

PREVENT POLICY

Preventing extremism that can lead to terrorism

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1. Introduction

This policy outlines **Plymouth Marjon University's** approach and commitments to Government legislation to reduce the terrorism threat to the UK. In 2015 the Government passed the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act which specifically addresses the role of Universities and for the first time brings them under direct statutory provision in this respect.

The 'Prevent Duty' refers to Section 26 of that Act which contains a duty on Universities to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'.

As a University we are proud of our commitment to, and record of, challenging any expression of prejudice or discrimination directed against any group or individual (whether in the form of racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism; attitudes to sexuality, gender or disability, for example) (as recommended by UCU 2015). Whilst the Home Affairs Committee (2012) has stated there is less of a direct link between University education and terrorist activity than previously thought, it remains part of this University's duty of care to safeguard members of its community from being steered into a rigid and narrow ideology that is intolerant of diversity and leaves them vulnerable to future radicalisation.

Violent extremism, extremism that incites violence and terrorism, are described by Universities UK (Freedom of Speech on Campus: 2011) as some of 'the greatest threats to the liberty and safety of citizens in modern times'. Their opening statement continues 'to an extent unprecedented in history, individuals acting alone or in small groups have the ability to cause mass murder in pursuit of a political cause. Recruitment to the cause is through diverse routes and secretive processes'. The purpose of Prevent is to safeguard individuals, groups and communities from those routes and processes. This document sets out our policy in relation to this Duty.

Definitions of extremism and terrorism can be found in Appendix A.

2. Commitment

The University is committed to the guidance issued by the Home Secretary

The *Prevent Duty Guidance for Higher Education institutions in England and Wales*¹ which came into effect on 18 September 2015 and values freedom of speech and the expression of beliefs / ideology as fundamental rights underpinning our society's values. Both students and staff have the right to speak freely and voice their opinions. However, freedom comes with responsibility and free speech that is designed to manipulate the vulnerable or that leads to violence and harm of others goes against the moral principles in which freedom of speech is valued.

3. Scope

The Prevent Policy applies to all staff and (where relevant²) students of the University and to individuals external to the University where these individuals are engaged as, for example, visiting speakers.

4. Approach

The University welcomes the Government's intention that the Prevent Duty is implemented 'in a proportionate and risk-based way'. The University implements its legal responsibilities as part of existing policies and procedures wherever possible, since we consider this to be the best way of ensuring a coherent and joined-up approach to countering radicalisation within our community. In doing this the University actively involves staff and students, Marjon Student Union (MSU), the campus trades unions and other relevant agencies external to the University, in particular the Department for Education Regional Prevent Education Co-ordinator for the South West and Plymouth Prevent Partnership Group. We will continue to consult these individuals and organisations should any changes to existing policies or the creation of new policies be required in the future.

¹ Updated April 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>

² Examples include when student events are taking place on university premises

The University values the principles of academic freedom and general freedom of expression and is clear in its understanding that we have a statutory duty to protect these features of our organisation; however, we also understand that preventing radicalisation will, at times, mean challenging extremist ideas to prevent any member of the university community from being drawn into extremism. This document sets out the ways in which we will fulfil our responsibilities in this context.

5. Leadership and Management

The University takes the need to prevent terrorism from occurring in our community seriously, at the highest levels. Our approach has been approved by the Vice-Chancellor, following consideration and agreement in the University's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and this policy is approved by the Board of Directors. The Chief Finance and Operating Officer has been identified as the member of ELT responsible for ensuring that the University complies appropriately with the Prevent Duty and is the Prevent 'Single Point of Contact' (SPOC), in liaison with the University's Convenor. The SPOC and Convenor will be supported by a Prevent Working group (PWG) drawn from a wide cross section of the University's staff and including student representation; the Regional Prevent coordinator and other key stakeholders within and beyond the University. The Government charged the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), now superseded by the Office for Students, with the monitoring of the Prevent Duty within the HE sector and regular communications with the regional liaison officer also take place. Internally, an annual report will be made to ELT and Board of Directors by the SPOC in consultation with the PWG.

6. Risk Assessment

As indicated above (section 4) the University understands that its communications and community engagement concerning Prevent needs to be objective and based on perceived risks. Hence, as required by the Prevent Duty, the University has carried out an assessment of the risk of our students, or any members of our University community being radicalised or drawn into terrorism.

The risk assessment is informed by the Counter Terrorism Local Police (CTLP), reviewed annually by ELT and is monitored regularly by the PWG (specific to each police force area).

7. Prevent Action Plan

Where any significant risk is identified, the University considers the actions which might mitigate the impact or likelihood of that risk being realised and include these in the University's Prevent Action Plan. Progress with implementation is reviewed at least annually.

Additionally, and in order to ensure that this policy is effectively implemented in the context of regional Prevent activity, the University delivers actions in support of the delivery of the Plymouth Prevent Partnership Group's action plan as appropriate.

