

Societies Charter

Introduction

Societies are an important part of UWSU and key to our existence. Societies have the right to form because they are part of delivering our charitable objects. These are statements which outline our role and purpose as a charity and are contained in our governing documents. These documents are agreed with the Charities Commission and define how we can operate. Our objects are:

The objects of the union are the advancement of education of students at the University of Westminster for the public benefit by:

- ***Promoting the interests and welfare of students at the University of Westminster during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students;***
- ***Being the recognised representative channel between students and the University of Westminster and any other external bodies; and***
- ***Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussion and debate for the personal development of its students***

All of our recognised societies are student led but are still part of UWSU and have to work within the governance of UWSU. Additional to our internal governance through our elected officers we have legal responsibilities under the 1994 Education Act and the 2011 Charities Act. This is on top of adhering to other recommended best practice monitored by the University (as our principal funder) and the Charity Commission. This means that what our societies can do and be funded for is not just down to whether UWSU likes it or not.

The broad areas that impact on societies are:

- Supporting/resourcing political campaigns
- Supporting/resourcing campaigns on issues that affect students as Westminster students
- Protecting the reputation of the charity

This document sets out the principles by which societies can exist. It is not a detailed set of regulations but each situation will be judged against those principles. UWSU can only support and put resource into societies who accept these principles and the responsibilities that come with them. This means societies who do not follow these principles will not be recognised as being part of UWSU. They will consequentially not have room bookings accepted and will not be funded or supported by UWSU.

General Principles

Societies should be run by current Westminster students and focused on events and activities for current students.

Societies and events should be open to all students.

Recognition and resourcing for societies will be decided on the following principles:

- Does the proposed activity sit within our Charitable Objectives and legal obligations?
- Will the committees be selected in a fair and transparent manner?
- How many students will be engaged in the activity and what will the impact be?
- Are the activities purely social and benefit relatively few students?
- Do the activities add to the general student experience?
- Is the society distinct enough from other current societies or are we duplicating funding?

Academic societies

Academic societies have additional roles and responsibilities in supporting those objectives:

- To be open to all students who are interested in the subject and not just restricted to the specific course
- To work with the academic staff in delivering the subject in partnership to run events and activities

It also means that our Academic societies cannot be centred around:

- Providing additional instruction/teaching on behalf of the university – particularly if it is compulsory to the course.
- Their activities should be extra-curricular in nature, but may be accredited.

Campaigning/Liberation societies

Campaigning/Liberation societies have additional roles and responsibilities in supporting these objectives:

- To embody the values of tolerance and not seek to divide the student community
- To respect the legal frameworks around UWSU, particularly regarding charity campaigning and work with the SU on their activities
- To ensure that no funds are spent on lobbying and campaigning for issues that do not affect students as Westminster students

It also means that our Campaigning/Liberation societies cannot be centred around:

- Campaign against UWSU where UWSU is not able to act or implement policy

Faith and Cultural societies

Faith and spirituality societies have additional roles and responsibilities in supporting those objectives:

- To provide opportunities to celebrate and share the faith and culture of their members
- To facilitate discussion and debate about their faith and other issues relating to their faith
- To represent students on areas where the faith impacts on the University experience
- To be focused on the Westminster student experience and to enhance the Westminster community

It also means that our Faith and Cultural societies cannot be centred around:

- Providing religious instruction or seeking to be representatives of their faith
- Setting and monitoring cultural identity, behaviours and norms for their members
- Being representatives of external organisations on campus, except where explicitly agreed with UWSU

Performing Arts societies

Performing Arts societies have additional roles and responsibilities in supporting those objectives:

- To ensure that they cater for and welcome all abilities
- To ensure all members are treated fairly during productions
- To enhance confidence and performance abilities of members
- To refer all material that may be sensitive or have ethical implications to UWSU for approval
- To be focused on the Westminster student experience and to enhance the Westminster community

Political societies

Political societies have additional roles and responsibilities in supporting those objects:

