



Protest and Demonstration Management Protocol

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Introduction

1. We are a university that values academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law. We see these as vital components of being an inclusive community. Promoting the lawful expression of diverse views on our campuses and through events that we hold, including the lawful expression of views that some may find objectionable or offensive, is an important part of our responsibility to be inclusive. It enables all members of the University to feel able to express their views and beliefs within the law and to be encouraged to be active members of our University community.
2. We celebrate the passion of our University members and recognise that there may be occasions when different beliefs expressed lawfully by some members of our community (or visitors to our campuses) conflict with those of others. Through our policies and procedures, we acknowledge that counter-speech and protest are also characteristics of a university committed to academic freedom, freedom of speech within the law, and inclusion. However, the right to protest should never prevent others from exercising their right to freedom of expression within the law.
3. The University has in place a set of policies and procedures designed to promote academic freedom, freedom of expression, and inclusion, and to create an environment in which knowledge can be advanced and debate and challenge can be widened, not restricted. This Protocol forms a part of these procedures and details how the University, in association with the Students' Union (SU), will manage protests and demonstrations on our campus grounds and support members of our community in this regard.

Protest / Demonstration Guidance

for Organisers

4. Protests and demonstrations are often organised in relation to current real-world situations, or contemporary events on campus. In this context, as a university committed to academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law, we want to have in place clear protocols to enable members of our community to organise demonstrations in a safe, appropriate, and timely manner. To support this objective, the University and the Students' Union have procedures in place to acknowledge plans for demonstrations and protests and to provide support to the organiser(s). It is imperative that organisers contact the SU and/or the University as soon as possible prior to an activity, and not less than 5 working days before the event is scheduled to take place (see 5 and 12 below).
5. Protests and Demonstrations can only be organised on University premises by current staff and/or current students. Any external person/body wishing to take part in such activities may only do so by invitation of a current student and/or staff member who will then be deemed to take on the responsibilities of 'the organiser', as defined in this protocol and the University's [Speaker Code of Practice](#).
6. In the first instance, **students** wishing to organise a protest or demonstration must make direct contact with the Students' Union either in person at the [SU reception](#), by phone (01206 863211) or via email (su@essex.ac.uk). Members of **staff** should contact the [EMS Helpdesk](#), by phone (01206 872959) or via email (ems-ops-comms@essex.ac.uk).
7. Following initial notification, protest organisers will be supported in the completion of a [Protest/Demonstration Notification Form](#). This should be submitted to ems-ops-comms@essex.ac.uk as soon as possible following initial notification. Ideally, related risk assessments (See 10 below) and other documentation (see 12 below) should be submitted at the same time as the notification form. However, completion of these additional documents should not delay the submission of the notification form. They can be provided subsequently, provided that this is at least three working days prior to the activity.
8. Any protest or demonstration may involve the expression of strongly held views in relation to issues on which there can be divergent and equally strongly held beliefs. As a consequence, the nature and/or content of a protest or demonstration may be construed as offensive or upsetting by some members of the University community.
9. All protest/demonstration organisers are required to recognise that freedom of speech, thought and expression come with responsibilities. When expressing ideas and points of view through protest and/or demonstration, those organising the event are requested to give consideration to the potential impact on individuals or groups within the University community who may be affected by

the subject matter, either directly or indirectly. The [University Equality, diversity and inclusion policy](#) outlines our values in this regard.

