

University of Cambridge

Guidance for booking University meetings and events

This guidance is subsidiary to, and should be read alongside, the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, which is available at

<https://www.governanceandcompliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/governance-and-strategy/university-code-practice-freedom-speech>

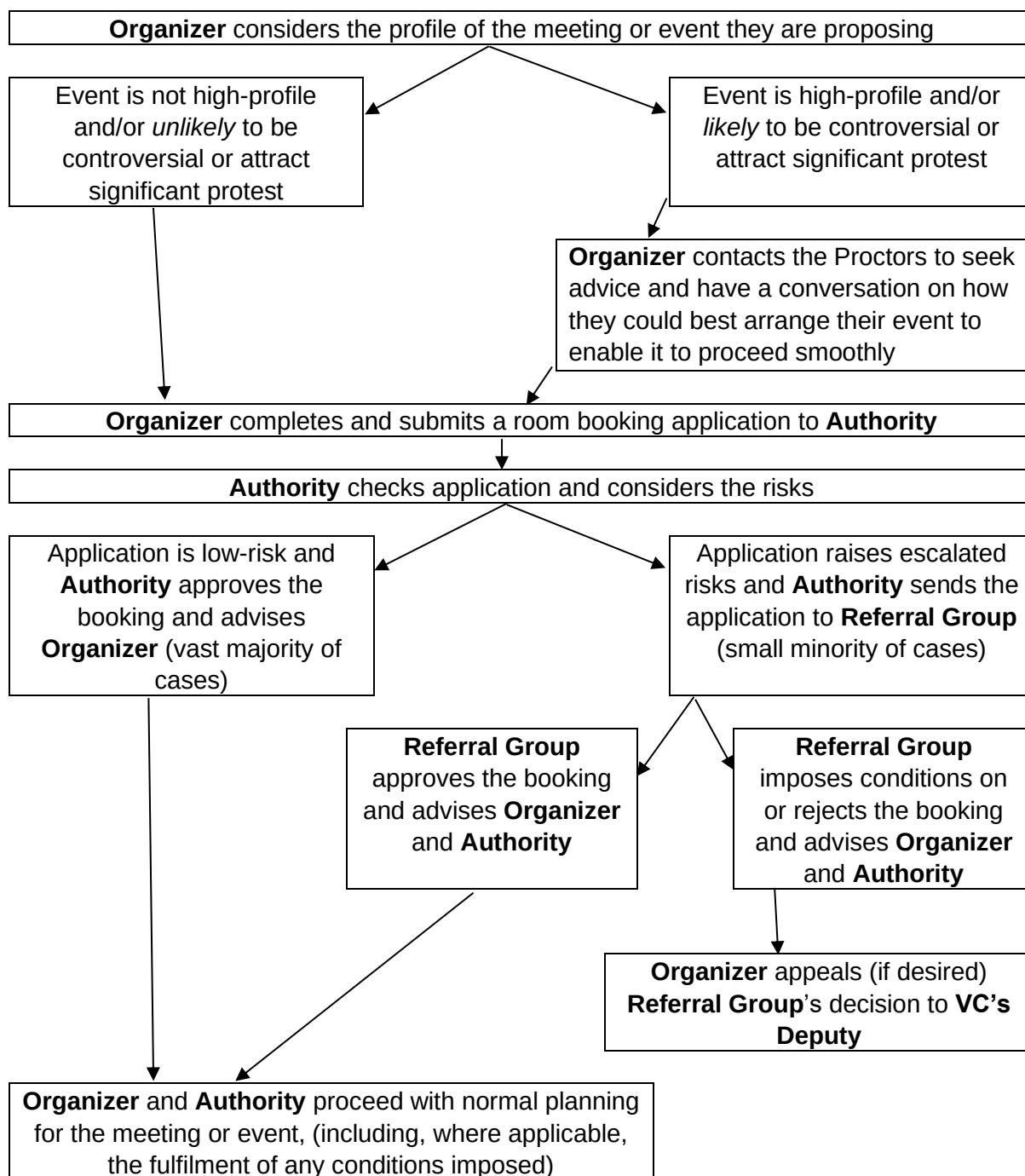
Scope

- This guidance applies to University meetings and events held on University premises. Meetings and events held on College premises are not in scope and instead will be subject to the relevant College's policies and procedures.
- The guidance sets out the procedures to be followed by meeting/event organizers and those authorities responsible for approving room booking and other meeting/event applications. It also outlines how organizers of high-profile and/or potentially controversial events (i.e. those which might attract significant protest) can seek advice in advance of submitting a room booking application, to enable the event to proceed smoothly.
- Meetings and events which are routine University business, including those related to curricular matters, are not normally subject to the process below.
- Meetings and events which are purely commercial in nature (e.g. the hire of University premises by a third party for its own purposes that is unconnected to University activity) are not subject to the process below. Commercial booking procedures and contracts may be put in place by the venue in question.
- The procedures outlined in this document refer to the booking of physical, in-person meetings and events 'on University premises'. However, the same risk assessment considerations and escalation procedures should be applied when authorities are approving the holding of online or hybrid University meetings and events, especially those involving external speakers.
- The procedures outlined in this document formally do not apply to University meetings or events that are not held on University premises, though the same principles of risk-assessed decision-making should be applied wherever possible. It should be noted that University disciplinary regulations apply when not on University premises.

This guidance is overseen by the Committee on Prevent and Freedom of Speech and was last updated in March 2025.

Summary of the process

Organizer =	the meeting or event organizer submitting the room booking application
Authority =	the authority (whether central or in a Faculty or Department) responsible for approving the room booking application
Referral Group =	the Referral Group, whose role and membership are outlined in the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech
VC's Deputy =	the individual appointed by the Vice-Chancellor to consider appeals by an Organizer against a decision of the Referral Group



Guidance for meeting or event organizers

Meeting and event organizers should ensure that they follow the below guidance to give their meeting or event the best chance of proceeding smoothly. This includes adhering to the timings stated below, and in the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, so that adequate notice is given to the appropriate University authorities to enable them to consider and facilitate bookings and to make any necessary arrangements for their part.

Step 1. Consider the profile of the meeting or event you are proposing, and consult the Proctors if necessary

