Procedures for designating and supporting Potentially Sensitive Events (PSEs)

Purpose

1. To enable Visiting Speaker and other formal discussion events to go ahead within the law, thereby upholding academic freedom and freedom of speech and the legal and regulatory duties of the University and the Students' Union in this respect.
2. To enable respectful and measured challenge of contributors' views, thereby upholding academic freedom and freedom of speech and the legal and regulatory duties of the University and the Students' Union in this respect.
3. To protect the safety and wellbeing of the University community as a whole (staff, students and visitors) and meet the University's legal and regulatory duties in respect of health, safety and equality.
4. To protect the interests of the University's academic endeavour, including the University's reputation.

Definitions and scope

5. These procedures apply to:

    a. Events involving Visiting Speakers as defined in the Policy on academic freedom and freedom of speech; **and**
    b. Any other formal discussion events (e.g. open meetings, internal speaker events such as research seminars);

    which are organised or overseen by:

    c. Students and student-led groups, including both York Students' Union-affiliated and non-Students' Union-affiliated student groups; **and/or**
    d. Members of staff.

    This includes any such events badged in the University's and/or the Students' Union's name which are held off-campus, as well as any which are organised by individuals from groups (c) and (d) above and hosted on the University's physical estate, or using the University's digital facilities.

6. Parameters for defining a Potentially Sensitive Event (PSE) are set out under **Appendix 1**. Assessments are made on the basis of risk.
7. The following are out of scope:

    a. Sessions held as a formal part of a programme of study.
    b. Discussions undertaken as part of regular committee business at University /Faculty/ Department/ School level.
    c. Protests organised by staff and/or students.
    d. Fundraising events.
    e. Promotional stalls (e.g. Careers Fair, student-run information stalls in Colleges).

8. Third party events fall outside the scope of this process, but where these raise issues similar to PSEs, any action taken by the University will be in accordance with the spirit of this procedure, taking into account the relevant rights set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.

Core principles

9. **All** student-led events as defined under paragraph 5 above must have a Sponsor with overall responsibility and accountability for the event, as follows:

Category	Organiser	Sponsor
Student-led	York Students' Union affiliated student society	York Students' Union
	Department/School affiliated student society	Head of Academic Department/ School
	College-based events	College Manager and York Students' Union
	Independent (i.e. non-affiliated) student organisers	Head of Academic Department/ School for lead student organiser

10. Any staff-led event as defined above **which is potentially a PSE** must have a Sponsor with overall responsibility and accountability for the event, as follows:

Staff-led	Department/School/Faculty event	Head of Academic Department / School / Faculty Dean
	Professional Services event	Professional Service Director
	College-based event	College Manager
	Independent or University-level event	Senior member of the University, identified by the GAO

11. For the purposes of these procedures, events organised jointly by staff and students will be treated as staff-led events, with the relevant member/s of staff designated as the organiser/s.

12. All Sponsors may delegate the activity to an appropriate designate, avoiding any conflicts of interest, although the Sponsor will remain responsible and accountable.

13. These procedures should be initiated **at least three weeks** before a planned event, and expedited as far as possible by all parties, to enable the event to go ahead at the proposed time. Submission of events without giving the required notice may mean that they cannot proceed on the originally planned timescale. Where in use, Event Management Forms (EMFs) will normally be approved no more than 10 working days from the date of submission.

14. Events should only be advertised (and opened for booking or sales) once the appropriate due process as set out below has concluded.

15. Risk Assessments are confidential to the University (and the Students' Union where involved) and must not be shared with third parties without the consent of the University Secretary / the Students' Union CEO, or their nominee(s).

16. If an event referred for consideration under this Procedure includes a Visiting Speaker/s, the organisers must share a copy of the University's Dignity at Work and Study Policy with the Speaker(s),