10. Organisers have a responsibility for the health, safety, and wellbeing of those who may attend, or who may be impacted by the activity that they are organising. To this end, organisers should complete a risk assessment in relation to the planned activity and submit this to ems-ops-comms@essex.ac.uk. Students organising a protest/demonstration can obtain support from the Students' Union team to assist them in preparing a suitable risk assessment. Staff should contact their departmental Health & Safety Liaison Officer and/or the People & Culture Section for advice and guidance.
11. As part of the planning for an activity, and/or through the risk assessment, students organising an activity must give consideration to the requirements of the University's [Speaker Code of Practice](#) and the [Code of Student Conduct](#). Consideration of the requirements of the [Code of Student Conduct](#) will help ensure that student organisers and those taking part in the activity are not at risk of being in breach of any aspects of the Code. In the context of a protest and/or demonstration, specific consideration should be given to student conduct regulations A1, A2, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, A10, A11, A13, C3, D1, D3 and D12.
12. As part of the planning activity, and/or through the risk assessment, staff members organising an activity should seek advice from People & Culture to ensure that the activity does not breach their terms and conditions of employment or any University policies.
13. It is important that organisers consider the legality of their own and any potential participants' actions in relation to the activity and this must be referenced within the risk assessment. This includes consideration to the wording of speeches, banners and any media released in relation to the protest. This includes flags, banners, posters, flyers, clothing, logos and electronic media such as social media posts. Organisers may provide copies of any planned speeches, banner wording or chants as part of the notification and risk assessment process in order that guidance can be provided in relation to potential legal considerations.
14. It should be noted that the University of Essex's campuses are private property, and no outside organisation or individual has a legal right to invite themselves onto our campuses without permission, or host events that have not been approved through our Speaker Code of Practice, this protocol or other relevant policies. Individual students and/or staff are responsible for any guests that they invite on to our campuses so careful consideration should be applied to advertising any protest and/or demonstration. If external organisations or individuals are invited and likely to speak at an event, organisers must ensure that they (and the speaker) comply with the [Speaker Code of Practice](#). **Please note that the process to approve an external speaker through this code of practice requires 15 days' notice so organisers will need to account for this in their planning of the activity.**
15. Dependent upon the outcomes of operational risk assessment(s), for each activity there may be specific locations where protests/demonstrations will not be permitted. The Protest/Demonstration

Notification Form also indicates certain locations on the Colchester and Southend campuses which are deemed to be particularly sensitive given their use as individual living and sleeping accommodation, such as Wivenhoe House Hotel and spaces in close proximity to student accommodation, where protests will not normally be permitted.

16. As part of the notification process, organisers should confirm that they will arrange for any materials used as part of the protest/demonstration to be removed once the protest/demonstration has been concluded.

University and Students' Union

Operational Procedures

Initial Notification

17. Upon initial notification made by activity organisers to the SU or the EMS Helpdesk, organisers will be provided with a contact to support them through this process and complete a Protest/Demonstration Notification form for submission as soon as possible. The form contains the Organisational Guidance detailed above and links to University and SU support teams. **The organiser's name, contact number and email address should be provided as the first point of contact in order that the relevant team can contact them.**
18. Upon receipt of an initial notification the below should be contacted immediately:
 - a. Chief Compliance Officer (Infrastructure and Environments)
 - b. Director of Facilities Services / Head of Security and Campus Safety
 - c. Director of Education, Activities and Welfare (Students' Union)

Information Gathering

19. Following initial notification of a student-led activity, the nominated SU team will contact the activity organiser and gather further information and inform the organiser of the support available and the process they should follow. If the organiser is not a student, the Operational Communications team will contact the organiser.
20. Within 24 working hours of notification the Protest and Demonstration Operational Group (PDOG) will meet to begin operational planning for the proposed activity. The PDOG will consist of the Chief Compliance Officer (Infrastructure and Environments), Director of Education, Activities and Welfare (Students' Union) and the Head of Security and Campus Safety, alongside other staff members from relevant teams as deemed appropriate to the particular proposed activity.

21. The relevant support contact (as defined in point 19 above) will then contact the organiser to gather further information for the group as required and support any further submission of documentation.

Activity Assessment

Scale and potential impact

22. Following receipt of sufficient information from the Organiser, PDOG will assess the Notification Form, activity plans, risk assessment(s) and associated documentation (such as content of chants, media, and speeches) to ensure that organisers have considered all of the risks associated with their event and have sufficient mitigations in place for the proposed activity.
23. PDOG will consider the information provided to determine if there is:
 - a. Potential for the University, the Students' Union, the organisers, or those taking part in the activity to be in breach of UK law.
 - b. Potential for significant reputational damage to the University and/or the Students' Union.
 - c. Potential impact on individuals or groups within the University community who may be affected by the subject matter, either directly or indirectly.

Where PDOG assessment identifies a possible issue in relation to any of the above which cannot be resolved with the Organisers, the activity notification will be escalated as per the Escalation and Additional Support section (page 9).