As part of the Action Plan, the University considers the following issues as highlighted by the legislation:

- the pastoral care of our students;
- the use of our prayer rooms and availability of faith-related facilities;
- the use of University spaces, real and virtual, for disseminating information;
- how we provide platforms for radical speakers and events;
- the use of social media and the internet;
- how we carry out research in areas related to Prevent;
- how we manage charitable collections to ensure that they do not support radicalisation or terrorist-related activity.

Pastoral Care

The University seeks to ensure that appropriate provision is made for those of any faith (or those without faith) to access appropriate opportunities for pastoral care and for religious purposes.

Pastoral care is available to students in a variety of ways. Lecturers are likely to be the first contacts who identify initial concerns. They may contact Personal Development Tutors or specialist support staff within the Student Support department. Students in University residences will have access to support. MSU, whilst not formally trained, also offers friendly support and advice.

Faith Facilities

The University provides a Chaplaincy and full-time chaplain support. There is a quiet room and an Islamic Prayer facility. There is opportunity for various Students' Union faith societies and the Chaplaincy has rooms that are available to be booked for these groups.

The use of University spaces, real and virtual, for disseminating information

The University will not permit victimisation or infringement of the rights of others in any way, nor will we permit material supporting terrorism to be displayed within University premises. The University will remove any such material if it is found. Likewise, it will seek to ensure that the University's printed and electronic communications (including its website and any other badged or branded forms of communication) do not support violent extremism or contain material likely to encourage violent extremism or terrorism. The University will investigate immediately if any such instances are raised. It is acknowledged that there may be legitimate reasons to display materials relating to extremism and terrorism as part of legitimate teaching and research activities, and this should be declared under the process described below.

How we provide platforms for radical speakers and events

[External Speaker & Freedom of Speech Policy](#) - The University's External Speakers and Events Policy sets out how it will ensure that it meets the different legal requirements, not least the duty under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, to secure freedom of speech within the law. Where the views expressed by potential visiting speakers constitute views that risk drawing people into violent extremism or terrorism, or are views that are shared by terrorist groups, permission to host the visitor must be sought by the staff or student organiser from the SPOC. Due diligence must also be carried out prior to the visit or event and we will share information with other institutions if appropriate about any particularly problematic event that comes within the remit of Prevent. In complying with the Prevent Duty the University will encourage staff to use their professional judgement to consider and ameliorate negative impacts which may result from giving a platform to any individual or group. These negative impacts could include for example the victimisation of individuals, the infringement of the rights of individuals or the incitement to terrorist-related activity of individuals who are part of the University community.

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023

On 11 May 2023 the House of Lords as the Upper House of Parliament approved the Bill and the Bill progressed to receive Royal Assent. These statutory duties make it clear that the protection for freedom of speech and academic freedom is to be *within the law and* most students' unions, for the first time, will also have a direct statutory duty to secure freedom of speech. Consistent with the usual external speaker scrutiny process, attention will be required to determine what other laws might limit someone's right to freedom of speech or their academic freedom in any specific context e.g. national security, the prevention of disorder or crime, discrimination etc. Legal advice should be sought where necessary and it is anticipated that a code of practice will be issued. MSU has adopted the University's procedures in relation to events organised by its societies where external speakers will be participating.

Use of our IT networks

The University considers it unacceptable for its IT networks to be used in any way that supports, promotes or facilitates terrorism. Prevent is referenced in the relevant IT policies and will keep under regular review the possible use of filters as a means of restricting access to content covered by the Prevent Duty as part of the risk assessment process and in discussion with the HE sector. Social media services provide new avenues for the distribution and accessing of extremist material, and the University takes the challenges presented by social media very seriously. If any misuse of the University's branding on social media accounts is discovered then action will be taken in accordance with the terms and conditions of the relevant platform. Ethical and appropriate uses of social media will continue to be included in programmes.

Security Sensitive Research

Staff and students should be able to undertake research, including that which may relate to the Prevent agenda without risk of prejudice. It is therefore acknowledged that certain staff (and exceptionally students) will have need to access material concerning violent extremism or which supports terrorism as part of their work. In such cases it is incumbent on the responsible member of academic staff to ensure via the University's normal ethical review processes that material is only accessed that is appropriate for the research or other work being carried out and that its use will not encourage terrorism in any way. This may include the use of an electronic and / or physical

‘safe room’ (as is already required by some funders for some security-sensitive research). For the protection of the individual and the University, it is a requirement that any individual who needs to access such material must register this in advance with the Director of Digital, Data and Technology.

