

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

CODE OF PRACTICE ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEETINGS OR OTHER ACTIVITIES ON COLLEGE PREMISES

1. Introduction

The Royal College of Art recognises that freedom of speech within the law is a fundamental to the life of a higher education institution. The RCA is committed to maintaining academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law, alongside our commitment to tolerance, understanding and equality and diversity.

2. Context

The College has a legal duty (section 43 Education No 2 Act 1986) to take such steps as are reasonably practical to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for staff, students and visitors. In addition, the College's Statutes state that '.... academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions....'.

This Code governs the organisation and running of meetings, debates, speeches, talks, presentations or other activities ("events") on RCA premises, other than the RCA's normal academic and administrative business.

The Code applies to all staff and students of the College, including visiting lecturers, and to all visiting speakers or others taking part in RCA events.

The Code also applies to events organised by staff or students of the College held in external premises, and to externally organised events held on College premises.

3. Authority

The Vice-Chancellor of the College has authorised the Chief Operating Officer to ensure compliance with the Code as far as reasonably practical. The Chief Operating Officer may delegate authority in general or in particular instances to other members of staff of the RCA.

4. Bookings and publicity

Bookings must be made by contacting the Events Team within the Building & Estates department. The booking form is attached for information. Academic and internal administration activities take priority for using College premises, but permission may be given for space to be hired or used by outside persons or organisations.

A weekly email of events at the RCA is circulated by the Communications & Marketing team (to be added to the mailing list, please email media@rca.ac.uk). Events organised by the SU and its societies are publicised on its website (<http://rcasu.org.uk>).

5. Arrangements

The organisers of any RCA event shall ensure that there is a single named principal organiser who is a member of staff, a student or trustee or manager of the Students' Union. The principal organiser is responsible for the event complying with this Code and should consult with the Events Team as early as possible if she/he has any concerns about the event.

Where College premises are hired or used for externally organised events, then the person or organisation must identify a single, named principal organiser of the event at the time of booking. The principal organiser is responsible for the event complying with this Code and should consult with the Events Team as early as possible if she/he has any concerns about the event.

The College will not unreasonably refuse to allow events to be held on its premises. The expression of controversial views which do not breach the law will not constitute reasonable grounds for withholding permission for an event. Reasonable grounds for refusal would include, but are not limited to, the fact that the event is likely to:

- incite those attending to commit a criminal act;
- lead to the unlawful expression of views;
- be in direct support of an organisation whose aims and objectives are illegal; or
- give rise to a breach of the peace.

In determining whether the holding of an event on College premises might reasonably be refused, consideration will be given to:

- the safety of persons attending the event and persons on College premises who might foreseeably be put at risk;
- the risk that College staff, students or visitors may be subject to harassment, intimidation or abuse;
- the security of College premises; and
- the good name and reputation of the College.

6. Gender Segregation

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued guidance for universities and student unions on gender segregation at events and meetings.¹ The Commission's advice is that under equalities legislation gender segregation is not permitted in any academic meetings or at events, lectures or meetings provided for students, or at events attended by members of the public or employees of the university or the students' union. Gender segregation is permissible during collective religious worship because it is not subject to equality law.

Gender segregation is therefore not permitted at RCA events or externally organised events held on College premises, except for collective religious worship.

If any event includes religious worship and involves gender segregation, then the principal organiser must provide full details when requesting the booking, including the seating arrangements that will apply across each part of the event.

7. External speaker requests

The external speaker request process is shown in the diagram below.

All external speaker requests must be made by the principal organiser to the Events Team at least two weeks prior to the date of the proposed event.

8. Review and approval process

The Events Team will carry out a due diligence enquiry on any booking request from an external organization or for events involving external speakers. Should there be any reason for concern, the request will be escalated to the Chief Operating Officer. Reasons for the request to be escalated may include but are not limited to: the title or subject matter of the event is likely to be controversial or cause distress; the external speaker has links to or represents a proscribed terror group or organisation; there are inadequate security provisions in place for the event.

Where the Chief Operating Officer considers that there may be grounds for refusing an event (as outlined in section 5, above), s/he will convene the Event Approval Panel who will review the request, liaising with internal and external contacts as necessary. Depending on the circumstances of a specific request input may be appropriate from, for example, local police, the local authority, HEI institutions known to have hosted or refused the external speaker previously, BIS regional Prevent coordinators.

¹ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/gender-segregation-events-and-meetings-guidance-universities-and-students>

The Event Approval Panel will be chaired by the Chief Operating Officer and include at least two other members of senior staff identified by the COO including, for example, other members of the Senior Management Team or a member of academic staff in an area relevant to the event.

The booking request will receive one of the following responses:

- 1) The request may be approved with no conditions
- 2) The request may be approved on the proviso that specific conditions are met. These may include but are not limited to: varying the time and location of the event; opening the event up to the general public; making the event ticketed; requesting that a particular individual chairs the event; additional security for the event
- 3) The Panel may refuse or withdraw permission for the event.

