

Union Council Motion

Motion Title: Non-compliance with Prevent Duty 'Students not Suspects'

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Motion Passes into Policy on: 12th July 2021

Policy due to lapse by: 12th July 2025

Union Council Notes

1. The UK Government's 'Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015' places a statutory requirement on public bodies, which includes Universities, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" through the implementation of Prevent.
2. According to the Prevent Strategy, potential indicators of "radicalism" or "extremism" include:
 - a. "a need for identity, meaning and belonging"
 - b. "a desire for political or moral change"
 - c. "relevant mental health issues"
3. The Prevent duty, as part of the government's 'counter-extremism' agenda, has been used to create an expansive surveillance architecture to spy on the public and to police voiced opinions, systematically targeting Black people and Muslims. It threatens academic freedom and freedom of speech as it has been used to shut down politicised conversations within institutions notably the topic of Palestine.
4. Under Prevent, students are reported for being 'at risk of radicalisation' for merely taking an interest in political affairs in class, or for observing their religion more closely.
5. The Government's counterterrorism/security policy is fundamentally flawed in its approach; its concepts of 'extremism' and 'radicalism' are ill-defined and open to abuse from political ends.
6. That the National Union of Students (NUS) and University and Colleges Union (UCU) have both passed motions at their conferences opposing the Act and Prevent, publicly speaking against it. At present, there are 31 Students' Unions who have passed similar motions about Prevent with the addition of Warwick University condemning Prevent too.
7. In January 2019, the government announced that they would be conducting an 'independent review' of Prevent.

8. The terms of this review are likely to be narrow and focused mostly on building support for Prevent rather than deal with its root issues or call for its scrapping.

Union Council Believes

1. Students are not suspects.
2. Universities are places for education, not surveillance.
3. Islamophobia is massively on the rise across Europe and legitimised by the mainstream media. We do not tolerate Islamophobia at the Union.
4. The government-identified 'warning signs' of "radicalisation" are problematic and dangerously affect those with mental health difficulties.
5. There is no legal definition for the terms used by the government such as radicalisation and extremism - they are just terms used to reflect the government's political agenda.
6. The implementation of the Prevent Strategy does not only isolate Muslim students but also undermines the civil liberties of other groups such as environmental, political, and humanitarian activists. This ultimately feeds into the causation of further alienation and dissatisfaction within the student body.
7. As a Charity, we as a Union are not legally bound to engage with Prevent and should seek towards a non-compliant approach.

Union Council Resolves

1. To mandate the Officers of this Union to oppose, not engage with or implement any of the Prevent duty measures not only to protect its students but also in solidarity with students of all backgrounds and beliefs.
2. To constructively challenge the university, where legally possible, on the development and implementation of the Prevent Strategy.
3. To ensure that students are aware of their rights and what help is available should they be concerned about Prevent.
4. To support and lead Islamophobia Awareness Month as an annual initiative.
5. To lobby the university to be open and transparent about how they are engaging with Prevent and other similar initiatives. This involves the publication about how the policy is operating within the University and the material that is being used to train staff and/or students.