- To further opportunities for political debate and awareness of political issues
- To discuss party manifestos and policies and their implications
- To enable students to explore their own personal political views
- To be focused on the Westminster student experience and to enhance the Westminster community

It also means that our Political societies cannot be centred around:

- Campaigning for or on behalf of their political party in elections

Special Interest societies

Special interest societies have additional roles and responsibilities in supporting those objects:

- To further the opportunities for recreational and social activity
- To share common interests and pursuits

It also means that our Special Interest societies cannot be centred around:

- Providing funding for social activities that would take place without the existence of this society

1. Aims and Objectives

This document outlines the rules and expectations for all societies affiliated with the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU). UWSU seeks to provide activities which users find pleasant, safe and enjoyable to take part in, and in which members and users can achieve their society goals and enhance their student experience. Societies are therefore expected to adhere to the rules set out in this document. Student Societies aim to provide an outlet for students with a common interest to join together.

UWSU is required to adhere to the laws of England and Wales and its courts, therefore societies must adhere as well. If any society fails to follow the laws of England and Wales the society risks becoming unaffiliated with UWSU and may lose the provision of the Students' Union.

- 1.1. The Aims and Objectives of the Society shall be considered and consistent with the definition of your society category outlined previously.
- 1.2. The society's aims and objectives set out in the affiliation form will be read to be compatible with 1.1 and are considered binding under this agreement.

2. Society Requirements

- 2.1. Society meetings must be open to all full members of UWSU.
- 2.2. All societies must possess Aims and Objectives.
- 2.3. Society officers must attend general meetings and have a member of the society represent them or send apologies if unable to attend
- 2.4. All society committee members must be registered student members of the University.
- 2.5. There must be at least two officers:
 - 2.5.1. A President or Chairperson
 - 2.5.2. A Treasurer
- 2.6. Committee members must update their social media channels and UWSU website accordingly and ensure that UWSU has a list of all official social media outlets.

- 2.7. Committee members must have access to and regularly check their society email address and respond to emails within 72 hours.
- 2.8. All societies must provide an inventory of all equipment every academic year on request.
- 2.9. All societies must abide by UWSU financial procedures.
- 2.10. Societies must adhere to advice and suggestions made by the Societies Co-ordinator and the Student Engagement and Activities Manager.
- 2.11. Societies should treat staff, students and any external attendees with courtesy and respect.
- 2.12. Discrimination towards staff, students and external attendees on the grounds of age, ethnicity, gender, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation or disability will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action under the procedures defined below.
- 2.13. Physical intimidation or violence towards staff, students and external attendees is entirely unacceptable and will lead to action under the procedures defined below.

3. Society Membership

- 3.1. All societies must be registered with UWSU.
- 3.2. All societies must have specific Aims and Objectives.
 - 3.2.1. Aims and Objectives must be adhered to. Failure to this may lead to action under the procedures in Section 15.
 - 3.2.2. Societies may be asked to change or alter Aims and Objectives if :
 - 3.2.2.1. They are deemed to be too similar to another Societies Aims and Objectives
 - 3.2.2.2. They fail to comply with the:
 - 3.2.2.2.1. Equality Act 2010.
 - 3.2.2.2.2. University and UWSU bye-laws.
 - 3.2.2.2.3. Charity commission rules.
- 3.3. Failure to register with UWSU will result in the society not being recognised or supported by UWSU.

4. Student Membership

- 4.1. Membership of the society must be open to all members of the Union
- 4.2. Membership of the society must be open to any member of staff of the University of Westminster
- 4.3. Membership is open to non-Westminster students and must be approved by the Societies Coordinator when registering on the UWSU website.
- 4.4. Society membership fees must be agreed with UWSU first
 - 4.4.1. Membership fees must be recorded and available for UWSU to view when and if requested.
- 4.5. Society members must be informed and permitted to attend any general meetings being organised by the society.

