



**MLA**  
**COLLEGE**

# External Speakers Policy

External Speakers Policy  
Sponsor: Vice-Rector (Professional Services)  
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# 1. Introduction

1.1 At times, MLA College may wish to welcome visiting speakers from around the world to bring diversity of experience, insight and opinion, to enrich our events and activities, and spark discussion and debate among our students, staff and visitors alike.

1.2 Holding open, challenging debates rather than silencing the views of those we do not agree with helps to build tolerance and address prejudice and discrimination. Freedom of speech in higher education should be upheld at every opportunity and should only be limited where there are genuine safety concerns or it constitutes unlawful behaviour.

# 2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set in place a governing framework for events with external speakers to ensure that opportunities for debate, challenge and dissent are not only permitted but expected, while safeguarding our institution, MLA College staff and students.

2.2 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. Definitions

3.1 An 'external speaker' is deemed to be anybody who is neither a registered student nor a paid/unpaid employee of MLA College who will be addressing a group at an event. Where an employee of MLA College is speaking on a topic out of scope of their job description then they will be deemed an external speaker.

3.2 An 'event' is any gathering that is hosted on MLA College premises, an external venue, or online in the name of the college, that 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. Organising an event

4.1 MLA College's aim is for events to take place and to mitigate risks where appropriate to enable this. Therefore, notice is required to allow sufficient time to put in place any risk mitigation measures required.

4.2 Assessment of risk will include consideration of the safety of the speaker, attendees and MLA 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.

4.3 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 be considered.

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

- This policy, the External Speaker Risk Assessment Procedure (Annex A), and associated processes are followed.

- The External Speaker Risk Assessment Procedure must be completed at least 21 days prior to the planned date of the event.
- Any requested modifications are implemented before the event takes place.
- Where an event has been previously agreed but has been rearranged, the 21 days' notice may not be required but organisers should submit their booking form to the Vice-Rector (Professional Services) for re-approval as soon as possible.
- Where there are changes to speakers at previously agreed events, the 21 days' notice may not be required but organisers should submit their booking form for the new speaker to the Vice-Rector (Professional Services) as soon as possible.

4.5 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 event being cancelled and the organiser may be subject to formal action under the college's disciplinary processes.

4.6 MLA College 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 college will still consider late bookings and accommodate where possible but cannot commit to agreeing bookings outside of the specified timescales. In these instances, organisers should complete and send forms as usual to Vice-Rector (Professional Services).

## 5. Approval of an event with an external speaker

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

5.2 In deciding whether to approve an event, the MLA College will consider its general duties:

- Duty of care to its staff, students and visitors; to ensure freedom of speech with reference to the Education Act 1982;
- 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
- Any other relevant legislation.

5.3 In the spirit of debate, the college will normally seek to ensure that events or speakers identified as posing a risk will go ahead subject to the agreement of appropriate safeguards. Refusal or cancellation of an event will only occur in exceptional circumstances, for example upon the advice of Police.

5.4 Where a proposed speaker or event presents potential high risks and/or possible reputational damage, the request will be referred to the Vice-Rector (Professional Services). They will seek advice and guidance from relevant internal and external stakeholders. Where an event is assessed as high risk, these events will require the approval of the Rector or nominee. In such cases, the Vice-Rector (Professional Services) will notify the organiser of the outcome of the approval process and necessary modifications within the specified time.

5.5 Where an event is not assessed as high risk, the college will only require 14 days' notice of such events.

5.6 The college reserves the right to cancel, postpone or request modification to any event at any time should risks be identified. The college may, amongst other things:

- Ensure a presence of security to ensure good order;
- Ensure a presence of a senior staff member of the college to ensure good order;
- Alter the proceedings of the meeting and/or its facilitation, such as appointing an alternative Chair;
- Request stewards be provided by the organisers;
- Place a limitation on what attendees may bring to a venue, which may include banning food or drink or anything that could be used as a potential weapon;
- Bag searches and ID checks;
- Place a ban on banners, flags, placards or similar items being allowed into a venue and its immediate surroundings;
- Place a limit on attendees or to whom it is advertised/accessible to (i.e.. MLA College audience or open to the general public);
- Seek declaration of attendees in advance of the event;
- Request submission of the speeches in advance of the event;
- Reserve the right to input into communications about the event (before and after);
- Cancel, prohibit or delay at any time

5.7 Any costs incurred by the college in complying with these conditions may be passed onto the event organiser. Event organisers would be consulted on any conditions or modifications in advance of the event taking place and they would then be responsible for informing the external speaker of the outcome.

5.8 MLA College reserves the right to perform spot checks on events being hosted on college premises or other external hosting venues. If there are breaches of policies at any event the matter may be referred for disciplinary or legal action.

## 6. Managing events

6.1 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.

6.2 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.

## 7. Managing external speakers and attendees

7.1 It is the responsibility of the event organiser to ensure that all external speakers receive a copy of the Guidelines for External Speakers (Annex B) and the Academic Freedom Policy.

7.2 All speakers and attendees are expected to act with civility, consideration and respect for others in the college and the local community.

## 8. Data Sharing

8.1 Where it deems there is a legitimate reason to do so, MLA College reserves the right to share information on the external speakers it has hosted, and/or those it deemed to be a risk, with other relevant agencies.

8.2 In accordance with its obligations as detailed in the Prevent Policy, the college will report any major incidences of concern involving external speakers to the Office for Students (OfS).

