

COU15D006

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### Issue

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places an obligation on the University to “have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. Statutory guidance, “*Prevent*” has been issued and was approved late in September.

HEFCE has been appointed as the monitoring body and are likely to require an initial assessment of the preparedness of the University on a five point scale (A, Policies and Processes documented, recently reviewed and updated which satisfy *Prevent*, to E, Policies and Processes have not been prepared yet).

The purpose of this report is to familiarise Council with *Prevent* guidance and to secure commitment at the highest level in the University to compliance.

### Recommendation

Council is invited to comment on this report and in particular to confirm its commitment to compliance.

### Resource Implications

Compliance with the guidance may require some modest additional resources, most probably in the area of training and possibly in the area of pastoral care.

### Risk Implications

Both the staff and student unions (UCU and NUS respectively) are in opposition to the *Prevent* strategy. The main risks are:

- this is a statutory requirement and failure to comply will lead to directions from the Secretary of State;
- opposition from staff and student unions may hinder compliance. Their objections include a perceived threat to academic freedom and freedom of speech (albeit the Act itself requires the University to have regard to these other obligations when applying the *Prevent* guidance), that the guidance will be used to stifle campus activism, it will turn lecturers into spies on learners, it is discriminatory towards Muslims and legitimises xenophobia and racism and will destroy the element of trust between staff and students.

Self-evidently the compliance with the *Prevent* strategy is a statutory obligation for the University, and given that this is essentially about safeguarding students and staff from the potential consequences of radicalisation leading to terrorism both for those who are radicalised and those they engage with, it is to be hoped that we will find some common ground at a local level. If we see the obligation in those terms and avoid clumsy implementation or seeing this as a opportunity to progress some alternative agenda the risk to relationships within the University should be minimised.

## Equality and Diversity

The concerns and response are set out in the Risk Section above.

## Timing of decisions

The duty and guidance are in force now. The initial monitoring return is likely to be required by HEFCE towards the end of November/early December 2015.

## Further Information

Further information is available from the Registrar and Secretary, Mr Brian Summers, tel. 01603 592208, email [b.summers@uea.ac.uk](mailto:b.summers@uea.ac.uk). The guidance document for HE can be found at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/445916/Prevent\\_Duty\\_Guidance\\_For\\_Higher\\_Education\\_England\\_Wales\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445916/Prevent_Duty_Guidance_For_Higher_Education_England_Wales_.pdf)

## Discussion

The key elements in the *Prevent* guidance are:

### External speakers and events

The University has an established policy (in pursuit of its duty to promote freedom of speech and not to deny the use of the premises to groups or individuals on the basis of their opinions or beliefs unless they are unlawful) for the monitoring and approval of events and speakers. In brief, the University looks at any risk to the safety of speakers, attendees, the premises and public order in the context of the nature and management of the event. If there is discernible risk which cannot be reasonably managed, the event does not go ahead.

This policy is being reviewed and will take particular account of the provision in the guidance that where the views likely to be expressed constitute extremist views (those counter to fundamental humanitarian values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs) which risk drawing people into terrorism or are shared by terrorist groups, then the event should not be allowed to proceed except where the University is **entirely convinced** that such risk can be fully mitigated without cancellation and the University should always err on the side of caution in this judgement.

### Partnership

We are required to have active engagement with partners including the Police and BIS Regional Prevent Coordinators.

The University already has close links with the Police and is engaging with the Prevent Coordinator.

### Risk Assessment

The University is expected to carry out a risk assessment as to where and how students might be at risk of being drawn into terrorism, or non-violent extremism which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorists can exploit.

We consider the University to be at low risk, albeit this is something not easy to quantify, it is more a qualitative judgement. It would seem to be the case that universities in large cities are more vulnerable. The sheer size of the surrounding population and its diversity makes it more likely that the small numbers who might promote extreme acts will be represented and could go unnoticed.

Nonetheless, the University should be alert to:

- any radical extremist activity, through observation and reporting;
- the dissemination of radical, extremist or terrorism related material including through internet resources;

- the impact of external speakers.

The University is required to have a *Prevent* action plan to mitigate these risks. The University's action plan will focus on:

**Leadership** – commitment from Council and the Executive Team and establishing a small group chaired by the Registrar & Secretary to monitor compliance and keep key policies under review.

**Partnership** – the University will have (and already has) mechanisms engaging with the relevant agencies. The University will promote the sharing of best practice through representative bodies such as the Association of University Chief Security Officers.

**Pastoral care and student welfare** – the University has an embedded and engaged chaplaincy team but may need to consider if there is any strengthening required in this area.

**Events and venue hire** – existing policies and procedures are being reviewed to ensure that they are entirely comprehensive and also adequately cover all events including those which may be part of the curriculum.

**Internet safety** – this may be one of the more challenging areas. Blocking sites is not a simple matter, arguably monitoring may be more straightforward. Our usage Policy will be reviewed in the light of the *Prevent* duty. However, there are a number of services offered by JISC (the universities national collaboration which provides and manages the joint academic network which is the route into the internet for all university-based activity) which may help.

**Research** – academic research into extremism and terrorism is a legitimate activity and we need to ensure that this is not hindered by steps such as blocks on internet sites.

**Staff Training** – a number of staff will need to engage in some awareness training, and a number already do. For many this should not be overly demanding. They should be recognising vulnerability and behaviours in others which may be cause for concern and understanding who in the University should be made aware.