

Prevent Duty: Guidance

1. Prevent and the law

Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on specified authorities – including most higher education institutions – to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. This is commonly referred to as the ‘Prevent Duty’.

The Act also requires those authorities to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State in meeting the Prevent Duty. That guidance identifies various areas that require policies and procedures, properly followed and applied, from relevant higher education bodies (RHEBs).

The Act makes clear that RHEBs must balance their duties under Prevent with their legal requirements in relation to freedom of speech and academic freedom, as enshrined in other legislation. Freedom of expression is itself an important means to challenge and prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

The Federation¹ and its constituent member houses (as full and associate members of the Federation) are required by law to comply with the Prevent Duty.

2. How has the Federation responded?

The Federation has established a Prevent Duty Task Group to devise its response to the Prevent duty. The Task Group has included representation from across the Federation and from the student body, and is chaired by the Principal of Westcott House.

Work was undertaken by the Task Group to review and refresh existing policies, and, in some cases, to create new policies to respond specifically to questions raised by the Prevent Duty. For instance, the provision and monitoring of training provision to raise awareness of the Prevent Duty has been an area where the Federation has had to devise new policies and procedures. These policies will be reviewed and updated as necessary on an annual basis.

The Federation has recently agreed governance and operational structures and policies that have been put in place to mitigate many of the risks described in the Prevent Duty. The Federation has submitted its risk assessment, action plan and related policies and procedures to HEFCE in order to comply with its statutory duty.

3. Prevent and safeguarding in the Federation

Specified authorities have considerable freedom in terms of how they implement their responsibilities under the Prevent Duty, and the Federation is taking a proportionate and risk-based approach to these matters.

The Federation and the Houses have well established arrangements in place to mitigate a number of the drivers of criminal extremism and promote positive, respectful relations among its students and staff. As a Federation our work is to prepare students² almost universally for public ministry in its constituent Christian churches; even those students not preparing for Christian ministry are church-based in their affiliation.

¹ When the term “Federation” is used in this document it is used to include the Full and Associate Member houses of the Federation

² The term “student” in this document includes students registered on all award-bearing courses offered by the Federation, as well as students enrolled on bespoke or other non-accredited courses and modules offered by the Federation or any of its constituent member houses, or students studying on other courses who are living in residence or are affiliated to one of the Federation’s constituent houses.

The Federation values freedom of speech and expression. Our classrooms and houses are places where each member feels confident and able to research, question and test received wisdom, and to express new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without fear of isolation, marginalisation or discrimination. Equally, the Federation expects its members to receive and respond to intellectual and ideological challenges in a constructive and peaceable way. The Federation acknowledges its statutory duties in protecting its members and other people from “radicalisation and has carefully considered its [policy on freedom of speech](#), to which all members of the Federation and its houses (including visitors, speakers, and exchange students) are subject.

We are mindful that we must be diligent in terms of access to our students, staff and facilities especially through external events, and thus we have reviewed and revised our [policies for external events](#) in terms of all the constituent houses. Our well established diversity networks, the role of house chaplains and our faith-related facilities play an important role in this regard. So too does the close level of pastoral care provided by Federation and house tutors and other support staff. We are committed to staff and student wellbeing and have many support services available. Each constituent house has a structure for pastoral-care which ensures that students are able to raise any concerns, and these can be escalated through principals.

We are mindful of the pervasive and all important role that IT plays in the life of the Federation, and have reviewed and revised our [IT policy](#) accordingly.

The Federation has excellent relationships with people of other faiths – chiefly through the Woolf Institute, one of our associate members – and this is one of our many strengths in relation to these issues. We also have excellent relationships with the Cambridge Muslim College, for instance, which we see as one of the best ways in which to build the sort of community relations – and prevent recourse to radicalisation – which the Prevent Duty is designed to advance. Many of our teaching programmes contain courses in which the relationship of different faiths is a focus, and in which negative aspects of these relations are addressed.

We recognise that some students only interact with us through distance-learning or by occasional supervisions. The duty of care in relation to these is one of which we are especially mindful since they represent variations to the norm for us in student terms. They are part of the same pastoral-care structures nonetheless within the constituent houses.

If you have any queries or concerns about any Prevent-related matter please email the Federation Registrar at registrar@theofed.cam.ac.uk