24. PDOG will assess the scale of the event to ascertain if sufficient resource is available to support and manage the planned activity alongside other day-to-day operational activities and any other pre-planned activities.
25. PDOG will also consider the potential impact on other University and Students' Union led activities that could be impacted, and work with organisers of the protest/demonstration and any impacted activities with the aim of identifying a suitable solution.
26. Should the assessment of points 22 through 25 indicate an issue requiring resolution, the Organiser will be notified and given the opportunity to amend the proposed activity, provide mitigations to address the issue, and/or delay the activity to allow for further consultation and/or professional guidance. PDOG will communicate the outcome of the assessment to the Organiser.

Risk Assessment

27. The SU holds a template protests/demonstrations risk assessment for organisers to utilise and update for their specific activity.

28. The University has a suite of template risk assessments for managing our activities. Where required, PDOG will utilise and update appropriate templates to support decision making in relation to each proposed activity.
29. The Security and Campus Safety team holds a risk assessment in relation to the University's response to, and management of, protests and demonstrations. This risk assessment is updated for each activity following acknowledgement of the notification to the organiser by the Chief Compliance Officer.

Operational Management of Protests and Demonstrations

30. PDOG will identify members of the University community who may be impacted by the proposed activity and assign appropriate University and/or SU teams to communicate with those groups and offer relevant and appropriate support in the context of the activity and the associated risk assessments. The Head of Security and Campus Safety will oversee all aspects of the operational management and control of the activity.
31. Should assessment indicate additional resource may be required to manage the activity safely, the Head of Security and Campus Services will secure sufficient resources to manage the activity in line with the Security and Campus Safety risk assessment and operational event plan.
32. Where a Police presence is identified to be required, this will be organised by the Head of Security and Campus Safety.
33. Organisers should ensure that all materials used as part of the protest/demonstration are removed following completion, in line with the arrangements confirmed within the Protest and Demonstration Notification Form.
34. Actions by University or Students' Union staff and/or contracted staff not covered by the operational event plan will only be taken following authorisation by the Head of Security and Campus Safety or the Director of Facilities Services.
35. The Security and Campus Safety team will be supported by the Infrastructure and Environments Compliance team and the Students' Union Societies team as appropriate during the activity.
36. The Security and Campus Safety team will support the Organiser(s) in ensuring that disbursement occurs safely immediately following completion of the protest/demonstration, in line with the arrangements confirmed within the Protest and Demonstration Notification Form.

Notification Acknowledgement

Organiser liaison and acknowledgement process

37. For student-led activities, the appointed SU team will be the primary point of contact for the organiser.
38. For staff-led activities, the Operational Communications team will be the primary point of contact.
39. The Operational Communications team will administer the acknowledgement process. All forms, risk assessments, plans and correspondence relating to the activity will be held and distributed to the relevant teams for assessment by the Operational Communications team.
40. The Operational Communications team will instigate and note agreed actions from the PDOG meetings in relation to each specific protest/demonstration notification. Where another party receives initial notification, that party should instigate the initial meeting immediately.
41. Should PDOG assessment of the proposed activity indicate that all risks are mitigated appropriately, and that both the University and Security and Campus Safety risk assessments indicate a satisfactory level of risk, the Notification will be acknowledged which will indicate that the activity has been authorised, with or without conditions.
42. The Chief Compliance Officer will confirm acknowledgment of the Notification and add any conditions via the Protest and Demonstration Notification Form. The Operational Communications team will then forward the acknowledgement directly to the Organiser or, in the case of student led activities, via the appointed SU team.
43. If, after following all of the processes and communication with the organiser(s) detailed in this document, the PDOG assessment indicates that the activity should not go ahead, or there is a reasonable level of doubt, the Organisers will be informed that an acknowledgement cannot be issued at this point and the Chief Compliance Officer will escalate the Notification as per the Escalation and Additional Support section (page 10).
44. The Chief Compliance Officer will clearly state the reasons why PDOG cannot provide an acknowledgment and indicate the further action that has been taken in regard to escalation.