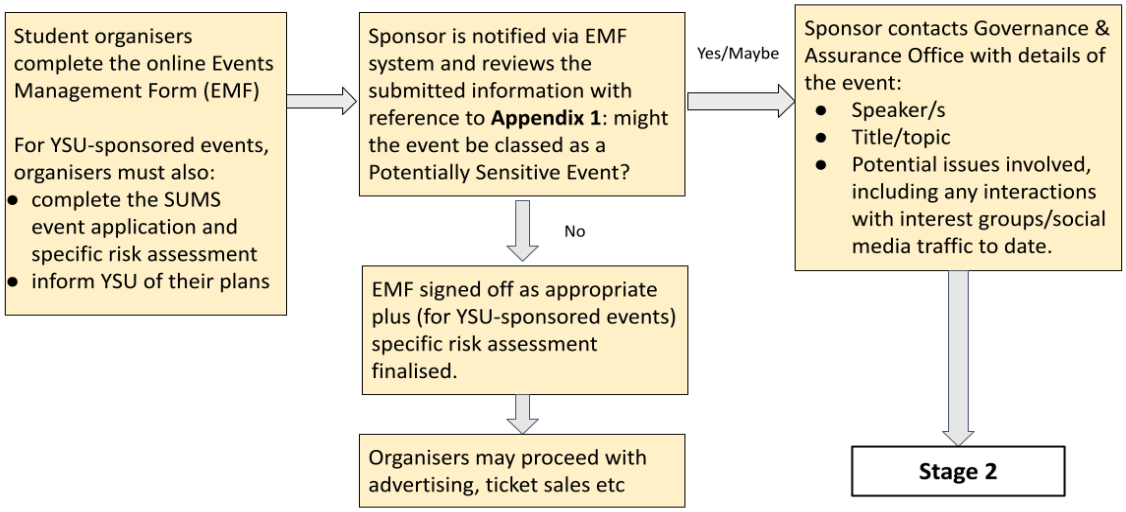
and make it clear that events must be conducted within the framework set out in the Policy and will be chaired accordingly.

17. Neither the University nor the Students' Union will request sight of transcripts/detailed content of speeches in advance of an event.

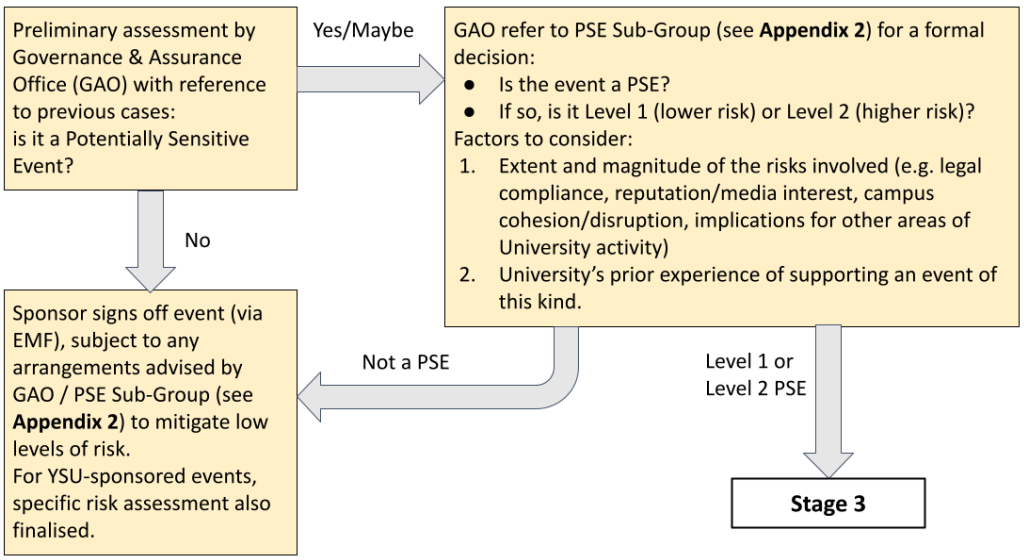
18. Security costs for events held under these procedures will not be passed on to the event organiser/s, except under exceptional circumstances. For University events, the University Secretary acting reasonably shall be responsible for determining whether circumstances are exceptional. For York Students' Union events, its Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for determining whether circumstances are exceptional.

