



UNIVERSITY COURT

19 June 2023

Prevent Duty Annual Update

Description of paper

1. The paper provides an update to Court on the University's obligations under the Prevent duty for 2022/23.

Action requested/Recommendation

2. To note this update and the ongoing work in response to changes set out by the UK and Scottish governments in regards the Prevent Duty.

Background and context

3. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015) imposes a duty on universities and other public bodies to have due regard to need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. This duty is commonly referred to as "the Prevent duty".

4. Under the guidance published for Scottish universities, "Monitoring and Enforcement" is understood to be the responsibility of each institution's governing body. This guidance sets out high level expectations for the University in the areas of: external speakers and events, leadership, engagement with local Prevent or CONTEST multiagency groups, staff training, safety online and welfare and pastoral care.

5. In 2019, the UK government committed to carrying out an Independent Review of Prevent. The Review and Government's response was [published](#) on 8 February 2023.

6. Of the 34 recommendations presented in the Review, four recommendations specifically relevant for universities in Scotland are:

- The Scottish Government should restructure Scottish Prevent in-line with the regionalisation model for England and Wales. This would move Prevent from the communities and integration agenda towards other strands of CONTEST. The Scottish Government should provide a dedicated Prevent lead, a Higher Education/Further Education regional co-ordinator, and Prevent-funded projects for the region. Scottish Police should also prioritise enhancing practitioners' understanding of Scotland's terrorism threat picture via the dissemination of regular local threat assessments (known as 'Emerging Threat and Risk Local Profiles');
- Develop a new training and induction package for all government and public sector staff working in counter-extremism and counter-terrorism. Training should focus on improving understanding of the ideological nature of terrorism, including: worldviews, objectives and methodologies of violent and non-violent extremist groups, grievance narratives and issues exploited by terrorist recruiters and extremists;
- Higher education staff responsible for authorising on-campus events with external speakers should be provided with training on how to manage and assess risk. Where necessary this should include conducting effective due diligence checks, and guidance on how to balance statutory obligations under

the Prevent Duty with the legal requirement to protect freedom of speech; and,

- Develop specific measures to counter the anti-Prevent campaign at universities. Higher and further education co-ordinators should work closely with institutional safeguarding leads to co-ordinate activities for students and staff which directly take-on and challenge disinformation about Prevent. The Department for Education should develop a network of speakers who are able to speak to students and staff about counter-radicalisation work and its benefits.

7. Alongside the above, a Review of Prevent Governance within Scotland took place in 2021. The Scottish Government's Safeguarding and Vulnerability Team, in agreement with the UK Home Office, have created a Prevent Assurance Return Process. This process is three-fold and consists of:

- A Self-Assessment Toolkit
- An annual return
- The creation of an Annual Report on Prevent Delivery in Scotland created by the Safeguarding and Vulnerability Team for and on behalf of the Prevent Sub-Group, for delivery via the Strategic Contest Board for Scotland to Scottish ministers, and ultimately the Home Office.

8. This process forms part of an overall intended strengthened quality assurance framework across the UK for Prevent Delivery.

9. This Assurance Return requires a Red/Amber/Green rating of their compliance with the Prevent Duty Guidance. This is to help us establish a baseline of delivery of Prevent in Scotland to identify both areas of good practice and areas for further development and support.

Discussion

10. The University continues to approach application of the Prevent duty in a proportionate manner. This is also consistent with the government guidance referenced above, which states that: "...We do not envisage the new duty creating large new burdens on institutions and intend it to be implemented in a proportionate and risk-based way."

11. Any high-risk events with external speakers, and any cases of concern for students, are referred to the University Compliance Group, which is chaired by the University Secretary.

12. Since the last update to Court (13 June 2022) to the date of writing (3 June 2023):

- Events on campus: 13 referrals were made to the University Compliance Group about higher risk events with external speakers – none of these events were relevant for considerations within Prevent;
- Referral of vulnerable students: 0 students were referred to the University Compliance Group; and,
- Revised research ethics procedures: 0 cases of students carrying out research as part of their dissertations into sensitive / extremism-related areas were raised.

Resource implications

13. Not applicable.

Risk Management

14. The University has a legal duty to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.” Failure to comply with the duty may lead to the Prevent Oversight Board recommending that the Secretary of State use the power of direction under section 30 of the Counter-Terrorism Act (2015). This power would only be used when other options for engagement and improvement had been exhausted.

Equality & Diversity

15. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out in implementation of the Prevent duty, and equality and diversity is taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis by the University Compliance Group.

Next steps/implications

16. N/A

Consultation

17. An update was provided to University Executive in February 2023 on the outcomes of the UK government Independent Review of Prevent as part of a Report on a Review of the Speakers and Events Policy.

18. Consultation has taken place with Legal Services on the Self-Assessment Return.

Further information

19. Author & Presenter
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Freedom of Information

20. Open paper