Escalation and Additional Support

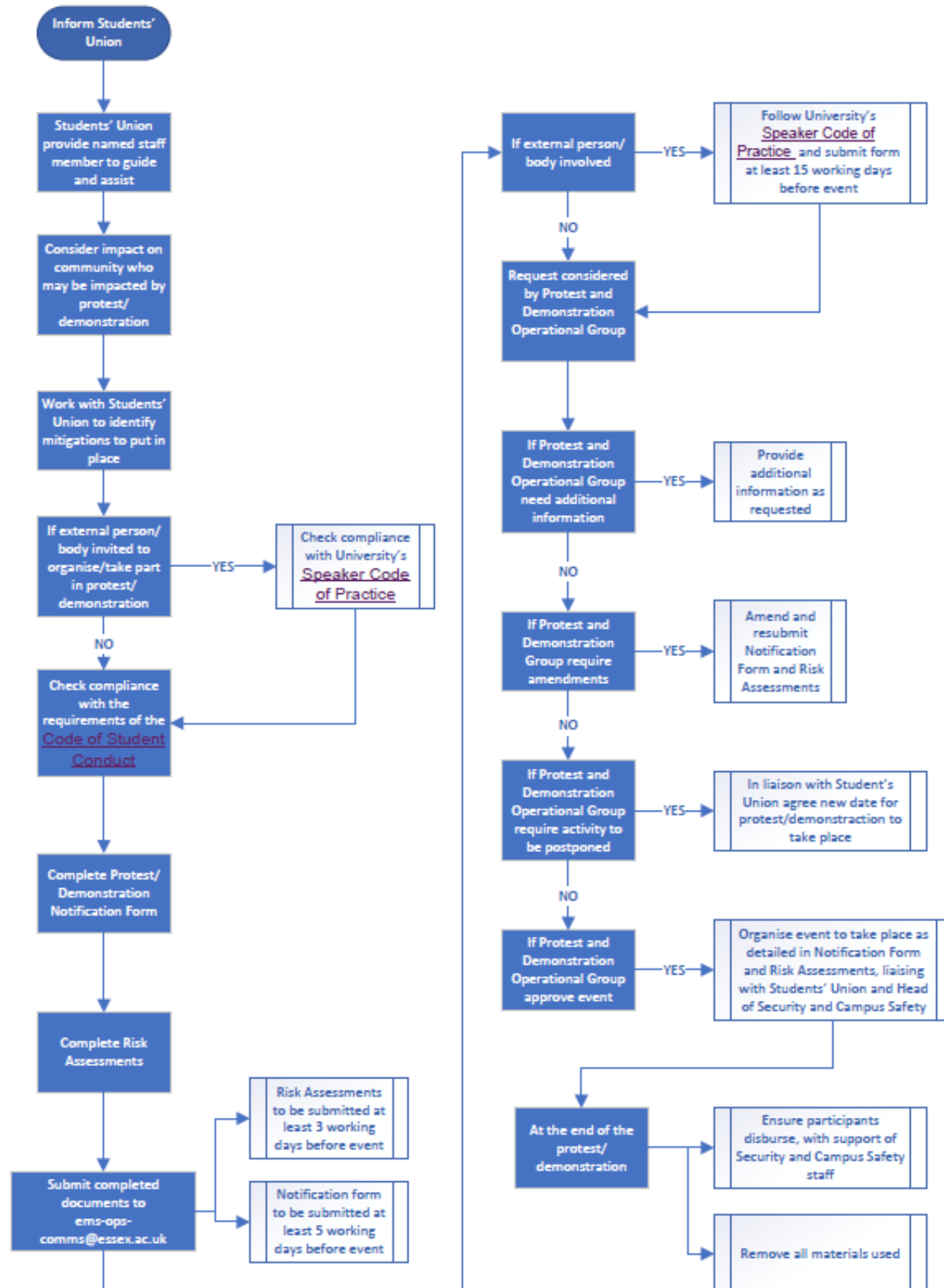
45. Should there be an indication that there is a potential for a breach of UK law, PDOG will liaise with the Deputy University Secretary for further guidance and, if required, seek professional legal advice.

46. Upon receipt of sufficient information on the proposed activity through the procedures detailed in this document, PDOG will notify the Chief Executive of the Students' Union, the Deputy University Secretary, the Deputy Registrar (Infrastructure and Environments), and the Registrar and Secretary.
47. Should PDOG conclude they cannot acknowledge the Notification of the activity, the Chief Compliance Officer will escalate the Notification to the Chief Executive of the Students' Union, the Deputy University Secretary, the Deputy Registrar (Infrastructure and Environments), and the Registrar and Secretary for further consideration and guidance. The Chief Compliance officer will provide a recommendation at this stage.

