Procedure for the Booking and Conduct of Events, and Guidelines for Protests and Rallies

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Note: All policies must be read in conjunction with all other SOAS policy, procedure and guidance documents. Printed copies of policies may not be the most up to date, therefore please refer to the policy pages on the SOAS external website or intranet for the latest version.

1. Introduction

1.1. SOAS, University of London has a long tradition of welcoming high-profile speakers from all over the world, from every part of the political, social and religious spectrum. SOAS is committed to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and ideas through being a leading institute for debate. This can only be conducted effectively in an atmosphere of open enquiry, mutual tolerance and intellectual freedom.

1.2. The University recognises that there are specific legal obligations on universities to promote, protect and respect these key freedoms. However, the rights to academic freedom and freedom of speech and expression are not absolute - they are freedoms "within the law". Consequently, the criminal and civil law also sets limits on the lawful exercise of these rights.

1.3. However, freedom of expression may not be exercised if in so doing it breaks the law or breaches the rights of others, such as if its expression is unlawfully discriminatory or threatens others'' safety or freedom of expression. Membership of the University and permission to use its premises is predicated upon acceptance of these principles.

1.4. Our university is also committed to being a place where all members of our community can freely express their opinions and challenge views and perspectives through discourse, spoken word, different art forms, and peaceful protests. To encourage a safe and secure atmosphere for all our staff, students, and visitors, this document also sets out the arrangements for our community to facilitate peaceful protest on campus. This procedure must be read in conjunction with the SOAS Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

2. Scope

2.1. This procedure applies to all activities on any premises which are managed and operated by SOAS, including the organisation of protests and rallies.

2.2. Any events to be held in the precinct or other surrounding areas overseen by the University of London, must follow their procedures for University-of-London-Visitor-Regulations.pdf and Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Code of Practice - v3.4.pdf. The accompanying application to hold a protest and demonstration must be completed and submitted to: uolevents@london.ac.uk at least 72 hours prior to the planned event.

3. Definitions

3.1. This procedure applies to activities such as meetings and events, including public lectures, conferences, lectures, seminars, committee meetings and musical and theatrical performances ('events'). It also applies to teaching and curriculum content and the facilitation of research, as well as external speaker events.

3.2. The organisers of any event are required to appoint an individual to act as 'Principal Organiser' of the event. The Principal Organiser is responsible, as far as is reasonably practicable, for ensuring that the organisation of the event and the conduct of those attending it, whether from the SOAS community or outside, is lawful and conforms to the provisions of the Code, to all relevant SOAS guidance and to any condition relating to the event imposed under the Code. This includes ensuring that the chair of the event is properly briefed. The Principal Organiser is also required to be present at the event. The Principal Organiser may be:

3.3. An 'internal event sponsor' will be the relevant Head of College/Department, a Head of a Centre or Institute, a Director of Professional Services, or the Students' Union Chief Executive.

4. Booking Events

4.1. The organisers of any event are required to appoint an individual to act as 'Principal Organiser' of the event. Events that are open to people other than current SOAS staff or students should be chaired by a suitable and experienced figure who is fully familiar with SOAS, meaning in principle an established (not visiting) or emeritus member of the SOAS academic staff. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the Vice-Chancellor or one of the Deputy Vice-Chancellors. This may be requested by the Principal Organiser or the Director of Governance, even for a limited access event if appropriate.

4.2. Organisers need to book at least 20 working days before the event, and should complete the booking form via the staff intranet for internal or affiliate organisers. External organisers may obtain the forms via the Conference Office. All organisers, event Chairs, and lead speakers must confirm they have read and understood the SOAS Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

4.3. Where any of the following criteria is met, a risk assessment must be completed and accompany the booking form for approval:

- For all event organised by an external organiser
- External (IP) guests or speaker will be in attendance
- Event size of more than 50 attendees

4.4. The booking form and risk assessment should be provided to the event sponsor for staff and student events prior to submission to the Conference Office. Written confirmation that the event has been approved by the event sponsor must be provided:

- Internal Event Sponsors: Deans, Heads of Department, or Directors of Professional Services.
- Student Event Sponsor: CEO Students Union

4.5. Organisers need to provide all the information concerning the event, and approved form and risk assessments at least ten working days in advance of the event for consideration by the Conference Office. Where short notice details for an event have been provided (and there is agreement to accommodate the event) the Head of Safety and Security will need to be informed, who will then notify the Director of Governance and Prevent Lead.

4.6. The Head of Safety and Security, or their nominee, will provide security risk management advice to event organisers. Any conditions for the event may be applied and agreed to and complied with, and / or any costs of security covered before the event can proceed. Advice may be sought via the Director of Governance and other key stakeholders (such as the Prevent Lead and/or Head of EDI and Wellbeing) where there may be arising issues in respect of free speech. Escalation of any matters will be actioned via the Director of Governance to the Vice-Chancellor or the Executive Board as necessary.

