

External Speaker Policy

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Version	Author	Date	Section	Changes summary
	Head of Student Experience and Inclusion	September 2025	Appendices 2 and 3	Updates following guidance from the Office for Students. Added booking form and application and approval process.

Policy Description

This policy is Craven College's response to the requirement of the Education (No 2) Act 1986 (the "Act") that the governing body of further education institutions should issue a code of practice setting out the procedures to be followed by students and employees of the establishment in connection with the organisation of meetings and other activities which are to be held on College premises, and the conduct required of such persons in connection with any such meeting or activity.

The policy applies to the whole Craven College community which includes all staff, students and external visitors.

Links to other policies:

- Bullying and Harassment Policy

- Lettings Policy for External Organisations
- Prevent Strategy and Action Plan
- Visitor Policy and Guidelines
- Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy

Purpose

Craven College is committed to creating an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and where diversity is valued. This policy outlines the procedure relating to events involving the use of external speakers regardless of who is organising them.

Craven College aims:

- To provide an environment where freedom of expression and speech are protected, balanced with the need to ensure that our community is free from harm and that incitement to hatred is never acceptable.
- To provide a supportive, inclusive and safe space for students.
- To provide clearly defined and effective procedures to ensure that the law is upheld.
- To collaborate with others to reach sound, evidenced judgments about proposed external speakers ensuring that the College can meet their legal obligations.
- To encourage and provide a balance of opinion at any academic discussion or debate.
- To provide clear instructions for organising an event with external contribution (e.g. speaker, representatives, film) and guidance for researching an external speaker.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression and speech are basic human rights that are protected by law. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are not absolute freedoms but freedoms within the law. Universities and colleges have a history of being open to debate and ideas with students at the forefront of pushing the limits of freedom of expression. 'Academic freedom' is a term used to describe the law that allows for open and honest debate in an academic context.

Craven College has a duty to promote freedom of speech and to protect academic freedom under the Education Act, the Freedom of Speech Act 2023, and is subject to regulation in this matter by the Office for Students (OfS).

The College recognises the regulatory role of the Office for Students in relation to freedom of speech and academic freedom and will comply with all OfS requirements, including cooperation with investigations and enforcement under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

However, we have a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of our staff, students and communities. The freedom to express views needs to be balanced with the need to secure freedom from harm. We want all of our events to be safe, within the law, and not pose reputational risks to the College.

Occasionally, an external speaker or their topic of discussion may go against our conditions for a safe event. We are committed to working together with event organisers and external speakers to reach a judgement that is reasonable, informed and lawful.

External Speakers and their Responsibilities

An external speaker or visitor is any individual or organisation not affiliated with Craven College or one of its contracted partners who has been invited to speak to students and/or staff. This includes visitors from other institutions.

An event is any event, presentation, visit, activity or initiative organised by a student group/society, individual or staff member that is being held on Craven College premises. It also includes events where external speakers are streamed live into an event or a pre-recorded film is shown.

All speakers or visitors should be made aware by the person or group arranging the event (by referring visitors to this policy on the College website) that they have a right to Freedom of Speech but also responsibility to abide by the law and the College's policies including that they must:

- Not advocate or incite hatred, violence or law-breaking.
- Not promote or glorify terrorism or individuals/groups supporting such acts.
- Not disrupt social harmony or promote hatred or intolerance.
- Be mindful of causing offence and avoid insulting others within a context of lawful debate.
- Not raise or gather funds for external organisations without express permission from the Head of Student Experience and Inclusion

Guidance for Staff and Students Organising Events

- All meetings on College premises are private unless the public is expressly invited to attend.
- Students and employees of the College have freedom of speech within the law, as do visiting speakers.
- The Student Services Manager must be informed of any external speaker event.
- No speaker event can be confirmed or publicised until clearance is obtained through this procedure (including on social media).
- The College may cancel or delay events if the policy is not followed or if health, safety, or legal conditions cannot be met.
- Requests must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the event to allow for checks and risk assessment.
- Any request made outside of this timeframe may be rejected.
- See also the college's Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom policy for overarching principals.