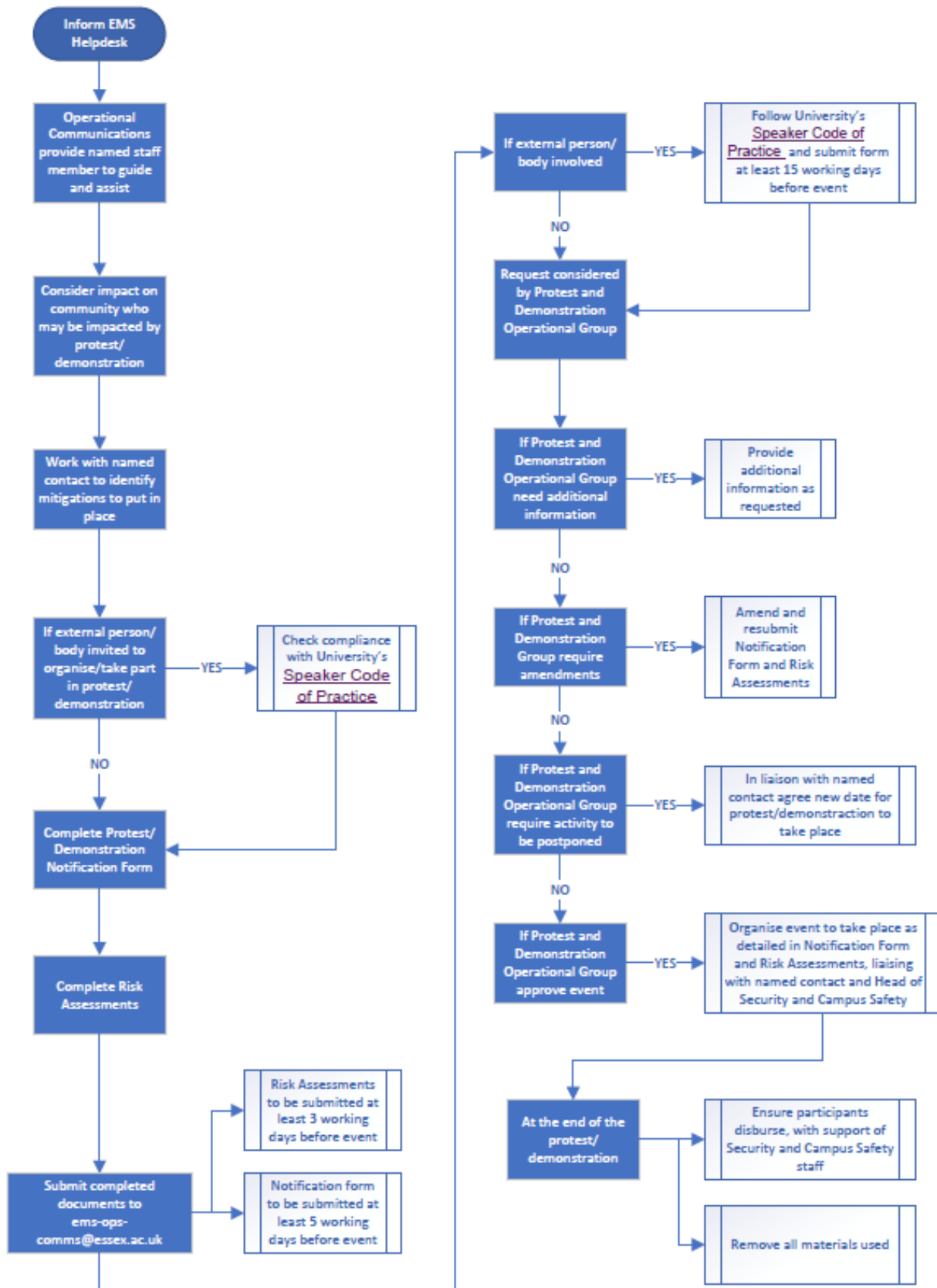
Wider Communication

48. The Head of Security and Campus Safety in conjunction with the Director of Education, Activities and Welfare (Students' Union) and/or the appointed SU team will liaise with any potentially impacted members of the University community in relation to the activity and any mitigations that have been recommended as a means of ensuring they are well supported in relation to the protest/demonstration.
49. If PDOG is able to acknowledge and authorise an activity, they will consider if further communications to the University Community are required, and the scale of any such communication. If communication is required, the Infrastructure and Environments Operational Communications team (with support from Communications and External Relations) will draft communications which will then be approved by the Deputy Registrar (Infrastructure and Environments) for dissemination.
50. If the activity notification is not acknowledged or is escalated in line with the above processes, any wider communication will be at the discretion of, and approved by, the Registrar and Secretary.

