

External Speaker Policy

Date: 10 June 2026

Last amended by: Tim Johnson

1 Introduction

- 1.1 ThinkSpace Education (TSE) is committed to the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom. This policy sets out the process by which external speakers are invited to contribute to TSE's academic programmes and online events, and ensures that TSE meets its statutory obligations under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent duty) in relation to external speakers.
- 1.2 TSE is an exclusively online provider. All teaching and events take place in digital environments, including the VLE and live webinar platforms. This policy applies to all external speakers participating in any TSE-managed online event, whether live or pre-recorded.
- 1.3 TSE's overall risk profile in relation to external speakers is low. Our postgraduate programmes in music, sound design, and game audio do not attract speakers whose views are likely to present a radicalisation risk. However, TSE is required to have a formal approval procedure in place as part of its Prevent duty compliance, and this policy fulfils that requirement.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to any individual who is not a TSE member of staff or registered tutor and who is invited to address students or staff in any TSE online space, including:
 - Guest lectures or masterclasses within the curriculum
 - Webinars or online events open to TSE students
 - Panel discussions, Q&A sessions, or interviews hosted by TSE
 - Pre-recorded video content produced specifically for TSE's programmes
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to tutors delivering their contracted teaching, to student presentations, or to TSE staff conducting their normal duties.

3 Freedom of Speech

- 3.1 TSE is committed to protecting freedom of speech within the law. The purpose of the approval process in this policy is not to exclude speakers with controversial or minority views, but to ensure that TSE meets its Prevent duty obligations and that speakers are appropriate for the academic and professional context of the programme.
- 3.2 Decisions to decline a speaker invitation must be based on a genuine, evidence-based assessment of risk or unsuitability — not on the basis of the speaker's political, religious, or ideological views alone.
- 3.3 This policy should be read alongside TSE's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice.

4 Approval Process

- 4.1 All external speaker invitations must be approved by the Head of Postgraduate Education before any invitation is extended or confirmed. Approval must be obtained in advance of any public announcement or student communication.

- 4.2 The member of staff or tutor proposing an external speaker should submit a request to the Head of Postgraduate Education setting out:
- The speaker's name, professional background, and area of expertise
 - The purpose of the invitation and how it relates to the curriculum or programme
 - The proposed format, date, and platform
 - Any known concerns or sensitivities
- 4.3 The Head of Postgraduate Education will consider the request against the criteria in section 5 and communicate a decision within five working days.
- 4.4 In straightforward cases — where the speaker is a well-established professional in TSE's subject areas — approval will normally be granted promptly. A more detailed assessment is only required where there is a specific reason for concern.

5 Approval Criteria

- 5.1 The Head of Postgraduate Education will consider the following when assessing an external speaker request:
- Whether the speaker's contribution is relevant and appropriate to the academic programme
 - Whether there is any credible evidence that the speaker promotes extremism, terrorism, or illegal activity
 - Whether the content of the proposed session is consistent with TSE's values and obligations under the Prevent duty
 - Whether the speaker's views are consistent with TSE's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion
- 5.2 A speaker may be declined where there is credible evidence that they advocate or have advocated terrorism, extremist violence, or unlawful discrimination. A speaker should not be declined solely on the basis of holding views that are controversial or politically contested.

6 Recording and Monitoring

- 6.1 TSE maintains a log of all approved external speaker requests, including the speaker's name, date, event, and the outcome of the approval decision. This log is maintained by the Head of Postgraduate Education and reviewed annually.
- 6.2 Where a live online event includes an external speaker, a member of TSE staff should be present throughout. If any content causes concern during the event, the staff member may pause or end the session and should report the matter to the Prevent Lead as soon as possible.
- 6.3 The external speaker log is reviewed as part of the annual Prevent Risk Assessment.

7 Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 This policy is reviewed annually by the Head of Postgraduate Education and approved by the Board of Directors.
- 7.2 The policy will be updated in response to changes in legislation, Government guidance, or OfS requirements relating to the Prevent duty or freedom of speech.

8 Related Documents

- 8.1 TSE policies:

- TSE Prevent Policy
- TSE Freedom of Speech Code of Practice
- TSE Online Safety Policy
- TSE Student Code of Conduct

8.2 Legislation and guidance:

- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (HM Government, 2023)
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023