Charitable Collections/ Support of Terrorism

Whilst working on behalf of the University, all staff must ensure that they do not carry out any activity which could potentially support radicalisation or terrorist-related activity. This will include charitable collections and expenditure for events organised for staff or students where money could potentially be used to support illegal activities. If there is a suspicion that this is the case, the member of staff should discuss with the Prevent SPOC and agree appropriate action.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, families and adults at risk, is everyone’s responsibility. An important part of this and fundamental to our duty of care is in providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into extremism or terrorism. Therefore, in partnership, and as part of our existing policy framework we will:-

- identify individuals and groups at risk;
- assess the nature and extent of that risk; and
- develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

Plymouth Marjon University expects everyone associated with its work (including employees, board members, sub-contractors and those commissioned by us or use our premises) to play their part delivering this. The University will cooperate with partners via Channel (or other routes, eg Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) including sharing information and delivering interventions, as appropriate.

Anyone identifying an individual who is at risk of getting drawn into violent extremism or terrorism must discuss it promptly with the Welfare Concern Group, the SPOC for students OR Director of People & Operations where staff are concerned OR another suitable person and take responsibility for ensuring follow up action is taken as appropriate. A referral to the Prevent process will be made if deemed necessary. This does not supersede our wider statutory safeguarding duties.

A Prevent concern does not have to be proven beyond reasonable doubt; it should be based on something that raises concern, which is assessed by using professional judgement.

8. Developmental Opportunities

The University has developed a clear staff training programme, building on the preliminary training many staff have already undertaken, to ensure that all staff have appropriate training proportionate to their role. The aim of the training programme is to equip staff to recognise when others may be vulnerable to radicalisation and to provide an explanation of how to handle sensitively any concern that may emerge. For those with whom any specific concerns will be raised (Welfare Concern Group/People & Organisational Development Dept [POD]), differentiating the risk of radicalisation from other issues will be covered in more detail, together with the opportunities and requirement to share information confidentially where needed. The approach will be to support vulnerable staff and students in whatever circumstance they find themselves, recognising that radicalisation could occasionally be occurring when certain behaviour is manifest but that other explanations will usually apply. Staff training is reported annually to the OfS (Office for Students) in accordance with their requirements.

9. Information Sharing

The University is familiar with the Channel process and of the opportunities for informal and formal sharing of information with relevant authorities and will use these when considered necessary and appropriate to do so in the interests of preventing people from being drawn into terrorism. Information sharing will only take place with external authorities when this is consistent with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.

10. Marjon Student Union (MSU)

The University works closely with MSU in ensuring that we provide excellent support to our students. This includes the various matters covered by this document. MSU staff [and Officers] participate in the Prevent training provided by the University and are very aware of their duties as charitable bodies. There is close collaboration with MSU in relation to any controversial event proposed by its societies. Through regular contact with MSU the University ensures that students are consulted on an on-going basis in respect of implementing the Prevent duty.

11. Related Policies and Procedures

The University's policies and procedures are required to take account of the Prevent Duty as stipulated by the Prevent Action Plan and as part of the regular review and updating process.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

All members of staff should be aware of the University's responsibilities under the Prevent Duty and of the measures set out above to comply with it. Members of the University community who are concerned about a student who might be at risk of being drawn into violent extremism and terrorism should report this to the Welfare Concern Group, the SPOC for students or Director of People & Operations where staff are concerned or another suitable person.

Appendix A – Definitions

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

Extremism is defined by the Government in the Prevent Strategy as:

Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.

Extremism is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service as:

The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:

- Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;
- Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;
- Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts;
- Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK.

There is no such thing as a “typical extremist”: those who become involved in extremist actions come from a range of backgrounds and experiences, and most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in violent extremist activity.

Members of the University community may become susceptible to radicalisation through a range of social, personal and environmental factors - it is known that violent extremists exploit vulnerabilities in individuals to drive a wedge between them and their families and communities. It is vital that staff are able to recognise those vulnerabilities.

Indicators of vulnerability include:

- Identity crisis – being distanced from their cultural or religious heritage and experiences discomfort about their place in society;
- Personal crisis – experiencing family tensions; a sense of isolation; low self-esteem; dissociated from existing friendship group and become involved with a new and different group of friends; searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging;
- Personal circumstances – migration; local community tensions; and events affecting the person's country or region of origin may contribute to a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy;
- Unmet aspirations –perceptions of injustice; a feeling of failure; rejection of civic life;
- Experiences of criminality – which may include involvement with criminal groups, imprisonment, and poor resettlement or reintegration;
- Personal difficulties - with social interaction, empathy with others, understanding the consequences of their actions and awareness of the motivations of others.

Importantly, this list is not exhaustive, nor does it mean that all people experiencing the above are at risk of radicalisation for the purposes of violent extremism. More critical risk factors could include:

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters;
- Accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element;
- Possessing or accessing violent extremist literature;
- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage;
- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues;
- Joining or seeking to join extremist organisations; and

- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour;
- Experiencing a high level of social isolation resulting in issues of identity crisis and/or personal crisis.

Any concerns should be referred to the SPOC.

Appendix B : Governance and Frequency of Review

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