Process Flow Chart – Student led Event



Process Flow Chart – Staff led Event



Roles and Responsibilities matrix

Role	Responsibility
Students wishing to hold a protest or demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform Students' Union and liaise with the Student's Union named contact. • Complete the Protest/Demonstration Notification Form and related risk assessments and submit them by email to the EMS Helpdesk at ems-ops-comms@essex.ac.uk. • Comply with the University's Speaker Code of Practice if an external person/body is invited to organise or take part in the protest/demonstration. • Ensure the protest/demonstration complies with the requirements of the Code of Student Conduct. • Provide additional information as requested by the Protest and Demonstration Operational Group. • Remove all materials used as part of the protest/demonstration immediately following the protest/demonstration.
Staff wishing to hold a protest or demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform EMS Helpdesk and liaise with Operational Communications named contact. • Complete the Protest/Demonstration Notification Form and related risk assessments and submit them by email to the EMS Helpdesk at ems-ops-comms@essex.ac.uk. • Comply with the University's Speaker Code of Practice if an external person/body is invited to organise or take part in the protest/demonstration • Provide additional information as requested by the Protest and Demonstration Operational Group (PDOG). • Remove all materials used as part of the protest/demonstration immediately following the protest/demonstration.
Students' Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide activity organiser with a named contact. • Liaise with the activity organiser and provide support. • Provide support to the Security and Campus Safety team during the activity if required.
EMS Helpdesk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide activity organiser with a named contact. • Liaise with the activity organiser and provide support. • Notify the members of Protest and Demonstration Operational Group when a Notification Form has been received.

Role	Responsibility
<p>Protest and Demonstration Operational Group - Chief Compliance Officer (Infrastructure and Environments), Director of Education, Activities and Welfare (Students' Union), Head of Security and Campus Safety)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational response planning for the proposed activity. • Inclusion of other staff members from relevant teams as appropriate. • Assess the proposed activity and if sufficient resource available to support. • Refer back to organisers if proposal needs to be amended or activity delayed. • Assign appropriate team to communicate with affected groups and offer relevant support. • Consider if further communications to the University Community are required and confirm to Operational Communications team. • Confirm acknowledgment of the notification to the Operational Communications team, Chief Executive of the Students' Union, the Deputy University Secretary, the Deputy Registrar (Infrastructure and Environments), and the Registrar and Secretary. • If there is a potential for a breach of UK law, liaise with the Deputy University Secretary for further guidance and seek legal advice if required.
<p>Chief Compliance Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm acknowledgment of the notification of the protest/demonstration and any conditions to the Operational Communications team. • If acknowledgement cannot be granted, provide reasons and recommendations to the Chief Executive of the Students' Union, the Deputy University Secretary, the Deputy Registrar (Infrastructure and Environments), and the Registrar and Secretary for further consideration and guidance.
<p>Head of Security and Campus Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure additional resources to manage the activity if required. • Liaise with Essex Police if their presence is required. • Oversee operational management and control of the activity. • Support the organisers at the conclusion of the protest/demonstration to ensure disbursement of participants. • Authorise any actions by participants who are not covered by the operational event plan.
<p>Compliance Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to the Security and Campus Safety team during the activity if required.

Role	Responsibility
<p>Operational Communications team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the primary point of contact for protests/demonstrations organised by staff. • Administer the acknowledgement process. • Provide administrative support to the PDOG. • Confirm approval or rejection of proposal to the organiser or, in the case of student led activities, via the appointed SU team. • Draft communications to wider University community, if required, with support from Communications and External Relations. Seek approval of Deputy Registrar (Infrastructure and Environments) for dissemination.

Document Control Panel

Field	Description
Title	Protest and Demonstration Management Protocol
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