Events organised by students

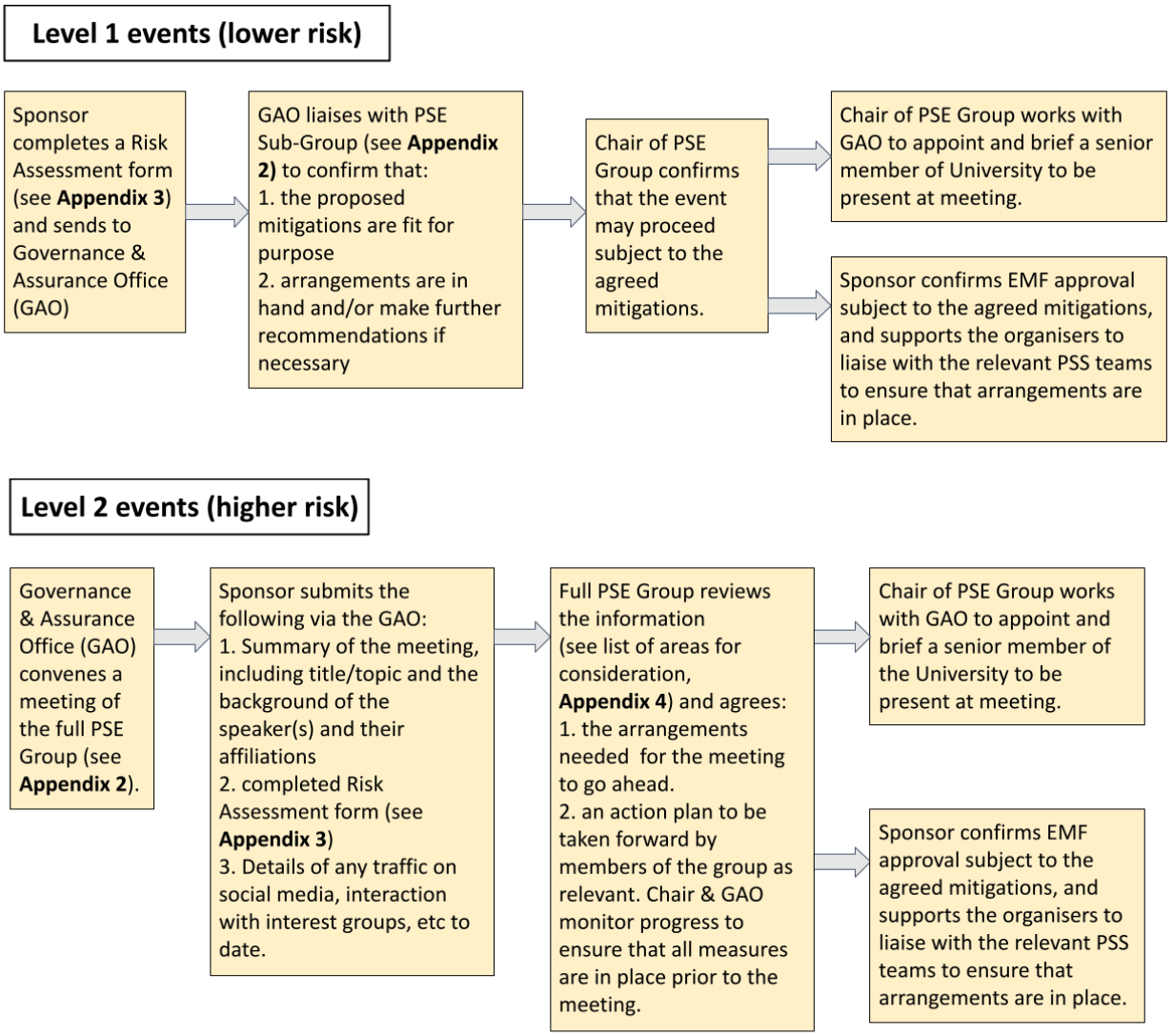
Stage 1: Event Management Form and initial referral



Stage 2: Assessment and designation



Stage 3: Risk assessment and mitigations



Note: If the Sponsor feels the levels of risk increase in the lead up to the event, they should refer the matter back via the GAO for further consideration. Likewise the GAO and/or the Chair of the PSE Group may decide at any point in this procedure to review an event's designation and/or the mitigations put in place.

Events organised by staff

19. The individual member of UoY staff leading on organising the event must consider whether it is potentially a PSE, with reference to the guidance under **Appendix 1**. If there is a risk that it might be a PSE, they must:

    a. Identify and notify the event Sponsor (see paragraph 10 above)[1]; and
    b. Provided the Sponsor agrees that there is a risk, then together refer the matter to the Governance and Assurance Office, providing an appropriate level of detail about the event and the potential issues involved.

20. Stages 2-3 above will then be followed, with the following variations:

    a. Communication at all stages will be with the organisers and the Sponsor jointly.
    b. For Level 1 and 2 events, the organiser will assist the Sponsor in preparing the Risk Assessment and any further advance information for the PSE Group.

[1] In the case of an event organised independently or at University level, the organiser/s should contact governance@york.ac.uk and GAO will identify an appropriate senior member of the University to act as Sponsor.

c. Not all events organised/overseen by staff will be processed through the EMF and subject to formal approval via this system. Practical arrangements for the event should be pursued via the organisers' usual system (EMF, Planon etc).

Appendix 1

Towards identifying a Potentially Sensitive Event: questions to consider

1. Is the topic of the event potentially controversial and/or could it prove challenging / a cause for concern to particular communities on campus or in the wider community? (e.g. EDI protected characteristics, staff/students of a particular nationality).
2. Is it possible that the event could have implications for other areas of activity at the University? (e.g. research/teaching delivery which depends on access to countries with a controversial human rights record).

If the event involves a Visiting Speaker/Speakers:

3. Is/are the Speaker/s associated with a potentially controversial group/groups and/or promotion of potentially controversial ideas? This includes groups/ideas which you might yourself support or accept, but which others may find objectionable.
4. Is it possible that the Visiting Speaker/s and their publicly stated views - whether or not the topic of the proposed talk - could prove challenging and/or a cause for concern to particular communities on campus or in the wider community?

If you have answered yes to any of the above questions, please contact the Governance & Assurance Office for further advice and support.