Events Toolkit: Case Study

Name and department: Matthew Wicks, School of Law

Title of event: Law on Trial 2017: Religion on Trial

- **Can you describe the event that you held? (e.g. detail the event, what did you do, attendee numbers, subject area, why did you do it)**

Law on Trial is the School of Law's annual week-long programme of free to attend public lectures and panel discussions. There are five events over five evenings bringing together academics, recognised internationally as authorities in their field, both from the School of Law's own ranks and from around the world. The events have a collective theme, for example Religion on Trial (2017), Europe on Trial (2016) and The University on Trial (2015).

The theme of 2017, Religion, saw us welcome experts discussing a wide variety of topics such as Islamic Law; Liberalism and its response to religious identity; and Rastafarianism in the music of Bob Marley. Guest speakers included Professor Akeel Bilgrami from Columbia University and poet/author Kwame Dawes.

Law on Trial 2017 Public Lecture: Professor Akeel Bilgrami: Why Does Liberalism Find It So Hard to Cope with Religious Identity?

- **What did you want to achieve by holding the event?**

The aim of the event is to publicise the school in a public forum and for the general public to gain access to some of the world's foremost experts. Our own staff's research is showcased alongside external speakers discussing their own areas of expertise.

- **What worked well in the planning, design and delivery of the event?**

The event was highly successful, with a wide range of speakers welcomed and almost 400 people in attendance. Publicity of the event was key in drawing in a large audience, with Eventbrite and social media being particularly important. Eventbrite bookings enabled us to gauge the popularity of each evening and adjust publicity accordingly - for example if one event's registration numbers were low we could increase publicity activity to promote it. Eventbrite also enabled us to produce guest lists and gain contact details of guests for future events.

We used social media to target particular interest groups. For example, for the event focusing on Bob Marley/Rastafarianism we used Twitter and Facebook to link with Rastafari community groups, Bob Marley fan pages and Marley's official website who assisted us in promoting to their followers. We developed a strong visual identity for the event, with social media graphics and posters produced by the design team.

For the delivery of the event it was key to book the rooms in advance in order to secure the larger lecture rooms. We recruited Team Birkbeck students to assist with the set-up, welcoming guests, ticking names off the guest list etc.

- **What were the main challenges that you faced?**

The main challenge was confirming speakers and the theme of discussion for each evening far enough in advance to begin promotion. These should be clarified at least six weeks in advance as without this information several subsequent tasks are held up. Although we had the majority of this confirmed there were a few late changes!

- **What top tips would you give to those considering running a similar event?**

- Events taking place over several days can be difficult to manage in terms of workload, so do as much as you can as early as possible. Plan an organisation timetable in advance and set deadlines for changes.
- Use social media to connect with niche interest groups who may want to attend your event.
- For large-audience events, try to run the event in the evening if possible. It is far easier to attract members of the public to a 6-8pm event than a 1pm-3pm event!
- Ensure that you develop a means of capturing the event for legacy purposes, through photography, podcast recording, video recording etc.

- Contact colleagues from other schools/departments who run similar events and use their advice. In this case, I spoke to colleagues responsible for running multiple day events such as [Arts Week](#) and [Science Week.](#)