

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH WALES GUIDANCE NOTE

POLICY ON VISITS AND MEDIA INVOLVING POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

1. Incoming visits by external organisations and individuals are governed by the University's policies on Visits and Events [[Visits and Events Policy 2021.pdf](#)] and on media relations [[USW Media Protocol, April 2024.pdf](#)]. This supplements those policies.
2. The University is a non-political organisation, without party affiliation, which willingly interacts with elected representatives whatever their party. As a charity it is required to avoid political campaigning. As an academic institution it is founded on the principle of free speech and debate. The purpose of this guidance is to enable such debate without placing the University in a position where it is, or is perceived to be, providing support or advantage to one candidate or party over another.
3. The University's normal practice is that it does not deal formally on matters of University business, local issues affecting its campuses, or public policy, with individual candidates for office until such time as they are elected.
4. The University's normal practice is to welcome visits from elected representatives, irrespective of party, who have a constituency interest in the University or a role within government, opposition, or their elected body that is relevant to the University's mission and research. Where doubt exists as to whether such a visit is appropriate, a judgement is made by the Vice Chancellor on the advice of the public affairs team.
5. The University provides policy and research knowledge within established academic practice on a non-partisan basis to all political parties.

Incoming visits

6. All incoming visits to the University are, whether in the pre-election season or not, governed by the University's events policy.
7. Colleagues should be aware that during a General Election, sitting Members of Parliament cease to be MPs at the point of dissolution, at which they too become candidates. The same applies to Members of the Senedd in a Senedd election, and Councillors in a local government election.
8. During an election campaign, it is expected that candidates and party organisations will seek visits and campaigning opportunities at major employers/organisations, including USW campuses.

9. The guiding principle in responding to requests to visit is that the University should not appear directly or by a reasonable person's implication to be exerting influence for or supporting one candidate or Party.
10. Candidates and campaigners for political parties may access areas of the University normally open to the public within the University's normal policies, providing that they do not engage in political campaigning or display political party branding such as rosettes, badges, and stickers.
11. Candidates and party campaigners may be permitted to come onto campus and display political branding such as badges, stickers, and rosettes if they are attending an event which is:
 - i. A hustings or similar event, organised by the University's academic staff or its Student Union, and;
 - ii. Open to and actively made available to candidates of all parties standing in the constituency in the same election.
12. Candidates and members of political parties are not permitted to undertake media events, film, or other public campaigning activity on University premises. The University's policy, which remains in effect, that all such requests must be referred to the Communications, Public Affairs and Policy team, who will judge their appropriateness against this guidance and manage the visit as required. Only the member of the team on duty can give permission for a camera crew or journalist to access University premises. They can be contacted either by emailing press@southwales.ac.uk or by phone on 07736 660538.
13. Outside a pre-election period, candidates and members of political parties are permitted to book and hold meetings on campus, provided that:
 - a. Such meetings and events are clearly identified in social, digital, traditional media, or in party election literature as the University providing a venue for hire, rather than hosting or endorsing the event;
 - b. They are paid for and declared in election expense returns at normal commercial rates;
 - c. They are not open to non-Members of that candidate's party unless in the context of or journalists/exhibitors who apply and pay for entry to a party conference;
 - d. In the judgement of the public affairs team, they are not likely to be interpreted as implying University support for the organiser or their candidate.
14. During a pre-election period, candidates and members of political parties are permitted to book and hold meetings on campus, provided that:
 - a. Such meetings and events are private, and not publicised in social, digital, traditional media, or in party election literature;
 - b. They are paid for and declared in election expense returns at normal commercial rates;
 - c. They are not open to non-Members of that candidate's party;
 - d. In the judgement of the public affairs team, they are not likely to be interpreted as implying University support for the organiser or their candidate.

15. Candidates and activists for political parties are of course permitted to leaflet staff and students providing that they do so outside the University boundaries on the Public Highway.
16. During a designated pre-election period, visits by UK Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, Welsh Government Ministers, Members of the Senedd, and Councillors will continue as normal, subject to the rules governing the pre- election period (formerly known as “Purdah”)
17. In such circumstances, the party accompanying visits by Ministers, MPs, Welsh Government Ministers, MSs, and Councillors who are not standing for election cannot include candidates who are standing in that election.
18. Incoming visits and events for the purposes of increasing participation and voter registration will be permitted, providing that they do not imply support for one or more political parties or candidates.

Campaigning by USW colleagues

19. Colleagues are free to express political views in support of and against particular parties and to engage in political campaigning providing that:
 - a. Any social media posting makes it clear that such views are their own personal opinions and not the position of the University. Where a reasonable person might infer USW support, particularly for example from a colleague whose role or seniority is such that they speak for USW in public, colleagues are advised to use their best judgement in the context of the University’s social media policy and to err on the side of discretion in their public social media comments.
 - b. Such activity does not take place in work time or using University resources, including but not limited to computer equipment, social media feeds, or email addresses.
20. The University’s staff communications channels, including Connect, must not be used to disseminate such political views.

Further information

Colleagues with questions should seek guidance from the public affairs team, in the first instance from the Director of Communications, Public Affairs and Policy by emailing publicaffairs@southwales.ac.uk

Last Updated: April 2024
Next update due: April 2026