4.7. Once all requirements for booking an event have been satisfied, the Conference Office will confirm the booking with the Principal Organiser. Any events declined at this stage will be communicated by the Head of Safety and Security, and, if applicable, reported to the Prevent Lead.

4.8. A regular report will be provided to the Vice-Chancellors Group of all upcoming events, as well as reports of any incidents from events.

5. External Event Hire Terms and Conditions

5.1. Terms and Conditions for hire of SOAS premises must be agreed and signed by external parties.

5.2. Insurance documentation as shall reasonably be requested by SOAS in order to satisfy SOAS that the insurance provisions are adequate.

5.3. Any conditions for the event may be applied and agreed to and complied with, and / or any costs of security covered before the event can proceed.

5.4. Any payments due to SOAS under the agreed Terms and Conditions, payable by the agreed dates.

6. Guidance for Organising a Protest of Rally on Campus

6.1. If you are organising a protest on behalf of a student society, please contact the SOAS Student Union's Events and Activities Officer. The procedure outlined at paragraph 2.2 will need to be followed.

6.2. Arrangements for a protest / rally will follow this same booking procedure

6.3. Organisers and participants must adhere to the following procedure:

- To follow the SOAS Dignity and Respect Policy, and compliance with SOAS Health and Safety Policies.
- Be mindful of others – SOAS is an institution that will always support freedom of speech, however primarily our campus is an education provider, so please be mindful of students trying to get to classes or lectures, or others trying to work and study in communal areas.
- Take part in the agreed location. For health and safety reasons, and to ensure your fellow students can access their lectures, you must not block access to SOAS buildings or conduct any activities on the SOAS steps. Blocking any entrance – especially around the steps – can create an intimidatory atmosphere for those not engaged with the protests when they enter and leave our premises.
- Remember opinions vary. Some people may not join a protest as they feel differently or unsure about the matter at hand. We must respect this.
- Individuals in our community must not be personally targeted – whatever their position on an issue – whether on social media or physically on campus.
- Material such as placards, posters, or banners containing abusive language will not be tolerated on site.
- Teaching or university operations must not be disrupted as part of any protest activities. It is essential that students can still access their learning if they so wish.
- Be respectful of your campus and its premises. Vandalism of school property, littering, and setting off fire alarms will not be deemed part of a peaceful protest. This includes the use of flares and fireworks.
- Do not engage in any activities or use language that violates UK law.

6.4. For students and staff who are in the vicinity of a protest happening on campus, but not taking part:

- Your studies / employment are our top priority. These guidelines aim to maintain all students and academics' abilities to conduct their work while respecting everyone's right to protest.
- Please talk to Campus Security if there is a problem.
- Please be mindful of others – while on our campus is primarily an education provider, it is a part of SOAS's ethos to respect others protesting.
- It is fine to not join a protest if you feel differently or may be unsure about the matter at hand. Everyone must respect this.
- Individuals in our community must not be targeted – whatever their position is on the issue – whether on social media or physically on campus

- Please do not try to physically or verbally stop a protest from occurring. This includes harassing those gathering, preventing speakers from addressing attendees, or preventing people from joining or leaving the protest.
- Our policies on Fire Safety, Freedom of Speech and Conduct of Events at SOAS, the SOAS Charter on Discrimination can be found on the Key Policies page of the SOAS website.

6.5. By adhering to these guidelines, we can ensure that protests at SOAS University of London remain a powerful means of expression while upholding a respectful and secure environment for all community members.

7. Conduct at Events

7.1. Organisers of online events are responsible for assuring the good order of the event as per section 4.5 of the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

8. Withholding or Withdrawal of Permission for an Event

8.1. Withholding or withdrawal of permission for an event will only occur in exceptional circumstances where effective measures cannot be put in place to secure freedom of speech within the law, or to discharge SOAS's obligations relating to the safety, health and welfare of its registered students, employees and other persons lawfully upon the premises or for the efficient conduct and administration of its functions. Wherever possible, the Principal Organiser and appropriate internal/external parties will be consulted by SOAS before such a decision is made.

9. Appeals and Complaints

9.1. Internal

9.1.1. SOAS has procedures in place for members of the SOAS community to raise concerns and, where applicable, formal complaints in relation to their rights to free speech and academic freedom. SOAS also ensures that the appropriate procedures are in place in order to allow its stakeholders to report any concerns to be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The SOAS complaints procedure is available on the SOAS website, or concerns can be raised via the Report and Support portal available on the SOAS website.

9.2. External

9.2.1. Students may apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) for a review of matters that have been decided under the SOAS student complaints procedure.

9.2.2. Any other third party can raise concerns via the SOAS public complaints procedure, available on the SOAS website, or through the Report and Support portal available on the SOAS website.

Appendix A – Event Booking Procedure

