
- 3.8 Where a presentation is likely to be seen as controversial or addresses topics of religion or politics, extra consideration must be given in consultation with a Head of Department before agreeing to the presentation. Consideration should not just be given to the content of the presentation but also to the individual who attends, for example the risk of someone high profile.
- 3.9 Where additional support is required to judge the appropriateness of the presentation or speaker, the Head of Department/Line Manager in all instances contact a member of the Senior Leadership team to make a formal decision around the appropriateness of the presentation or talk.

### 4. Making the decision on speakers

- 4.1 In situations where the presentation is on religion, politics or controversial issues and the speaker is unable to attend at short notice and instead offers an alternative speaker, without giving the College time to consider the new speaker, the presentation must not proceed.
- 4.2 Any presentation with speakers will be authorised by the Head of Department/Line Manager. A member of the team will conduct a short investigation into the speaker and the presentation and this may involve liaising with colleagues in Counter Terrorism Unit and/or the local Prevent Coordinator. If required it could be escalated to the Senior Leadership Team.
- 4.3 In making recommendations the level of risk will be assessed on the following basis:
  1. The potential for any decision to limit freedom of speech

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2. The potential for the presentation going ahead to cause the College to be in breach of its equal opportunities policy
3. The potential for the event going ahead to cause reputational risk to the College
4. The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to cause fear or alarm to members of the student body
5. The potential for the speaker's presence on campus to give rise to breach of peace

As a result the Head of Department/Line Manager member may make one of the following recommendations:

- Fully permit the presentation with the external speaker to go ahead unrestricted
- Not permit the presentation with the external speaker to go ahead
- Permit the presentation with the external speaker to go ahead on the basis of steps designed to reduce risk

Examples of steps that could be taken to reduce risk;

- Requiring that a copy of any presentation or speech to be delivered by the speaker be submitted in advance of the presentation
- Requiring that an event promoting a particular view includes an opportunity to debate or challenge that view
- Requiring the use of the Security Team to be on the door of any large scale event