Meeting or event organizers should start by considering the profile of the meeting or event they are proposing. If it is high-profile and/or likely to be controversial or attract significant protest they should seek advice at an early stage by consulting the Proctors (contact@proctors.cam.ac.uk). This will allow a conversation about various practical steps (e.g. venue, timing, ticketing, chairing, communications, security) that should enable the meeting or event to proceed smoothly while allowing others their right to peaceful protest. Amongst other things, meeting and event organizers should note that not all University buildings or rooms are suitable for high-profile events where significant protests might need to be managed, and a preliminary conversation about venue, timing and other practicalities offers the best opportunity for the event to proceed smoothly. The conversation will also allow organizers to understand the various roles and responsibilities of those involved in stewarding events (e.g. the Proctors themselves, the Constables, and University Security).

Meeting or event organizers that take advice in this way will be guided to proceed through the normal booking processes below but, insofar as necessary/possible, those processes will be facilitated by relevant University staff.

Step 2. Complete and submit a room booking application

Requests to hold a meeting or event on University premises should be made by the organizers using the room booking application procedure applicable to the venue in question, such as the sample Room Booking Application Form at Appendix A. (The questions on this sample form are integrated as appropriate into the University's Booker system.) Event organizers should ensure that the information provided about their booking is complete and accurate.

For a request to hold a meeting or event within a Faculty or Department, the booking application should be submitted to the Faculty or Department in question using whatever procedure they have in place (e.g. via the Booker system or using a locally managed offline form). For a request to hold a meeting or event in centrally managed accommodation, the booking application should be submitted via the Booker system or to studentregistryroombookings@admin.cam.ac.uk (in term) or to facilities.management@admin.cam.ac.uk (out of term).

It is important to submit the booking application as far in advance of the meeting or event as possible, in order to allow time for it to be properly considered. There should be no publicity for a meeting or event unless and until the booking is approved. The expectation is that a booking application should be received at least fourteen working days in advance of the proposed meeting or event.

Step 3. Abide by booking conditions

Once a booking is approved, the meeting or event organizers must abide by the general expectations set out in the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech together with any additional conditions imposed by the authorising authority (whether central or in a Faculty or Department).

Those conditions may mean that event organizers incur some additional costs (e.g. to run ticketing systems) but, other than in exceptional circumstances, the costs of any security required at events will be met by the University.

On the rare occasions that the authorising authority escalates the booking for consideration by the Referral Group, the meeting or event organizers must abide by any conditions imposed by that Group. If the meeting or event organizers are unhappy with any conditions imposed by the Referral Group (or its refusal of permission), they have the right of appeal to the Vice-Chancellor's deputy appointed for this purpose.

