

Chair's Checklist — Event (free speech considerations)

To be read in addition to the University's [Code of Practice](#) and the [Office for Students Guidance on Free Speech](#).

1. Set the scene

Consider setting the scene around free speech, by including something like the following in any opening:

"Welcome everyone. This event is run in line with the University's Free Speech Code of Practice. We uphold freedom of speech within the law and so expect robust discussion and debate, although the University will also not permit any unlawful behaviour or harassment.

Q&A will be [your chosen format]. If we need to pause for safety or legality, I'll say so and we'll reset. Thank you."

2. Q&As

Consider pre-submitted questions where possible, so there is time to consider in advance, then open the floor.

Politely turn speeches into questions where relevant.

3. Intervention (if needed for the Chair)

Reminders can be used to keep on track, such as: "Let's keep to the question," or "One more sentence, then we'll move on."

Consider intervening where there may be a personal attack that could be unlawful e.g. harassment "No personal attacks—focus on ideas, please wrap up."

If there is any element of unlawful behaviour, then move discussions on, such as: "If this continues, we'll move to the next speaker/question." Also consider a pause and reset.

As a last resort, understand the process for any steward or security support.

Retain notes of any intervention.

4. Red lines where the Chair must intervene:

- Threats or incitement to violence.
- Inciting racial or religious hatred or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation or encouraging crime/terrorism.
- Targeted, unlawful harassment (sustained, directed conduct meeting the legal threshold).

- Defamation of identifiable individuals—stop and invite re-phrasing or a factual basis.

5. **Managing protests and disruption**

Remind all those attending of their obligations in attending the event as set out in the Code of Practice, in particular:

- They are expected to show tolerance towards the expression of views, opinions and beliefs of others, even though those views, opinions or beliefs may run contrary to their own personal views, opinions or belief.
- They must not engage in conduct that prevents, obstructs or disrupts the holding or orderly conduct of the event.
- Protests must be conducted without infringing the rights of others, including others' rights to freedom of speech. No protest should prevent an event from going ahead as scheduled.

Acknowledge peaceful protest and keep dialogue via a named liaison.

Keep entrances, aisles, and emergency routes clear. Use stewards to manage queues and late entry.

Apply a clear disruption threshold (e.g. repeated shouting over speakers), then consider relevant intervention.

Base decisions on time, place, and manner of protest—not on a viewpoint.