## **9. Complaints**

9.1 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 disciplinary processes.

9.2 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 by emailing [info@mla.ac.uk](mailto:info@mla.ac.uk)

## **Annex A – External Speaker Risk Assessment Procedure**

### **Procedure to be followed by all event organisers**

Anyone organising an event with an external speaker attending must follow this procedure and comply with the MLA College External Speakers Policy.

### **Criteria for local assessment of proposed external speaker event**

Prior to approval of any external speaker event, the event organiser is responsible for assessing the speaker against the following sets of questions:

- Question 1: Is the proposed speaker or event a political or religious figure or topic?
- Question 2: Could the speaker be seen as a controversial figure?
- Question 3: Could the topic of the event be seen as controversial?
- Question 4: Is the proposed speaker/theme likely to attract attendance from individuals/groups that have previously been known to express views that may be in breach of the Freedom of Speech Policy?

If 'Yes' to any of the above questions, please answer the following questions:

- Question 5: Will the event be open to the general public?
- Question 6: Will the event be broadcast, streamed or offered for download by the organisers?
- Question 7: Is there a likelihood that any person at the event might experience harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse or physical violence?

If the answer to any of questions 1-4 is NO, then the event is deemed 'low risk' and the event organiser can then proceed with booking their speaker and their event or activity. The organiser must send the speaker a copy of the Academic Freedom Policy and External Speaker policies.

If the answer to any of questions 1-4 is YES, then questions 5-7 must also be completed, and full details of the event (including the answers to questions 1-7 above) must be submitted to the Vice-Rector (Professional Services) who will convene a meeting of the College Executive Group (CEG). The CEG will consider the event further and either give permission for it to proceed/give permission for it to proceed/give permission for it to proceed with certain additional safeguards/refuse permission.

This decision will be confirmed to the event organiser by the Vice-Rector (Professional Services) or their nominee. The approval of any event that is deemed high risk, or any recommendation to reject an event/speaker will require the approval of the Rector or their nominee.

## **Annex B – Guidelines for External Speakers at MLA College events**

MLA College welcome visiting speakers from around the world. Such speakers bring diversity of experience, insight and opinion, enriching our events and activities and sparking discussion and debate among our students, staff and visitors alike.

### **External Speaker Definition**

An 'external speaker' is deemed to be anybody who is neither a registered student nor a paid employee of MLA College. An 'event' may be one that is hosted on college premises, an external venue or online in the name of MLA College.

### **Prevent Duty**

MLA College has an External Speaker Policy governing external speakers coming into the college; this complies with the legislation required by all Higher Education Institutions in England as part of the implementation of the Prevent Duty.

### **Freedom of Speech**

MLA College takes its responsibilities to ensure freedom of speech very seriously and intends to ensure external speakers can continue to come and contribute to the life of the university in their different capacities.

In receiving these guidelines, you accept that you agree to comply with the contents of this document and those which are attached for your information (Academic Freedom Policy).

*The details of your speaking engagement are as follows:*

Name:

Organisation:

Date of event:

Location of event:

Title of talk:

Approximate number of attendees:

Lecture open to public: Yes/No Event organiser:

MLA College procedure for approval of external speakers:

In allowing speakers to attend the College, the event organiser will assess the event based on the understanding that that you {the speaker} will act in accordance with the Academic Freedom Policy and all other relevant rules and regulations.

In the spirit of debate, the College will normally seek to ensure that events or speakers identified as posing a risk will go ahead subject to the agreement of appropriate safeguards. Cancellation of an event will only occur in exceptional circumstances, for example upon the advice of police.

Where risks that a proposed speaker or event risks incitement to commit criminal acts, the expression of hate speech, radicalisation of attendees and/or reputational damage, the request will be referred to the MLA College Prevent Co-ordinator (Vice-Rector (Professional Services)).

They will seek advice and guidance from relevant internal and external stakeholders. Any recommendation to cancel or amend the arrangements for a proposed speaker or event will be approved by the Rector.

The College reserves the right to cancel, postpone or request amendment to any proposed event should risks be identified. The College may, amongst other things:

- Request submission of the speeches in advance of the event;
- Place a limit on attendees;
- Seek declaration of attendees in advance of the event;
- Request stewards be provided by the organisers;
- Ensure the presence of a Duty Manger of the College to ensure good order;
- Place a limitation on what attendees may bring to the event, which may include banning food or drink or anything that could be used as a potential weapon;
- Place a ban on banners, flags, placards or similar items being allowed into the venue and its immediate surroundings;
- Alter the conduct of the meeting and/or its facilitation.

MLA College reserves the right to perform spot checks on events being hosted on College premises or other external hosting venues.

It is a criminal offence to incite or encourage others to break the law. All speakers and event attendees are expected to be respectful of the beliefs and opinions of others.

Event organisers have a responsibility to ensure that no enforced segregation by any protected characteristic takes place at any event, unless it is specifically for religious worship or practice, 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 an individual attending or wishing to attend an event.

In accordance with its obligations as detailed in the Prevent Duty Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>), MLA College will report any major incidences of concern involving external speakers to the Office for Students (OfS).

Where it deems there is a legitimate reason to do so, the College reserves the right to share information on the external speakers it has hosted, and/or those it deemed to be a risk, with other relevant agencies, including the OfS and other higher education providers.