5. Dismissal and Resignation of Officials

- 5.1. If any complaints are received by the Societies Co-ordinator then these will be investigated as outlined in Section 15, any official who is found to have committed an offence may be removed from their position
- 5.2. The resignation of an official shall not be of effect unless given in writing to the Society President and until accepted by the relevant Society's Committee, the resignation of the president will be sent to the Societies Co-ordinator.

6. Facility usage and booking

- 6.1. Societies should treat equipment and rooms provided by UWSU and the university, with respect and treat it with an appropriate manner.
- 6.2. Any attempt to make use of the facilities without booking or paying will be viewed as a disciplinary offence and will lead to action under the procedures defined below.
- 6.3. Any significant damage to facilities or equipment caused by irresponsible behaviour will be viewed as an offence and will lead to action under the procedures defined below.
- 6.4. If shared facilities are busy, users should seek to make facilities available as soon as possible to those waiting. At the same time, those waiting should be prepared to wait for a reasonable period or use alternative facilities until their chosen facility becomes free. Any disagreements should be referred to the Activities department of the Students' Union.

7. Health and Safety

- 7.1. Societies should be aware of safety procedures in relation to their activity and should seek to observe these procedures; as such Societies are required to do a risk assessment for all events, internally or externally.
- 7.2. Safety regulations relating to facilities and individual activities should be observed at all times. Societies should be aware of safety procedures in relation to their activity and should seek to observe these procedures, not least when they affect the safety of fellow users or participants.
- 7.3. Societies are required to do a risk assessment for all events, internally or externally.
- 7.4. A 3 strike rule is imposed on all societies if they do not complete a risk assessment.
- 7.5. Failure to complete risk assessments may lead to action under the procedures in Section 15.

