

What is the Prevent Duty?

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 came into effect on 1 July 2015 requiring HEIs, through a statutory duty, *to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism whilst having particular regard to the need of the duty to ensure freedom and speech and the importance of academic freedom.* This is sometimes referred to as the Prevent Duty.

The Scottish Government published guidance on the Prevent Duty which outlining key areas for action alongside the expected approach of Higher Education Institutions to the agenda and how the University is responding are summarised in the table below.

Key Area For Action	Guidance ... In order to comply with the duty all (HEIs) should ...	How the University is responding:
External Speakers and Events	...have policies and procedures in place for the management of events on campus and use of all the institutions premises. Policies should apply to all staff, students and visitors and clearly set out what is required for any event to proceed.	A policy has been drafted and is currently being consulted on. Legal advice is being sought as to the scope of the Policy but it is NOT intended to apply to normal academic or administrative business. A key aim of the policy is, while complying with the duty, maintaining at all times the University's commitment to freedom of speech and academic freedom. Consultation is on-going with the Student Union who have published their own policy.
Leadership	...expect active engagement from senior management for the institution with the range of Prevent partners including police. This would include engagement with the Prevent network	The University has been engaged with partners for a number of years through membership of the Edinburgh CONTEST Group. We are a member of the HE Prevent Working Group a forum for sharing good practice in addressing the statutory duty across all Scottish Universities.
Staff Training	...demonstrate a willingness to undertake Prevent awareness training , giving relevant staff sufficient training to be able to recognise vulnerability to be drawn into terrorism	A new on-line course looks at safeguarding policies and helps the University to fulfil our duty of care requirements that are linked to specific duties under the Prevent Duty. The University is responding to these requirements by taking a broad approach to ensure we have inclusive, cohesive and safe campuses. We are also taking steps to ensure that these security issues are seen within the broader context of ensuring we recognise and value to the diversity of Heriot-Watt and maintain our strong community.
Information Sharing	Robust procedures both internally and externally for sharing information about vulnerable individuals (where appropriate). This should include information sharing agreements where possible linking to existing institutional	We have robust Data Protection procedures in place including a pro-active disclosure form. We will only share information where necessary to do so to protect individuals or the safety of the University community.

	policies relating to student welfare and safeguarding good practice	
Safety Online	<p>...have policies in place relating to the use of IT on campus with specific reference to the statutory duty.</p> <p>Clear policies should be in place for students and staff working on sensitive or extremism-related research.</p>	<p>We have existing IT Acceptable Use Policies that will be updated to make specific reference to the duty. The University will NOT be monitoring or filtering email or social media channels.</p> <p>The ethical approval process will ensure that safeguards are in place for all those working on research in these areas.</p>
Welfare and Pastoral Care	<p>Sufficient pastoral support for all students according to the needs of the particular institution. This may require the University to be clearer about the policies and processes we have in place, for example the use of case conferences for students where appropriate.</p> <p>Institution should have clear and widely available policies for the use of prayer rooms and other faith-related facilities and from dealing with any issues arising from use of those facilities.</p>	<p>A review of the Academic Mentor Scheme is being considered. This is recommending a standard implementation in all Schools. New support pages for both staff and students are being developed.</p> <p>The University has established an Interfaith forum representing all religions and beliefs and consultation is taking place through this forum.</p>
Student Unions	<p>...demonstrate that they have regard to the duty in the context of their relationship and interactions with student unions and societies. We would expect student unions and societies to have due regard to the institution's policies relating to Prevent.</p>	<p>Reported to the University Court in September 2015:</p> <p>“that the Student Union Executive had voted in opposition to the Prevent Agenda; however, both the University and the Student Union were committed to working together in the best way possible in support of the University’s Prevent Duty obligations while respecting their respective positions on the matter”</p>
Monitoring and Enforcement	<p>...explore the role of the governing body in ensuring compliance with the institutions statutory duties.</p>	<p>Assurance mapping has been undertaken and the Court will receive regular reports.</p>

The University is actively working on each of these areas and it is our aim to meet our legal requirements through broad and thorough collaborative and inclusive processes.

More detail about our Scottish requirements can be found in the [Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: For Scotland](#)

Why are we hearing so much about it and why is the Prevent Duty so controversial?

There have been some well publicised criticisms of the Prevent Duty across print and social media. Specifically, there have been some concerns around targeting particular groups and individuals through the Prevent Duty.

The University will not tolerate use of Prevent related activities as a method for targeting or marginalising individuals, groups, freedom of speech or academic freedom. Our approach is to take a broad view and ensure the safety of all across our campuses whilst ensuring we do not compromise our inclusive community.

The University established the University Prevent Group to make sure that the statutory duty is addressed effectively. The University is also taking steps to respond to the Prevent Duty via open and collaborative processes by involving representatives from across our community in shaping our approach to the Prevent Duty. This includes representatives of the academic, professional services, students and faith communities.

Why is this relevant to me?

We all play a part in ensuring we have a safe and inclusive environment and that this is achieved through mutual respect and adherence to our University values.

As we develop our response to the Prevent Duty we will keep you informed. There may be some changes to the way we do things and it will be helpful if you take every possible step to follow any guidelines produced to help you and the University meet our legal requirements.

In time, other training and workshop sessions will be offered.