

CUSU and Prevent Duty



This Union Notes:

The research/facts around the proposal:

1. The government's Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a statutory requirement on public bodies – including universities – to 'prevent people being drawn into terrorism' and to implement the 'Prevent' agenda.
2. The *Prevent* strategy defines "*extremism*" broadly and amorphously for these purposes, to include: "...*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.*"
3. Section 31 of the 2015 Act requires HE and FE institutions to have particular regard to their applicable separate duties to ensure freedom of speech and academic freedom when complying with the *Prevent* duty.
4. Universities are expected to carry out a risk assessment of where and how students might be at risk of being drawn into terrorism or non-violent extremism and put in place an action plan to mitigate the risk.
5. Coventry University has shown willingness to undertake Prevent awareness training and other training that could help the relevant staff prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and challenge extremist ideas.
6. As Students' Unions are typically autonomous charitable bodies independent of their parent institutions, they are not currently public authorities for the purposes of the 2015 Act, meaning that the *Prevent* duty does not directly apply to them.
7. As a matter of compliance with Charity Commission guidance relating to the prevention of terrorism, which requires charities to avoid involvement in promoting, supporting or giving a platform to inappropriate radical or extremist views (with extremism defined by reference to the *Prevent* strategy).

This Union Believes:

The changes you want to make:

1. Under the Prevent agenda, lecturers should not report students as being at risk of radicalisation for merely taking an interest in political

affairs in class or for observing their religion more closely as Prevent duty was not intended to stop students debating controversial issues.

2. No Institution(s) nor their staff should use the Prevent agenda to target people or students from a certain race, religion or background.
3. CUSU should comply with the Prevent Duty as proposed by the Department of Education and monitored by Office of Students

This Union Resolves:

How the Union will achieve this:

1. To mandate the Executive Committee to ensure student representation on the Coventry University Prevent Strategy Working Group
2. University should (if they do not) have and publish clear policies setting out the activities that are or are not allowed to take place on campus and any online activity directly related to the university, which should set out what is expected from students' unions and societies in relation to *Prevent*.
3. To lobby the University to be more open and transparent about how they are engaging with Prevent and other similar initiatives. This involves:
 - Demanding publications of how the policy is operating within the university and Students' Union.
 - This includes access to materials used to train staff and students.
 - Holding consultations with the student body regarding how this affects students.

Proposed by: Tochukwu Ajare (CUSU President 2018/2019)

Seconded by: Clinton Wilson (CUSU Vice President Postgraduate 2018/2019)