The Panel would normally only refuse or withdraw permission on the advice of the police, or if there were serious concerns regarding safety. The Chief Operating Officer will report the circumstances of any such incident to the next meeting of Senate.

The principal organiser has the right to appeal the decision of the Event Approval Panel. Appeals will be heard by the Vice-Chancellor (or his nominee) and a Dean School not otherwise involved in the request. An appeal decision will be provided within 7 days of the appeal being received.

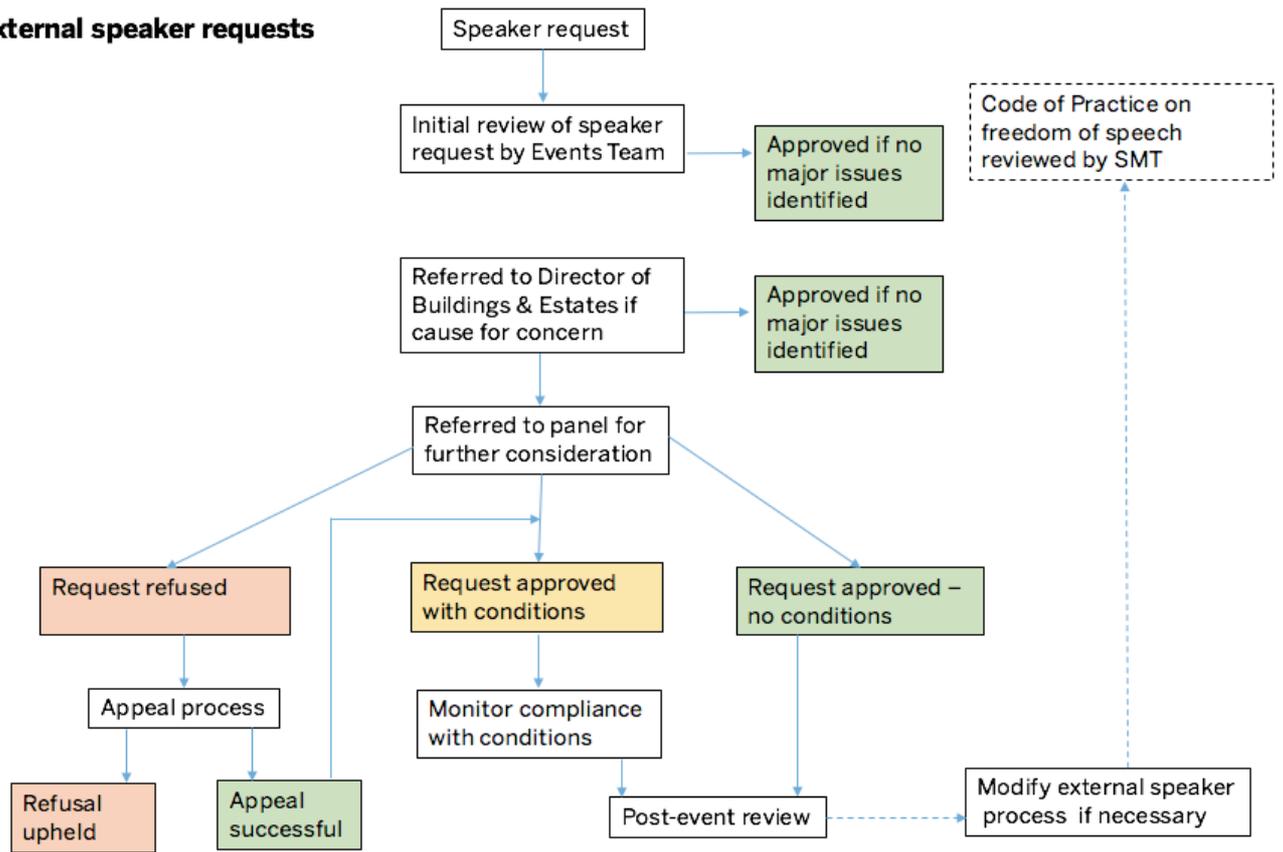
The principal organiser of the event must notify the Events Team if a speaker is replaced or other material changes occur to the event. The College reserves the right to review an external speaker decision if further information emerges about the proposed event.

9. Penalties and sanctions

The Chief Operating Officer may take such action or lay down such conditions in relation to any event or activity covered by this Code to ensure freedom of speech within the law, the safety of participants at any event or in its vicinity and to ensure that public order is maintained, as s/he considered necessary.

Infringements of this Code will make those responsible subject to disciplinary action under the RCA's Academic/Non academic disciplinary policy or the RCA Regulations.

External speaker requests



Document owner: Chief Operating Officer

Next review date: March 2017