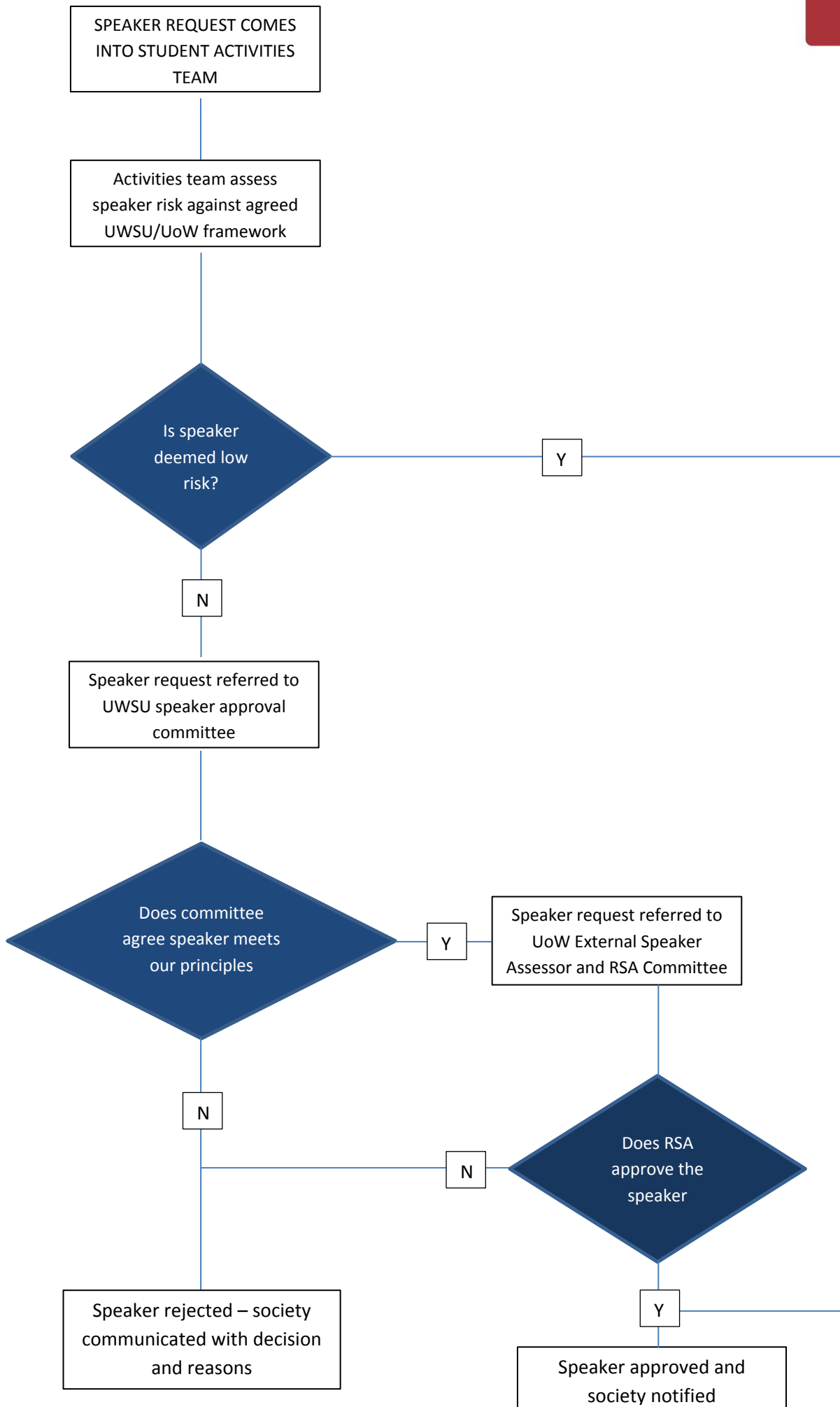
8. Committee Code of Conduct

- 8.1. Committee members must treat one another with dignity and respect.
- 8.2. The society President is the leader of the society;
 - 8.2.1. The President must work with committee members and take the advice of committee members when necessary.
 - 8.2.2. Committee members and general members should listen to the advice of the President when necessary.

- 8.3. Societies must treat other societies with respect and adhere to the Equality Act 2010, University and UWSU bye-laws and Charity commission rules.
- 8.4. All committee members must remain professional and work as team to achieve the goals of the society.
- 8.5. Committees should share the workload to ensure that the society is as efficient as possible.

9. Externals Process

- 9.1. Societies must provide the full name, email address of the external speaker(s) they wish to invite on site to the Student Activities Team.
- 9.2. Societies must provide a reason for inviting the external speaker(s) and how relevant they are to the proposed event.
- 9.3. External speaker(s) are required to undergo the 'External Speaker Procedure' before they are given permission to speak at Society event(s).
- 9.4. External speaker(s) are approved by the Student Activities Team given they comply to the University of Westminster's and the Students' Union's:
 - 9.4.1.1.1. Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech
 - 9.4.1.1.2. Religion and Belief Policy
 - 9.4.1.1.3. Code of Conduct
- 9.5. In the event the external speaker(s) do not comply to the above and the principles set out in the Students' Union External Speaker Policy, the Student Activities Team will refer the speaker(s) to the UWSU committee and their decision will be final.
- 9.6. All society events can have up to 30 external guests attend, per event.
- 9.7. The relevant committee member must compile an external guest list with full names, which must be submitted to the Societies Coordinator and Room bookings officer 48 hours before their event.
- 9.8. Societies that do not submit an external guest list in time will have their guest list rejected by the Societies Coordinator and Room bookings officer, and their external guests will not be permitted on site.
- 9.9. External guests fall under the responsibility of the society(s) hosting the event.
- 9.10. To appeal the approval of an external speaker the following procedure must be adhered to:
 - 9.10.1.1.1. All appeals must be sent to externalspeakers@su.westminster.ac.uk
 - 9.10.1.1.2. An appeal will only be accepted on the basis of providing evidence where they believe procedures were not followed and may provide evidence that was not considered or absent about the speaker(s).
 - 9.10.1.1.3. Appeals will be responded to within 3 working days of submission.
 - 9.10.1.1.4. The appeals process will be taken up by a committee made up of the Sabbatical Officers, Chief Executive and Activities Manager.
- 9.11. Transparent explanations for the confirmation of speakers may be found in Appendix A.