Guidance for those authorities responsible for approving room booking applications

Step 1. Approve straightforward bookings as normal business

As set out in the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, it is expected that the **vast majority** of requests to hold a meeting or event will be straightforwardly considered and approved as part of normal business. In these cases, this should simply be recorded as part of the relevant room booking application procedure. The person approving the booking should check that the meeting or event has at least one organizer who is a member, student, or employee of the University.

Step 2. Consider the risks for bookings that raise concerns

If the person who is authorised to approve a booking has a concern about a proposed meeting or event (including concerns about any external speaker), they should consider the likelihood and severity of the risks. They could do this by, for example, basic open source internet research to ascertain the likelihood of controversy surrounding the topic and/or the speaker(s). They can also consult the University's Office of External Affairs and Communications and/or the Proctors, either of which may be able to advise. If the risks are minimal, they should consider whether the risks can be mitigated through their normal room booking application procedure. The types of risks are listed in paragraph 6.2 of the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech. A consideration of these sorts of risks will be necessary only in a **small minority** of cases.

Step 3. If the risks are not minimal, make contact with the Referral Group

If the consideration of the risks suggests that they are not minimal and/or that they cannot be mitigated through the normal room booking application procedure, the person who is authorised to approve a booking should make contact with the University's Referral Group at referralconfidential@admin.cam.ac.uk. Contact **should be made at least seven working days in advance** of the proposed meeting or event.

The Referral Group will consider the request to hold a meeting or event using the criteria set out in the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech. The Referral Group will

advise the meeting or event organizer directly of its decision, copied to the person authorised to approve the booking.

Step 4. Retain paperwork

Those authorised to approve bookings should retain room booking applications, any considerations by them of the risks, and associated paperwork.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

SAMPLE ROOM BOOKING APPLICATION FORM

To be completed by individuals, societies or organizations wanting to book a room/facility on University premises.
The form must be signed to confirm understanding and acceptance of the terms and conditions overleaf.

Name of event						
Date of event	Is this an external event? YES / NO	Is there an external speaker? YES / NO	Start time of event	Finish time of event	Preferred location	Is this a repeat booking? YES / NO
Name and contact details for person requesting the booking (i.e. the meeting or event organizer, including the society, organization or group they represent)						
Event type (e.g. lecture, conference, social gathering, colloquium)			Approximate number of people attending			
Is the event open to members of the public (open invitation)?		YES / NO		Will the event be ticketed/pre-booked	YES / NO	
How is the event being advertised (word of mouth, social media, flyers, website etc.)?				Will the media be present?	YES / NO	
Is the event likely to be controversial or attract significant protest? If so, describe why.						
Have the Proctors been contacted in connection with this event? If yes, what was their assessment of the risks involved?						
Name(s) of the main speaker(s) (including the society, organization or group they represent)						

I accept the conditions below. I acknowledge the right of the University to terminate the booking without notice if any of the conditions below are not adequately complied with or if further information comes to light that gives rise to a reasonable belief that the meeting or event should not take place as set out in the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech:

1. to read and adhere to the Guidance for booking meetings and events (available online at <https://www.em.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us-what-we-do/estate-operations/facilities-services/room-bookings>), including the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech referred to therein;
2. to read and adhere to any applicable Proctorial notices (for example, those relating to meetings and public gatherings, public performances, discipline, and clubs and societies; see <https://www.proctors.cam.ac.uk/notices>);
3. to ensure that the fire regulations for the particular room or building are observed and that there is no smoking (at the time of the meeting or event specific instructions on local fire emergency arrangements will be issued by the Facilities team);
4. to ensure that television cameras are not admitted, cinematography films shown, music performed or played, or refreshments consumed, unless the room or building has been hired for that purpose or is otherwise agreed;
5. to ensure access to the room or building at all times for the Facilities team, Fire Officers or any Officer of the University;
6. to ensure that a fee for entrance is not charged at the door of the room or building (tickets may be sold beforehand);
7. to ensure that good order is maintained in the room or building and that no damage is caused to its structure or contents, and to inform the Facilities team or other relevant Officer of the University immediately if disorder or damage occurs;
8. to leave the room or building in a clean, orderly condition with all property of the organizers removed and the room or building vacated;
9. to meet, if applicable and where permitted under the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, the costs of overtime incurred by custodial/technical/security or other University or contracted staff in support of this meeting or event;
10. to abide by any additional conditions imposed by the authority responsible for approving the booking and/or the Referral Group.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

To be completed by the authority responsible for considering and approving the booking	
Is wider research and consideration of risks required? (It is anticipated that this will be necessary only in a small minority of cases.)	YES / NO (If you have selected YES refer to the Guidance for booking meetings and events)
Name of decision-maker and date of decision	