

Prevent duty guidance update: a briefing for Higher Education providers (HEPs)

September 2023

Updated Prevent duty guidance

The [Prevent duty guidance](#) has been refreshed and updated to reflect several recommendations of the [Independent Review of Prevent](#). It is an update to the existing Prevent duty guidance for higher education institutions in England and Wales (last updated in April 2021).

The updated guidance has been simplified into one document for all education settings - this helps to create greater consistency in the core expectations, whilst still acknowledging differences between education phases.

There are **no new legal requirements or additional responsibilities** for the higher education sector. Higher education providers (HEPs) should continue to understand their Prevent duty requirements as part of their wider approach to student wellbeing. The autumn term is a transition period and we do not anticipate that the **revised guidance will come into effect earlier than 31st December 2023**.



Subject to Parliamentary procedure, the updated guidance will come into force on **31 December 2023 at the earliest**

What's changed?

The changes provide greater clarity, practical advice and signposting to best practice. The changes include:

Ideological causes of terrorism

The first objective of Prevent has been changed to “tackle the ideological causes of terrorism”. The ideological component of terrorism is what sets it apart from other acts of serious violence.

The guidance recommends education settings consider ideology when delivering all aspects of Prevent. The guidance also introduces a new theme - ‘reducing permissive environments’ - to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism. For HEPs, this includes the existing considerations of having effective IT and external speaker and event policies to reduce the risk of unmitigated student exposure to radicalising influences.

Training

HEPs should determine who the appropriate members of staff are and how frequently training should occur, being proportionate to the risk of terrorism and extremism in their local area. They should also consider what type of training is needed for staff in different roles. It is recommended that leads with designated Prevent responsibilities receive more in-depth training, including on extremist and terrorist ideologies to enable them to train and advise other staff and support making informed referrals to Prevent where necessary. The guidance also signposts government training resources, including the [GOV.UK Prevent duty training](#).

Managing Risk

The risk and threat landscape has been updated in line with the [counter-terrorism strategy \(CONTEST\) 2023](#). The risk and threat picture is broader than that of 2015 but the threat from Islamist terrorism remains the primary concern. We recommend settings consider whether their risk assessments accurately reflect and account for local risk and threat, and are proportionate based on setting size and provision

[Information Sharing](#)

The National Referral Form is being rolled out nationally with the aim for all Prevent partners to adopt this approach. The referral form means that there is greater consistency of outcome both within and across a local authority. HEPs should continue to follow their existing processes for sharing information about students susceptible to radicalisation and be aware of the Prevent referral process in their relevant local authority.

[External Speakers and Events](#)

HEPs need to balance their legal duties in terms of both securing freedom of speech and protecting learner and staff welfare. There is no prescription from government (or the Office for Students) regarding what actions providers should take once they have had due regard under the Prevent duty. In most cases, we expect that any risks posed by external speakers can be mitigated without shutting down speech.

[Free speech](#)

The refreshed Prevent duty guidance has been developed in partnership with experts and through consultation with those effected, to ensure that it is in alignment with other responsibilities and expectations.

Additional support will be made available to statutory partners to ensure that they implement their responsibilities in a proportionate and effective manner.

[Will there be changes to the monitoring process?](#)

The Office for Students (OfS) will consider the updated Prevent duty guidance when it next reviews the monitoring framework. This will be done alongside consideration of the 2023 Higher Education Freedom of Speech (FoS) Act to ensure changes are co-ordinated and consistent with other duties on HEPs. Until that time, there is no change to the basis of how OfS monitor compliance.

[What actions do I need to take?](#)

We recommend those who are responsible for the implementation and oversight of Prevent responsibilities read the general sections of the guidance as well as the sector specific part for education. You may wish to reflect on risk and threat and the good practice recommended in the guidance. You may wish to update your Prevent risk assessment and action plan (if applicable) or safeguarding policy.

[What support is there for higher education providers to implement their responsibilities?](#)

If you require further support, please contact your Prevent partner. You can also access [Prevent duty training](#).

You can [access further training materials and guidance on GOV.UK](#) and further information is available from the [OfS](#).

The [DfE Regional Prevent Co-ordinators](#) run regional networks for further and higher education leads. They also share information via [regional newsletters](#).