10. Funding Regulations

- 10.1. All Clubs and Societies monies, including memberships, shall be held in the UWSU Club/Society Union accounts only.
- 10.2. No external bank accounts will be held by the Club/Society.
- 10.3. The accounts of all affiliated societies will be administered by the Societies Coordinator on behalf of the Student Activities Office.
- 10.4. The financial year for all societies is the same as that for UWSU.
- 10.5. Affiliated societies can claim a grant from the Students' Union for a budgeted activity which is in agreement with the Aims & Objectives of that society.
- 10.6. Grant allocation will be decided by the Student Activities Team.
- 10.7. Grant allocation processes will be made public.
- 10.8. Societies can appeal with evidence to the Sabbatical team, Chief Executive and Secretary if unsatisfied with the grant allocated.
- 10.9. Societies must adhere to the banking protocols set by UWSU.
- 10.10. Societies must discuss with UWSU before finalising any sponsorship deals with external companies.
- 10.11. Societies must have a signed agreement with external companies, drafted by UWSU.

11. Food and Beverage Regulations

- 11.1. Societies wishing to bring in food and beverages not supplied by Aramark must gain approval from the Societies Coordinator before the event.
- 11.2. The University catering company are contracted to be the exclusive caterer for the university.
- 11.3. All catering needs to be run past Aramark with the exception of:
 - 11.3.1. Any small catering for 30 attendees or less, unless there is alcohol or hot food served.
- 11.4. The University catering company can decide on a case by cases basis e.g. for religious reasons, traditional food being served, etc. if the SU can allow their own catering.
- 11.5. Societies who do bring in food and beverages not supplied by the University catering company must sign and complete the Food and Beverage Disclaimer Form, which can be found on the Committee Hub.
- 11.6. Societies must tidy and clean all areas where food and beverages have been served and put rubbish in the appropriate bins.
- 11.7. In the event that a society wishes to use an external caterer to provide hot or cooked food for their event, the caterer must provide:
 - 11.4.1 Food Allergen Information
 - 11.4.2 Food Hygiene Certificate
 - 11.4.3 Catering Method Statement
- 11.8. If the caterer or society fails to provide all documents by the deadline, the society runs the risk of having their catering cancelled.

12. Student Welfare

- 12.1. At the start of the year, UWSU will advise society leaders of all welfare services and options open for all students.
- 12.2. Committee members should advise society members on welfare options available to them at the start of the year.

13. Fair Election/Selection of a Committee

- 13.1. The University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) expects all societies to have open and fair elections, run democratically and free. This document serves to inform all members on how to prevent bias in the appointment of committee members and to allow all students a fair chance in applying and running for positions in the respective society.
- 13.2. These are the rules that societies must abide by:
 - 13.2.1. All societies must hold selection/elections of any post in an open, honest and fair manner.
 - 13.2.1.1. All societies must be aware of, and abide by the UWSU Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 13.3. Clear and accurate communication to all members of the society
- 13.4. Recruit students through a transparent and fair admissions and selection process
- 13.5. Provide a common level of accessible information
- 13.6. Respond in a timely manner to relevant correspondence(s)
- 13.7. Work in partnership with UWSU to ensure appropriate communication of procedures and advice to students
- 13.8. Check your official society email regularly to ensure everyone is kept informed and key information is relayed to those involved
- 13.9. Provide accurate and correct information as requested by the Societies Co-ordinator and the Deputy Returning Officer.
- 13.10. Raise issues at an early stage and seek advice from the Societies Co-ordinator and the Deputy Returning Officer if unable to resolve.
- 13.11. Operate and consistently apply robust procedures for appeals, complaints and disciplinary hearings, asking UWSU for support if required.
- 13.12. For the purpose of society elections the Activities Manager will hold the position of Deputy Returning Officer.
- 13.13. The Deputy Returning Officer will oversee elections and act as final arbiter for disputes.