Reasons for concern may include (but are not limited to):

- A speaker with an affiliation with proscribed terror organisations. [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations - GOV.UK](#).
- A speaker with an association with extremist views.
- A speaker who has a history of causing fear, safeguarding concern, or controversy.
- A speaker who would risk of reputational damage.
- A speaker with significant profile who could create crowd control and health and safety concerns.

In making recommendations, the Student Services Manager may consult on a wider basis with the Head of Student Experience and Inclusion and the Principal and the risk will be assessed on the following basis:

- Freedom of speech limitations.

- Reputational risks.
- Potential to cause fear, alarm, or breach of peace to staff/students.

Decisions following referral:

- Not permit the event.
- Not permit the speaker to attend.
- To permit the external speaker to go ahead on the basis of regulatory steps designed to reduce risk. These may include observation; independent filming; the inclusion of opportunities to debate or challenge the view being held.

The External Speaker consent form (Appendix 2) should be completed and forwarded to the Student Services Manager for approval and recording.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff team and students are aware of and support the policy.

Principal speakers or organisers who believe a decision was unfair may appeal in writing to the Deputy Principal. Appeals will be reviewed independently of the original decision-makers.

Event organisers are responsible for student supervision and should ensure that students are not left alone with external speakers to mitigate safeguarding risks. A named staff member must be designated as the Organiser for each event, consistent with the Freedom of Speech Policy.

External Bookings / Lettings

All bookings or lettings to external organisations must follow the guidance as set out in the College's Lettings Policy for External Organisations Policy which can be found on the Staff Intranet. A record must be kept and reported to the Senior Leadership Team on request and at the end of the academic year.

Other Legal Requirements

The College is mindful of its duties under equality legislation. The right to freedom of speech is constrained by laws protecting others from discrimination, victimisation and harassment, protecting national security and public safety, preventing disorder or crime, protecting the reputation and rights of others, and preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence. Reference to such legislation and guidance can be found in Appendix 1.

The Board of Governors will receive an annual report summarising speaker decisions and associated risks to fulfil its duty of oversight under the Education Act and OfS regulations.

Relevant Legislation and Guidance

- Legislation in this area is characterised by three key themes:
- Protection of the special status of Higher Education Institutions:
- Education Act 1986
- Education (No. 2) Act 1986
- Education Reform Act 1988
- Anti-discrimination legislation and proactive equalities legislation:
- Human Rights Act 1998 (incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights)
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Sex Discrimination Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended
- Equality Act 2010
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
Provisions that qualify rights: Public Order Act 1986
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Protection from Harassment Act 1997

<http://www.preventforfeandtraining.org.uk/lm-guidance-materials>

Appendix 1: External Speaker Booking Form

Staff Name:		Dep	
Number of students attending:			
Number of external visitors attending:			
Age of Attendees: <i>(select all that apply)</i>	16-18 <input type="checkbox"/>	19+ <input type="checkbox"/>	
Staff Member Taking Responsibility for the Event and supervision of students:			
Do you have any concerns that the speaker may be controversial or hold inflammatory or offensive views? If YES, contact DSL, explain why and what plans are in place to reduce concerns:			
Has the speaker ever been refused a platform at any other events to your knowledge? If YES speak to your DSL.			
Name of Guest Speaker(s) and the organisation they are representing:			
Address of Organisation:			
Telephone Number:		Email:	

Is there any known or likely media interest in the proposed event?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	N o <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please detail:		
Background checks – are there any matters that require further investigation / action? Supply brief discussion.		
Source	Agreed	
Website Checked		
Printed Literature Checked		
Resources to be Presented		
Google Search Completed		
Other Colleges Recommended		
Other Checks, Please State:		
What topic or event will the speaker be holding:		
How will learners benefit:		
Date of Event:	Room of Event:	
Start Time:	End Time:	
Approved by (title given):	Date:	

Appendix 2: Application and Approval Process Flowchart This flowchart has been updated to reflect the Freedom of Speech Policy escalation process, including the role of the Head of Student Experience and Inclusion and the appeal to the Principal.

