

Code of Practice on Meetings and Public Gatherings on University Premises

Code of practice issued under section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986

Section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986, referring to freedom of speech in universities, polytechnics, and colleges, requires the Council to issue and keep up to date a code of practice to be followed by members, students, and employees of the University for the organization of meetings and other events, which are to be held on University premises, and for the conduct required of members, students, and employees of the University in connection with [such] meetings, etc. This Code of Practice therefore applies to all members, students, and employees of the University, in respect of all University premises, which for the purposes of this Code includes Cambridge University Students' Union and the Graduate Union. Outdoor, as well as indoor, meetings and events on University premises are included.

Members of the University are reminded that alleged breaches of the general regulations for discipline and other alleged offences against the discipline of the University may be brought by the University Advocate before the University Tribunal, the Discipline Committee, or the Discipline Board, as appropriate.

Authority and approval processes for meetings and events on University premises

Authority is required for meetings and events to be held on University premises, whether indoors or out of doors. In the case of accommodation assigned to a single Faculty or Department, the permission of the relevant Faculty or Departmental authorities is required. In the case of accommodation not so assigned, permission must be obtained from the central University authority responsible for the accommodation concerned and, if a room is to be reserved, a booking must be made through that authority at least 14 working days in advance of the proposed event. Further details of who to contact are available in the [Event Booking Guidance](#).

It is anticipated that, in the vast majority of cases, the authority in question will straightforwardly consider the request as part of normal business.

However, in the exceptional circumstances that the authority in question considers that the holding of the event might reasonably be refused solely because of the duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, there is a process of escalation to a Referral Group to be followed before permission may be refused. Only the Referral Group may refuse permission on this basis. The request should be forwarded to the Referral Group¹ (preventconfidential@admin.cam.ac.uk) with a statement of the concerns. This referral should be made at least seven working days in advance of the proposed event. Members of the University who are concerned that a particular forthcoming event should be escalated to the Referral Group may do so directly. The Referral Group will, in consultation as necessary, determine whether the event can go ahead as originally planned, or in alternative premises, at a later date or in a different format. Only in exceptional circumstances and when the Referral Group considers that there are risks which cannot be mitigated or the event organizer refuses to meet any conditions imposed, will permission be withheld. An organizer who is unhappy with the Referral Group's decision has the right of appeal to the Vice-Chancellor or to his or her appointed deputy for these purposes.

¹ The Referral Group has the following membership: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Institutional and International Relations) as the University's *Prevent* lead; the Head of the Registry's Office (as the *Prevent* contact); the Senior Proctor; the Academic Secretary; a student representative; a member of the Legal Services Office.

Any decision by the Referral Group that an event proposed to be held in the University is not to take place, or may only take place subject to conditions, is binding and takes precedence over any other permission which may have been given by any other body or officer in the University.

Organization and management of meetings and events on University premises

Once approved, the organizers of meetings and events must comply with any conditions set by the University authorities concerned for the organization of the meeting or other activity and the arrangements to be made. Such conditions may include the requirement that tickets should be issued for public meetings, that an adequate number of stewards should be available, that the police should be consulted and their advice taken about the arrangements, and that the time and place of the meeting should be changed. The cost of meeting the requirements, and the responsibility for fulfilling them, rests with the organizers.

Notification of Proctors

In addition to seeking the permission referred to above, the organizers of all meetings and events to be held on University premises which are to be addressed or attended by persons who are not resident members of the University (except for academic meetings organized by the authority of a Faculty or Department, or for any meetings or classes of meetings approved for the purpose by the Senior Proctor as being commonly or customarily held on University premises) are required to give notice to the Senior Proctor. This notice may be given on the form used to book University premises, a copy of which will be sent by the University authority concerned to the Senior Proctor. The organizers may also, if they wish, communicate directly with the Proctors to give further details. Information is required at least seven working days in advance (although the Senior Proctor may, at his or her discretion, agree to receive information closer to the time of the meeting than this). The information needed is the date and time of the meeting, the place, the names, addresses, and Colleges (if any) of the organizers, the name of the organization making the arrangements, and the name of any expected speaker, whether or not a member of the University.

The organizers of any meeting must comply with instructions given by a Proctor, by any other University officer, or by any other person authorized to act on behalf of the University, in the proper discharge of his or her duties. The attention of members of the University is drawn to Regulations 9 and 10 of the general regulations for discipline.

Colleges

The provisions of section 43 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986 apply also to the Colleges in respect of their own members, students, and employees, and in respect of visiting speakers. Colleges are also subject to the duties under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, as described in the University's Statement on Freedom of Speech. Each College is requested by the University to name a senior member who will be responsible for enforcing the provisions of both the above Acts in that College and will co-operate as necessary with the Proctors. Members of the University are reminded that University disciplinary regulations apply on College premises as elsewhere in the Precincts of the University. A College may invite the Proctors to enter its premises.

The attention of organizers of public meetings and assemblies is drawn to sections 11 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986, concerning processions and assemblies. Other legal requirements may affect the conduct of meetings, etc. A speaker, for example, who incites an audience to violence or to a breach of the peace or to racial hatred, is breaking the law. Equally, assemblies of persons, even if directed to lawful purposes, cease to be lawful if they cause serious public disorder or breaches of the peace. Attention is also drawn to the provisions of the Licensing Acts, which apply to certain University premises, including the University Centre. These Acts require the licensee to maintain good order on licensed premises, and give the licensee the power to expel persons from the premises if he or she considers it necessary.

The application of this Code

Any person who is in any doubt about the application of this Code of Practice to any meeting or public gathering in the University is under an obligation to consult the Senior Proctor, who, in consultation with the Officers of the Registry's Office, will determine whether the provisions of the Code apply.