14. Disciplinary Procedures

- 14.1. UWSU will endeavour to support all societies in their activities and interaction with the student body. In return we expect members to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Code of Conduct. The elected officers of any society which is alleged to have committed an offence against the UWSU or Societies Constitutions shall be subject to the Disciplinary Procedure as laid out in bye-law 12 of the UWSU Constitution. In particular societies shall be responsible for the behaviour of their members at society events.
- 14.2. Initial action will be set out by the Student Activities Team.
- 14.3. In extreme circumstances the case may be referred and official disciplinary procedures taken.

Declaration

As President and Treasurer of the below Society, we agree to act in accordance with the regulations outlined above. We accept all responsibility and declare we have read and understood the Societies Charter.

Signature: Print Name: Date:
Proposed Club/Society President

Signature: Print Name: Date:
Proposed Club/Society Treasurer

Signed on behalf of the _____ Society.

Appendix A

Introduction

This policy outlines the process through which UWSU will allow external speakers to be represented at any events which are organised through UWSU or recognised UWSU groups, such as societies.

The policy has a set of principles (section A) and guidance on best practice (section B). When making decisions it is the principles that take priority over the best practice and it is the principles which should be followed

Context and scope

This policy is intended to support our obligations under Charity Law, national Law and the best practice guidance under the Prevent Strategy. It is not a statement of view on the issue of freedom of speech and the effectiveness of legislation to deal with the issues around controversial speakers.

This policy covers all speakers, both internal and external, that are attending and/or speaking at events organised under the UWSU name. This includes:

- Physical attendance
- Video or audio broadcast (live or recorded)
- Social media feed or stream as a featured part of the event
- Any other representation that could be viewed in these lines

For the purpose of this policy they shall be referred to as speakers

This policy covers all events wherever they are held, including online, where it could be viewed as being a UWSU activity. For the purpose of this policy they shall be referred to as events.

Principles of the policy

15. All events will adhere to our organisational values and further our charitable objects
 - 15.1. Events should be for the benefit of the current Westminster Student Population
 - 15.2. Externals should only be invited where doing so enhances the experience for Westminster students and benefits the University.
16. The scheduling of an event should demonstrate respect for all our members
 - 16.1. It should be scheduled well in advance and have time to allow discussion from the members about the event
 - 16.2. Any minor changes to the event should meet all of the same principles of advance notice
 - 16.3. Any significant changes to the event such as a new event title or new speaker would deem the event a new booking and it should adhere to the same principles of a new booking
 - 16.4. It should be sympathetic to other events, the academic calendar, University bookings and religious festivals/observances

17. The event should be risk assessed and meet the needs of the relevant University systems. This includes (but is not exclusive to):
 - 17.1. Room booking
 - 17.2. External Speakers and Referred Events
 - 17.3. Health and Safety
 - 17.4. Food Hygiene

18. The event should positively enhance the student experience for our members
 - 18.1. Events can and should challenge views and opinions but should not seek (intentionally or otherwise) to divide our members
 - 18.2. Potentially controversial events, where speakers attend, should be delivered in a debate format – this could be through interview or panel event
 - 18.3. All of our members should be able to attend the event and be able to have a positive experience

19. The principle of the process will be simple and fair and easy for the students to use
 - 19.1. The Trustee Board will appoint a group to oversee the speaker approval process and this will report into the Standards and Ethics Committee
 - 19.2. UWSU will review high risks events before approaching the University to make the booking
 - 19.3. A minimum notice period for an event booking will be set and reviewed. It will not normally be less than 2 weeks
 - 19.4. All events will be risk assessed on booking and those that are deemed low risk will instantly be accepted and booked and the organisers notified within an agreed time frame.
 - 19.5. All events that need review will be done so in the agreed and published time frame which will not normally be longer than 3 working days before passing to the University.

20. The process will be open, transparent and clearly published
 - 20.1. Event organisers are entitled to know the reasoning behind all decisions
 - 20.2. An annual report on events will be published on the website