WALBROOK
Institute London

# Visiting Speaker Policy

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Walbrook regularly welcomes visiting speakers from around the world. Such speakers bring great diversity of experience, insight, and opinion, enriching lectures, events, and activities, and sparking discussion and debate among students, apprentices, staff, faculty, and visitors alike.

1.2 Walbrook commits to actively fostering an environment where lawful freedom of speech is not only protected but encouraged. This includes the open discussion of controversial, unpopular, or challenging ideas in a respectful and safe setting.

1.3 Walbrook welcomes and promotes freedom of speech and expression within the law. The purpose of this policy is to set in place a framework for those engaged with Walbrook, in whatever capacity, to ensure that activities where debate, challenge, and dissent are not only permitted but expected, can continue for current and future generations.

1.4 This policy applies to all students, staff, faculty, members, partners, and visiting speakers of Walbrook in relation to any activity, whether in person or digitally delivered, on behalf of, or in partnership with, Walbrook.

1.5 All student-led events and activities, including those organised by student societies, fall under the remit of this policy. They must also complete the Visiting Speaker Risk Assessment prior to holding events with external participants.

1.6 This policy applies the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and OfS Regulatory Advice 24 as updated on 5 August 2026, and supports Walbrook's obligations under the Prevent duty. Anyone organising an event must follow the process set out in this policy and should be familiar with the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice. Decisions affecting lawful speech must consider reasonably practicable steps to secure it and whether any restriction is prescribed by law and proportionate.

1.7 The term "student" within this policy applies to all learners, whether higher education, professional education or apprentices.

## 2. Booking a visiting speaker

2.1 It is the responsibility of the event or activity organiser (the individual from within Walbrook e.g., member of staff or student named in the Visiting Speaker submission) to ensure that:

(a) a proportionate Visiting Speaker Risk Assessment is completed for every visiting speaker before confirmation, including speakers engaged under a written contract;

(b) the code of conduct is communicated to all visiting speakers before the event;

(c) all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the requirements of the code of conduct are upheld during the event;

(d) the Visiting Speaker submission is made no fewer than 28 calendar days before the event, in accordance with the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice. In exceptional circumstances, the Chief Operating Officer may authorise a shorter notice period in writing, with a documented risk assessment and reasons;

(e) no advertising, promotion or publicity for the event, including the naming of any speaker, takes place until approval has been given under this policy. Where an interim decision is necessary before the risk assessment is concluded, advertising may proceed only if expressly authorised in writing by the Chief Operating Officer, with the decision and reasons recorded.

2.2 The Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and Visiting Speaker Policy will be continually reviewed and updated in response to legislative changes and other factors. It is the responsibility of those organising events to ensure they are acting in accordance with the most recent version of the policies.

2.3 Most visiting speaker requests will be straightforward and can be handled entirely by the event organiser. However, some requests may be complex and may require referral for further consideration. The referral process will only apply in a minority of circumstances; to events or speakers deemed to be higher risk.

## 3. Risk assessment of proposed visiting speaker(s)

3.1 Prior to the confirmation of any visiting speaker, the event organiser will be responsible for assessing the speaker by completing the Visiting Speaker Risk Assessment. Once completed, the Visiting Speaker Risk Assessment should be submitted to the Registry Team.

3.2 The risk assessment has two parts. Part A (initial assessment) should be completed in all cases. If necessary, the individual should discuss this with their line manager.

3.3 Part B (referral) must be completed where Part A identifies uncertainty or concern. Prevent concerns are referred to the Prevent Lead; safeguarding concerns are referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead; other concerns are referred to a senior manager nominated by the Chief Operating Officer. Where concerns overlap, the Prevent Lead and the Designated Safeguarding Lead are notified simultaneously. Because the Chief Governance Officer is both the Prevent Lead and the owner of this policy, any decision to refuse an event, or to impose conditions on it, on Prevent grounds is reviewed by the Chief Operating Officer before it takes effect. The decision, the reasons, any conditions and the appeal route are recorded, and anonymised cases are reported to the Safeguarding and Prevent Group.

3.4 Risk assessments will be filed in accordance with local procedures and retained for the period set out in Section 6.

## 4. Training Requirements

4.1 Staff and student leaders who organise or approve events will complete annual training on freedom of speech and on the Prevent reporting route, appropriate to their role, as required by the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice. The Safeguarding and Prevent Group will review completion and effectiveness annually.

## 5. Complaints and Redress

5.1 Students who have exhausted Walbrook's internal complaints procedure may have access to an external complaints route. Higher education students, including higher education apprentices, may be entitled to refer complaints concerning their experience as a student to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Further education apprentices may be able to refer complaints concerning their apprenticeship training to the relevant government apprenticeship complaints service, currently administered through Skills England within the Department for Work and Pensions. Complaints relating to an apprentice's employment should be routed through Walbrook's Workplace Issues Complaints

Policy. Eligible staff, applicants for academic posts, non-student members and actual or invited visiting speakers may use Walbrook's internal procedure and complain to the OfS free speech complaints scheme in accordance with its published rules, which took effect on 1 September 2026 and are not retrospective. Walbrook publicises the scheme as set out in the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice.

## 6. Transparency and Record-Keeping

6.1 All speaker risk assessments and decisions will be retained for a minimum of six years, as specified in the institutional Document Retention Policy, and reviewed periodically. Summary data may be published annually in line with transparency commitments.

## 7. Governance

7.1 The Senior Leadership Group (SLG) provides management assurance on implementation and is responsible for escalation. It receives the annual Visiting Speaker and Freedom of Speech Report, prepared in anonymised form by the Chief Governance Officer, covering events, referrals, conditions, refusals and complaints. This is the single institutional report on visiting speaker and freedom of speech activity under this policy, the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and the Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct. The Safeguarding and Prevent Group scrutinises the report and the Prevent and safeguarding aspects of this policy, and recommends to SLG under its terms of reference.

7.2 The Chief Governance Officer owns this policy and reviews it annually. The Safeguarding and Prevent Group scrutinises revisions and recommends them to SLG, after which they proceed through LTQC and Academic Board to the Board of Directors for approval.

## 8. Related Policies and Guidance

- Freedom of Speech Code of Practice
- Visiting Speaker Code of Conduct
- Prevent Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Document Retention Policy
- Safeguarding and Prevent Group Terms of Reference

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## 9. Document Control

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| Version | 2.3 |
| Approved by | Board of Directors [pending] |
| Approval route | Safeguarding and Prevent Group → Senior Leadership Group (SLG) → Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQC) → Academic Board → Board of Directors |
| Author | Provost |
| Owner | Chief Governance Officer |
| Date approved | [13 October 2026] |
| Implementation date | 23 October 2026 [pending approval] |
| Review date | Autumn 2027 |