

External Speaker Policy

Document Ref: LAAT-STD-POL-ES-001

Department / Function: Academic Quality & Standards

Policy Owner: Dean, Dr Manoj Ponugubati

Oversight Committee: Academic Board

Approving Body: Academic Board (recommended) / Board of Governors (Final Approval)

Version: v1.0

Status: Draft Adopted

Date Approved: [To be confirmed]

Next Review Date: Annually from approval date

Supersede: None

Regulatory Alignment with Office for Students (OfS) Conditions

The External Speaker Policy forms part of the London Academy for Applied Technology's (LAAT) governance, safeguarding, and academic environment framework, ensuring that events involving external speakers are conducted in a manner that supports freedom of speech within the law while protecting the safety and wellbeing of the institutional community.

The policy aligns with **OfS Condition E1 (Public Interest Governance)** and **E2 (Management and Governance)** by establishing clear procedures for the approval, risk assessment, and oversight of external speaker events. It ensures that institutional decision-making is transparent, proportionate, and subject to appropriate governance controls.

The policy also supports **OfS Condition C1 (Consumer Protection)** by ensuring that events organised by LAAT are conducted in a fair, safe, and lawful manner that respects the rights and dignity of students and staff. Additionally, it contributes to safeguarding obligations and compliance with the **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 Prevent Duty**, ensuring that the institution takes appropriate steps to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism while maintaining lawful freedom of speech.

This policy is implemented through LAAT's governance, safeguarding, and event management arrangements to ensure that visiting speakers contribute positively to academic discussion while complying with relevant legal and regulatory obligations.

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

This policy establishes LAAT's approach to managing events involving external speakers. It ensures that external speakers may participate in academic discussions, debates, and events while safeguarding freedom of speech within the law and ensuring that institutional activities comply with relevant legal and regulatory obligations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all events organised, hosted, or co-hosted by LAAT where an external speaker is invited to participate.

It applies to:

- Events held on LAAT premises
- Events organised by LAAT off-site
- Events organised by students or staff representing LAAT

An **external speaker** refers to any individual who is **not a current student or member of staff of LAAT** invited to speak at a LAAT organised or supported event.

3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Education (No.2) Act 1986 – Freedom of Speech Duty
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
- Equality Act 2010
- OfS Regulatory Framework and Conditions of Registration

LAAT is committed to balancing lawful freedom of speech with its obligations to ensure safety, equality, and compliance with national legislation.

4. Principles

LAAT is committed to the following principles:

- **Freedom of speech within the law:** External speakers should be able to express views and participate in academic debate.
- **Safety and wellbeing:** Events must not create risks to safety or promote unlawful behaviour.
- **Respect and inclusion:** External speakers must respect the diverse and inclusive nature of the LAAT community.
- **Compliance with legal obligations:** Events must comply with relevant legislation including equality, safeguarding, and Prevent obligations.

Freedom of speech does not extend to speech that is unlawful, incites hatred, promotes violence, or encourages illegal activity.

5. External Speaker Event Approval

All external speaker events must be approved through the designated booking and approval process before the event takes place.

The organiser must provide:

- Name and background of the speaker
- Topic and purpose of the event
- Location and expected audience size
- Risk assessment where required

Events should normally be arranged **at least 14 days in advance** where possible.

6. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Stage 1 – Event Request

The organiser submits an **External Speaker Request Form** including details of the speaker, event topic, and risk considerations.

Stage 2 – Risk Assessment

The event organiser completes a risk assessment considering whether the event may:

- Promote unlawful activity
- Incite hatred or discrimination
- Present reputational or safety risks
- Conflict with LAAT policies

Stage 3 – Approval

Where no concerns are identified the event may proceed with standard approval.

If concerns arise the request will be reviewed by the **Designated Officer or Dean** and additional conditions may be applied.

Stage 4 – Event Monitoring

The organiser must ensure a responsible person is present during the event to manage any issues that may arise.

Stage 5 – Reporting

Following the event any incidents or concerns must be reported to the relevant officer for review and institutional monitoring.

7. Conditions for External Speakers

External speakers must:

- Comply with LAAT policies and applicable laws
- Respect equality and diversity principles
- Avoid inciting violence, hatred, or unlawful behaviour
- Follow the External Speaker Code of Conduct

LAAT reserves the right to impose conditions on events where necessary.

8. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through:

- Review of external speaker request forms
- Periodic compliance monitoring
- Reporting of incidents or concerns

Monitoring reports may be submitted to the **Academic Board and Senior Management Team**.

9. Failure to Comply

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- Cancellation of the event
- Disciplinary action where appropriate
- Restrictions on future events

10. Responsible People / Roles

- **Dean (Policy Owner): Dr Manoj Ponugubati**
Provides strategic oversight and ensures policy implementation and compliance.
- **Student Experience Lead: Dr Ruchi Singla**
Coordinates external speaker event approvals and maintains relevant records.
- **Safeguarding and Prevent Lead: Jay Sharda**
Reviews higher-risk speaker events and ensures compliance with Prevent Duty and safeguarding obligations
- **Event Organiser (Staff or Student)**
Responsible for submitting event requests and ensuring compliance with the policy.
- **Senior Management Team (SMT)**
Provides oversight and reviews high-risk or escalated cases.

List of people and contacts

| Role | Name | Contact email |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Dean | Dr Manoj Ponugubati | manoj@laat.ac.uk |
| Student Experience Lead | Dr Ruchi Singla | Ruchi.singla6@laat.ac.uk |
| Safeguarding Lead | Mr Jay Sharda | Jai.sharda@laat.ac.uk |

11. List of Documents

- External Speaker Request Form
- External Speaker Risk Assessment Form
- External Speaker Code of Conduct
- Event Incident Report Form
- Freedom of Speech Policy

- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy

12. Evidence

- External Speaker Request Form
- External Speaker Risk Assessment Form
- External Speaker Code of Conduct
- Event Incident Report Form
- Freedom of Speech Policy
- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy

Evidence mapping table for OfS conditions

| Evidence Item | Purpose / What it Demonstrates | Relevant OfS Condition(s) |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| External Speaker Request Form | Provides a formal mechanism for staff or students to request approval for external speakers and ensures that event details are documented prior to approval. | E2 (Management and Governance), E1 (Public Interest Governance) |
| External Speaker Risk Assessment Form | Ensures potential risks associated with external speaker events are assessed and mitigated, including safety, legal, reputational, and safeguarding considerations. | E2 (Effective Management and Internal Control), E1 (Governance Oversight) |
| External Speaker Code of Conduct | Defines behavioural expectations for visiting speakers, ensuring that events respect equality, diversity, lawful expression, and institutional values. | C1 (Consumer Protection), E1 (Public Interest Governance) |
| Event Incident Report Form | Records incidents, concerns, or disruptions during external speaker events, supporting institutional monitoring, risk management, and governance oversight. | E2 (Management and Governance), E3 (Accountability) |
| Freedom of Speech Policy | Establishes institutional commitment to freedom of speech within the law while ensuring compliance with legal obligations | E1 (Public Interest Governance), C1 (Fair and Transparent Institutional Practices) |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| | and protection of the rights of others. | |
| Safeguarding and Prevent Policy | Ensures that events and speaker activities comply with safeguarding responsibilities and Prevent Duty requirements to protect students and staff from harm or radicalisation risks. | E2 (Management and Governance), E6 (Harassment and Misconduct Prevention), E1 (Public Interest Governance) |