

SOAS SU Room Booking and Externals Policy

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Background

As set out in the governing constitution of SOAS Students' Union, the objects of the Union are the advancement of education of Students for the public benefit by:

- promoting the interests and welfare of Students during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising Students;
- being the recognised representative channel between Students and SOAS and any other external bodies; and
- providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of Students

All Students' Unions and universities are required by law to comply with a range of measures to ensure there is Freedom of Expression within the Higher Education system. There are several pieces of legislation that form the legal framework to ensure free speech is protected.

Specifically, universities have an explicit duty in law to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students, employees and

visiting speakers. This duty is addressed at SOAS University in the institution’s [Policy on Freedom of Speech and the Conduct of Events](#)¹, and the [Code of Practice for the Booking and Conduct of Events](#)², both available on the institution website’s governance section.

This policy should be read in conjunction with those SOAS University policies as these cover all members, students, and employees of SOAS, including bookings and events organised through the SU.

This policy sets out the processes by which SOAS SU will manage students’ booking requests, and requests to invite external individuals and organisations to participate in events.

Who this policy is for:

The policy applies to all SU clubs, teams and societies (collectively referred to as ‘Societies’); Programme, Department and College Reps (collectively referred to as ‘Reps’); and individual student SU members who wish to book a space through the union, including where a planned event involves any external speakers or guests.

Booking requests, process and timeline

University spaces can be booked by the SU on behalf of Societies and Reps subject to the school’s Code of Practice for the Booking and Conduct of Events. Rooms must be booked using the SU’s room booking system. A risk assessment and full information about the event must also be submitted and approved before any request is sent to the SOAS Conference Office. An event information form will be created by the SU for this purpose.

SU spaces can be booked by Societies, Reps and individual students. Bookings of SU rooms will be considered according to the design and purpose of the space. Room availability may reduce outside of term time.

All bookings require a named Principle Organiser (PO) who will be the key contact on behalf of the society or group and lead on the event and any issues arising from it. For Societies the PO will be a committee member.

The Principle Organiser must always seek approval if after a booking is made they wish to add or change an external speaker, or if they wish to open the event to external guests. They are responsible for informing the SU as soon as practicable and should always aim to allow at least 5 working days for approval.

The timeline for different types of events and the spaces available is set out as follows:

Which space	Who can book	Numbers	Nature of event	Advance notice
University rooms	Societies Reps	30 plus	with OR without externals; and ALL special activities (e.g martial arts, dance etc)	15 working days
University rooms	Societies Reps	Under 30	with externals; and ALL special activities (e.g martial arts, dance etc)	15 working days
University rooms	Societies Reps	under 30	internal only	10 working days

SU rooms	Societies	Any	with externals	10 working days
SU rooms	Societies Reps Any SOAS student	Any	internal only	Bookable on the day, or up to 48 hours in advance if space is available.
UoL space	Societies	Any		1 month

Process for Societies

Society booking requests can be made for SU space (and resources) or university spaces. In both cases the request will begin with a request submitted on the SU room booking site, confirmation that an appropriate risk assessment, is in place and completion a more detailed event information form if any externals are to attend.

Requests will be considered based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Application
Is the society properly registered?	For the initial couple of activities to help a society gain members they will only need to have their committee in place (three enrolled SOAS students); for further requests the society will need to have met the membership criteria for recognition.
Is there a risk assessment in place?	For recurring meetings or core activity a Society Risk Assessment can cover them all. One-off activities will require individual Society Event Risk Assessment.
Are there external speakers and/or guests?	For either external speakers or guests, details must be given on the 'Your Event Information' form before a booking can be approved or confirmed.

Having considered these criteria the booking will either be approved, rejected or further information sought.

STEP ONE

There are two forms to complete.

- a) The room booking request on the SU room booking system (soas.roombookingsystem.co.uk). Here you confirm which Risk Assessment (RA) applies, and whether externals are to attend.
- b) The '**Your Event Information**' form. Here you upload your RA if required; and give the details of external attendees. RA's must follow the template and guidance on the SU website.

STEP TWO

Your request will be reviewed using the criteria above. If it is categorised as high risk the Principle Organiser will be contacted to discuss steps to mitigate the risk before it can be approved. There may have to be a postponement of the event.

STEP THREE

For SU spaces, once approved, the request for an SU space will be confirmed and the society will get an email.

For university spaces a request will be made to SOAS Conference Office who will carry out their own review (including of the risk assessment) and send confirmation to both the SU staff who made the booking and to the Principle Organiser.

Once approved you can advertise your event, set up ticketing and request comms through SU channels.

Societies can set up tickets through the SU website. The full options available and guidance on how to do this is available in the Societies Committee Hub.

Process for Reps

Reps can book University space or SU space, for Rep-related business. For example, to meet students in preparation for a student-staff forum. These will be treated as 'academic or administrative operational meetings' for the purpose of the school's policy [s6 Policy on Freedom of Speech and the Conduct of Events].

Reps should contact reps@soas.ac.uk allowing at least 7 working days, stating all the details including time, date, and numbers expected.

SU staff will support Reps to ensure a valid risk assessment is in place.

Process for individual student's

SU spaces, if available, can be booked at the SU reception up to 48 hours in advance by individual students provided this is solely internal (no external participants) and is for activity already covered by the standard room risk assessment. Receptionists will go through any conditions with the student booker.

University space can be requested through the SU by Societies and Reps only.

External Speakers and Guests Approval

External speaker approval

Approval from the SU of an External Speaker must be confirmed before the individual or organisation is sent any invitation. Approval will be notified either through an email from SU staff to the PO; or can be assumed once the school confirms the booking of University space.

A detailed event information form must be completed in full and submitted with sufficient information to understand who the external guest is / are. For events in university spaces this must happen at least 15 working days in advance of the date of the event to allow time to meet the institution's timeframe.

