



External Speakers Policy 2023-24

Version:	4	Policy Number:	45				
Policy Owner:	Quality Manager / Vice Principal	Date of last revision:	26/06/2023				
Authorised By:	SMT	Authorisation Date:	26/07/2023				
Review Date:	31/08/2024	Place of Publication:	ForMission OneDrive ForMission Moodle ForMission website				
List of Related Policies:							
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ForMission College welcomes external speakers as a way of bringing diversity of experience, knowledge and opinion to its work. External speakers are valuable as a means of promoting discussion and debates to the education of our students. External speakers play an important role in ForMission's academic experience, allowing students and staff to be exposed to a range of different ideas, beliefs and opinions.

'External speakers' are defined here as persons who are invited to speak at a ForMission event. It does not include: students; employees or trustees of the College; regular or visiting tutors who are teaching for the college; or cluster leaders.

Some external speakers are known to hold offensive or even inflammatory views. Such speakers might include those subjects to adverse media attention; and/or associated with a campaign or political pressure group; and/or a member of a group whose views may be deemed as being discriminatory or inflammatory to others. For the purposes of this policy, such speakers are regarded as controversial speakers, but their freedom of speech within the law is recognised. By inviting such speakers, ForMission College is not necessarily endorsing their views.

While the law promotes and protects freedoms of speech and debate, there are limits placed on those freedoms. Freedom of speech does not extend to allow a speaker to break the law or breach the lawful rights of others through threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, particularly with a view to incite hatred or draw others into terrorism. Speakers proscribed by law are not to be permitted access to the College, its students, staff or visitors in any circumstances.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set out arrangements for the management of events which are held by ForMission but which do not form part of the College's normal academic or administrative business, so that the College can fulfil its legal obligations with regard to speakers and events, while maintaining at all times its commitment to freedom of thought and expression.

Principles

ForMission recognises and upholds the fundamental importance of freedom of thought and expression and does not seek to restrict this fundamental freedom through this policy. (For further information, see the college's Freedom of Speech Policy).

Where ForMission believes that there is an obvious and serious risk that the speaker and/or those at an event may break the law, breach the College's statutory duties – including the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism – and/or will pose a risk to the wellbeing of students, staff or visitors, it may require that certain conditions are met or, in exceptional circumstances, it may refuse to allow the event to go ahead.

Scope

This Policy applies to all staff and students of ForMission and to any other person in attendance at any event which has been duly authorised under this policy.

This Policy applies to any event:

- That is organised by students or staff at the College or one of its teaching locations (including partner hubs) or is organised by students or staff under the auspices of “ForMission” or “ForMission College” at any location (physical or virtual); and
- That is not part of the College’s normal academic or administrative business.

Responsibilities

The Proposer/Nominator:

- Is responsible for informing the Pathway Leader of events they are organising (or for Head Office events, informing the Vice Principal).
- Is responsible for booking external speakers for hub events not directly related to the College’s normal academic or administrative business.
- Is responsible for ensuring an [external speakers booking form](#) is completed within 4 weeks prior to the event taking place.
- With the agreement of the Hub Leader (or Vice Principal for Head Office events) is responsible for booking accommodation for an external speaker or event, if required.

The Hub Leader:

- Is responsible for assessing reputational damage when considering inviting an external speaker.
- Has responsibility for reporting and seeking approval of high-risk events or external speakers to the Vice Principal (or Principal) in relation to the College’s statutory duties.
- Is responsible for signing-off all [external speakers booking form](#) at hub level within five working days.
- Has authority to delegate these responsibilities to the Programme Administrator.
- Refer any appeals to the Vice Principal within five working days.

Students:

- Are responsible for completing an [external speakers booking form](#) for any events they are (co-)organising, which should be submitted to their Hub Leader at least 4 weeks prior to the proposed event taking place.

Vice Principal:

- Monitoring any college-wide risks relating to external speakers and events, including but not limited to reputational risks.
- Agreeing for the College to be associated with an event, although authorisation of low-risk external speakers and events at Hub level is delegated to the Hub Leader.
- Delegating responsibilities to the Programme Director(s) in their absence.

External Speakers:

- All speakers are required to recognise that freedom of speech, thought and expression come with responsibilities. When expressing ideas where differing ideas are likely to be shared, those contributing are required to consider the potential impact on individuals or groups within the College community who may be affected by the subject matter, either directly or indirectly.
- External speakers will be required to sign an acknowledgement that they will respect the views of those attending and will observe the law in all matters relating to proscribed speech, and not inciting hatred or drawing others into terrorism.

Referrals and Appeals

On receipt of an external speakers booking form, the Hub Leader will approve the request for hub events and the Vice Principal (or their delegate) will approve the request for college-wide events. Booking forms will either be approved within five working days or if there is a concern about the suitability of the proposed external speaker, then the reason will be made clear to the proposer/nominator.

If the proposer/nominator is dissatisfied with the decision made, they shall have the right to appeal to the Principal (or their delegate). An appeal should be made in writing and submitted within ten working days.

The Principal (or their delegate) shall consider the matter and respond to the proposer/nominator in writing within five working days from receipt of the appeal. The decision of the Principal (or their delegate) is final.

Record Keeping

All records of proposed external speakers, and any consideration of their suitability, will be stored securely and confidentially for five years and accessible by authorised persons only.

Booking External Speakers Flow Chart

