

Author: Apprenticeships Manager	Last Review Date: August 2025
Version: V1	
Responsible Person: Principal	New Review Date: August 2028

OVERVIEW

This policy outlines the procedures for assessing and approving guest speakers at ABDO College, in alignment with the **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023** and the College's commitment to academic freedom, safety, and inclusivity.

It should be read alongside ABDO College's **Freedom of Speech and Expression Policy** and relevant legal frameworks.

PRINCIPLES

ABDO College is committed to:

- Supporting freedom of speech and academic inquiry, ensuring that events proceed unless there are lawful and proportionate reasons to restrict them
- Upholding responsibilities under the **Equality Act 2010**, including the prevention of discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of students, staff, and visitors.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Guest speaker events must comply with UK law, including but not limited to:

- **Hate Speech Laws:** Prohibiting incitement to hatred or violence based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics
- **Prevent Duty:** Preventing individuals from being drawn into terrorism or violent extremism
- **Equality Act 2010:** Ensuring events are inclusive and non-discriminatory.

Restrictions on speech may be imposed only when lawful, necessary, and proportionate to protect:

- National security or public safety
- Public order or crime prevention
- Health or morals
- Rights and reputations of others
- Confidential information
- Judicial impartiality

PROCEDURE

4.1. Application Timeline

- Guest speaker requests must be submitted **at least 10 working days** before the proposed event
- Requests involving potentially controversial speakers or topics must be submitted **at least 15 working days** before the event to allow for escalation and review

4.2. Advertising

No event may be advertised until formal approval is granted. For sensitive topics, the College may require a review of the promotional strategy.

4.3. Event Organiser Responsibilities

The organiser (a staff or student representative) must submit:

- Event date, time, and location (or virtual platform)
- Speaker's name and affiliation
- Event topic and purpose
- Intended audience (e.g., students only, public)
- Whether alternative viewpoints will be presented
- A completed **risk assessment**

4.4. Background Checks

A due diligence check will be conducted, including:

- Online searches for past controversies or affiliations
- Assessment of potential reputational, legal, or safety risks
- Consideration of the speaker's alignment with proscribed organisations or extremist views
-

RISK ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Section 1: Legal Considerations

- Is the speaker associated with proscribed organisations?
- Could the content breach hate speech laws?
- Are there concerns under the Prevent duty?
- Will the event involve gender segregation?

Section 2: Event Dynamics

- Is the speaker or topic likely to provoke significant opposition?
- Has the speaker attracted controversy or media attention?
- Is the event expected to draw unusually large or disruptive crowds?

RISK CATEGORIES AND ACTIONS

Green Events (Low Risk)

- All checklist answers are "No"
- Event proceeds with minimal oversight
- Documentation stored for records

Amber/Red Events (Medium/High Risk)

- One or more checklist answers are "Yes"
- Escalated to senior management for review
- Conditions may be imposed (e.g., ticketing, security presence)
- High-risk events may be referred to the College Principal
- Events may be declined if risks cannot be mitigated

RECORD KEEPING

- All documentation, including risk assessments and decisions, will be securely stored in accordance with ABDO College's data protection policies.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years. Any revisions will be submitted to the **Teaching and Learning Committee** for approval. Programme Leaders are responsible for implementing this policy for their programmes under the guidance of the Principal.