The event information form will ask a series of questions, including:

- Full details of the event, title, date, time and which society is making the request.
- Details of the external attendees and their role in the event.

- For external individuals and organisations with a role in leading an event the form will ask for sufficient detail, including their name, and a description or profile preferably online to allow SU staff to establish who they are and the appropriate level of concern if any.

The approval process for bookings and external speakers / guest requests

SU staff will initially review all requests and categorise for a *simple* or *detailed* check for the purpose of approval. The categories are as follows:

Simple check: external guests are students from other UoL universities.

Detailed check: external guests are general public; external speakers; those playing an organising role in the activity, individually or on behalf of an external organisation.

A detailed check may invoke a conversation with school and security and may require mitigations or clauses to be put in place, and potential postponement of the event.

Special and unusual requests

It is advisable that events involving unusual or special arrangements should be planned as far in advance as possible. Examples may include events requiring culturally specific catering, rooms to be set up different to their normal use, out-of-hours events requiring security or porters, use of Audio-Visual support or other technical equipment not normally available in the room, and other situations not listed.

Catering

All catering must be in line with the SOAS SU Food Safety Policy and Food Safety Guidance for Societies and Sports Teams.

External catering may not be used in University spaces. Internal catering can be very expensive and should be discussed before including. Special events requiring food that can't be provided internally (e.g specific cultural food) can potentially be negotiated but would need to be discussed, planned and assessed with the SU well in advance.

SU Resources

The SU has resources to help societies run their events.

Some of can be booked through the room booking system, such as the card readers for fundraising activity, and hot water urns. New resources may be added to the booking system over time.

Locations, availability and specific conditions

The SU spaces

Space	Who can book; what times	How to book	Conditions
JCR	Societies and Reps for events after 5:30pm only	The SU Room Booking site	No exclusivity, while shop is open. Food is allowed.

			Room includes projector.
Ambedkar Studio (music/performance studio)	Music / performance societies take priority after 4pm; Societies, Reps and students' daytime 10-4pm	The SU Room Booking site	Food is allowed provided it is cleared away after.
Ramla Ali Studio (physical activity studio)	Priority martial arts / dance etc	The SU Room Booking site	No food or drinks (water is allowed). No furniture that can damage the floor.
Hussain Chaudhry Room (4)	SU staff and students: Thur and Fri after 4:30pm only	The SU Room Booking site . Ask at reception	3 days p/week blocked to the Hussain Foundation.
Office 1	Students, during open hours	Ask at reception	Fits up to 4 people
The Stage	Central SU events only	Request to NF28	Part of the bar area
SU Resources			
Hot water urns		The SU Room Booking site	
Zettle card readers		The SU Room Booking site	

The university spaces

Spaces and rooms	How to book
Lecture halls	<p>The SU Room Booking site.</p> <p>Note: SU staff will make the booking through the booking system once the RA and external speaker forms are completed.</p> <p>Special requests after 5pm may incur additional labour costs, e.g. moving lecture theatre seating back. Ask for advice. Confirmation will be sent from the SOAS conference office</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DLT (<i>LLT</i>) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWLT 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SALT 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BGLT 	
Bigger hybrid classrooms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brunei: B102; BG02 etc 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RG01, RB01, RB02 etc 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G3 	
Mid-sized classrooms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G51 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G51a 	
Small classrooms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (many) 	
Special Spaces	<p>The SU Room Booking site, followed by SU making SOAS conference office request.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WW steps 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cloisters 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precinct (outside) 	The SU Room Booking site, followed by SU making an External – UofL request
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grass square (outside) 	The SU Room Booking site, followed by SU making an External – UofL request
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multifaith room 	The SU Room Booking site, followed by SU making a request to Chaplaincy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wolfson gallery 	Free for students and staff. Submit proposal using form on school’s website
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brunei Gallery 	Submit proposal; information on website; long lead-in time and costs incurred. See the school website.

Examples for timing your requests and getting approval

Activity	Documents	Location	Timescale
Society activity, no externals	RA is in place	SU rooms	SU approval within 5 working days.
		Uni rooms	University rooms require a <u>further</u> 10 working days.
Rep meeting with students, internal	Activity is within basic RA	SU rooms	SU approval within 5 working days (may be quicker).
		Uni rooms	University rooms require <u>further</u> 5 working days.
Society activity, external attendees	Detailed event information submitted through SU form (covers externals and RA).	SU rooms and Uni rooms	Staff assessed for simple check = approval within 5 working days, plus 10 working days for school
			Staff assessed for detailed check = approval within 7 working days, plus 10 working days for school.
			Detailed check raises potential concerns = discuss and agree any further measures in place before approval; may need postponement.
Society activity, late request	Standard RA in place, no externals	SU rooms only	Bookable through reception. Provide details of Principle Organiser and confirm RA.
Individual student(s) for a study group, quiet room, online meeting.	Within SU standard RA; no externals	SU rooms only	Bookable through reception providing student id.

Definitions:

External speakers refers to individuals who present, coach or otherwise play a role in leading an activity, who are not current students or staff of SOAS university; and organisations that are not based in SOAS.

External attendees refers to people who are present, but not leading the activity or giving a speech or presentation, and who are not current SOAS students or staff. For example, audience members.

SU space refers to the JCR, Ambedkar Studio, Ramla Ali Studio, bar and offices.

Societies and Clubs refer to all registered societies of the SU; the registration process for clubs and societies is set out in the SU website.

Principle Organiser is the person responsible for making the booking on behalf of a society or individually.

RA means a risk assessment, guidance and a template can be found on the SU website.

'Special Spaces' include the Paul Webley Wing Cloisters, corridors and other spaces that are not ordinary rooms.