

Students given stronger protections against extremism on campus

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Increased support for universities to tackle extremism and intimidation.

Students and staff will receive stronger protections against extremism, harassment and intimidation on campus, as the government sets out new measures to support universities in keeping students safe and tackle rising tensions.

The steps will help universities meet their Prevent duty - the legal requirement for providers to take action to stop people being radicalised and drawn into terrorism.

The Office for Students will strengthen how it monitors whether universities are meeting Prevent responsibilities, ensuring institutions take appropriate action where serious concerns arise.

Alongside this, updated guidance will help universities manage external speakers and events responsibly, supporting providers to carry out appropriate risk checks where free speech crosses into unlawful activity or support for terrorism.

Where universities fail to meet their legal duties, the regulator has powers to intervene, including imposing sanctions or ultimately removing providers from the register.

The government will work to make the Office for Students a whistleblowing body for registered higher education providers, allowing staff to report wrongdoing directly to the regulator where they feel unable to raise concerns internally.

The government will also work with students to co-design a Campus Cohesion Charter, setting clearer expectations around conduct, respect and shared values across university life.

These measures form part of the government's wider Social Cohesion Action Plan, bringing together steps across government to strengthen resilience against extremism and reinforce shared values across communities.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said:

Universities often reflect the wider tensions playing out across our society. When conflicts or global events dominate the headlines, those debates and emotions can quickly be felt on campuses across the UK.

We know our institutions work incredibly hard to support their students and uphold the law, but it is vital they can continue a zero-tolerance approach to those who incite hatred or draw students into terrorism.

We will work closely with universities to ensure students and staff feel safe and supported, while protecting the open debate and academic freedom that are central to university life.

When tensions spill onto campus, universities are often left on the front line, balancing the need to

protect students from harassment or intimidation while upholding open debate and academic freedom.

The Office for Students has made clear it will take action where universities fail to protect students from harassment or intimidation, with powers to sanction or deregister institutions that do not comply with its conditions of registration.

Under the Prevent duty, universities already have a legal responsibility to have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. The measures announced today are designed to support universities in meeting those responsibilities and responding confidently when difficult situations arise.

The package of new measures comes as wider data shows growing pressure on institutions dealing with extremist rhetoric and hate incidents. Prevent referrals have increased over the last year by more than a quarter, reflecting both rising risks and greater efforts to identify and support people who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

Together, the measures announced by the government aim to ensure universities remain places where robust debate can take place, but where unlawful behaviour is never tolerated.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/students-given-stronger-protections-against-extremism-on-campus>