

BIRKBECK
University of London

Meeting of the Governors

11 December 2024

Annual report on Prevent compliance 2023-24

Report prepared by: Katharine Bock, College Secretary, for the Prevent Working Group

Action required: Governors are asked to note the attached Prevent duty risk register and action plan and the annual data return that has been submitted to the OFS.

- 1 University governing bodies are responsible, under the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, for preventing people from being drawn into terrorism. OFS is responsible for assuring Higher Education provider compliance with the requirements of the CTSA.
- 2 OFS has a Prevent monitoring framework in place. Under the framework universities are required to submit an accountability declaration of compliance with the Prevent requirements and a data return each year.
- 3 Birkbeck has a Prevent working group of senior staff: the DVC, College Secretary, Director of Student Services, Chief Information Officer and the Heads of Facilities, Communications, Organisational Development, and Estates resources. The group oversees compliance with the Prevent duty, considers specific issues referred to it and maintains a risk register and action plan.
- 4 The risk register and action plan, updated in November 2024 is attached as Appendix A and the data return as Appendix B. The risk register indicates a heightened risk profile with multiple causes: the impact of the Israel/Gaza conflict on the campus and social media environment and the increasing threat from bad actors on our organisation's cybersecurity and on geopolitical events impacting the wellbeing of individuals in our community. The action plan reflects the ongoing need to pay attention to campus security while preserving the rights and freedom of individuals, protect our reputation, and safeguard the interests of vulnerable people. in a more tense environment.
- 5 The return was submitted to OFS on 2 December.

Birkbeck College: Prevent duty Risk Assessment and Action Plan

Birkbeck is a diverse and complex community whose members come from different backgrounds, have different experiences and are at different stages in life. We take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. This extends to students who are young, isolated, and possibly vulnerable to ideologies as well as members of our community experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues. Equally there are mature, professional local people in our community and many students and staff who are dedicated to sincerely held beliefs about politics, society and freedom.

As a community, we value being able to operate inclusively, with diverse views and expressions and vigorous debate. We seek to work collaboratively with the Students' Union and the Trade Unions in all areas of joint interest. Birkbeck values its own radical beginnings as a college specifically for working people and much of our academic culture is built on diverse concepts of radicalism.

We promote and support freedom of speech within the law. We have a duty of care to the students, staff and visitors who make up the College community, and a duty to safeguard vulnerable individuals.

The Prevent duty requires organisations to establish senior management oversight arrangements, carry out a risk assessment and develop an action plan. Since the duty was introduced the remit has expanded to cover general safeguarding and welfare matters. The College has a working group bringing together senior academic and operational staff and the Students' Union, which has developed the risk register and action plan set out below.

Birkbeck Prevent working group

Updated November 2024

	Risk	Indicators	Impact before	Mitigation	Impact after	Action	Owner	Update
I	<p>Support for violent extremism is expressed, or illegal statements made, at events on campus, online or via social media or at other venues with Birkbeck students and staff present</p> <p>Restricted ability for academic groups and student societies to exercise freedom of thought and expression and engage in enquiry and debate</p>	<p>Students, staff and others raise concerns about events or speakers</p> <p>Information about proposed speakers indicates that they advocate violent extremism</p> <p>Police, Prevent officers or other authorities raise concerns about speakers or events</p>	H ↑	Freedom of Speech Policy defines procedure for approval of externally booked events and external speakers, via an events panel to consider operational risk and a freedom of speech panel, with academic representation, to consider and confirm any decisions not to host events or speakers	M ↑	<p>Keep Freedom of Speech policy updated and implement it</p> <p>Convene events panel as needed</p> <p>Convene freedom of speech panel as needed</p>	DCSG	<p>The impact of the Israel Hamas conflict continued throughout the year.</p> <p>We have needed to manage the impact of pro Palestine action, including encampments at neighbouring University of London institutions. This has been done jointly with the other institutions involved.</p> <p>At the same time we must acknowledge and protect the interests of all involved, from both sides of the conflict.</p> <p>The free speech policy was reviewed in preparation for the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act and new OFS conditions of registration. The new Government paused implementation of the Act, and we found the</p>

Risk	Indicators	Impact before	Mitigation	Impact after	Action	Owner	Update
							policy to be fit for its current purpose.
		M	<p>Room hire terms and conditions make reference to Freedom of Speech policy and require adherence to all College policies including Events/External Speakers procedures</p> <p>Room hire terms and conditions and procedures require bookers to define nature of event, speakers and risk assessment, and to identify an appropriately experienced individual to be present at and manage the event.</p>	L/M↑	Terms and Conditions for room bookings include Risk assessment/due diligence criteria and external speaker information disclosure, with training delivered to staff involved.	Deputy Director Estates Resources	We have had several internal room bookings made by staff and students that should have been put through the external booking process with risk assessment and due diligence. We have been able to manage the impact of these individually, but the booking process and terms and conditions need to be reviewed.
			Procedures for managing internal and external communications if issues arise with specific events		Procedures and routes of escalation have been agreed	Deputy Director of Communications	
			Social Media Principles agreed and published		Referred to College Ethics Committee. Social Media Guidelines agreed and	Deputy Director of Communications	We have needed to manage the impact of staff social media posts and complaints arising from them. We have obtained specialist legal advice on

	Risk	Indicators	Impact before	Mitigation	Impact after	Action	Owner	Update
						published on the internal/staff website		lawful free speech. The individuals involved have been made aware of the impact of their actions and asked to be clear they do not speak for Birkbeck.
2	Individual students, members of staff or visitors experience harm or distress , affecting their wellbeing and potentially the wellbeing of others	Complaints, feedback or concerns raised by students, staff or visitors	M/H→	Agree and implement an effective safeguarding policy, aligned with the College Code of Student Discipline, Student Terms and Conditions and Fitness to Study policies and procedures, with appropriate contacts for referral to counselling, mental health and other support, via a safeguarding panel	M→	Keep Safeguarding policy and procedure updated and implement it Publicise safeguarding policy and procedure to students and staff Safeguarding policy updated with information on front line contacts and how decisions are made.	Director of Student Services	Safeguarding policy on College website Wellbeing Services and Safeguarding on Student Services Connect site
				Agree procedure for referring individuals at risk of being drawn into violent extremism, in consultation with local Prevent officers		If an individual at risk is identified, the Director of Student Services on behalf of the safeguarding panel will contact local Prevent officers who will advise on referral.	Director of Student Services	We are seeing more people experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues or unclear/mixed ideologies

	Risk	Indicators	Impact before	Mitigation	Impact after	Action	Owner	Update
				Training and briefing for staff and SU officers on applying the safeguarding policy and supporting vulnerable individuals		<p>Draw up and implement awareness training plan, tailored for different staff categories according to their level of contact with students and visitors</p> <p>Training team attends events by Prevent Co-ordinator</p> <p>Include safeguarding in new staff induction</p>	Head of Organisational Development & Change	<p>Safeguarding training to be made part of compulsory training for all staff</p> <p>Categories of staff who undertake specific Prevent training updated and expanded.</p> <p>Prevent working group, which includes Head of ODC, attends events run by DFE Prevent Co-Ordinator with renewal training every two years.</p>
	Violent incident occurs on our premises		M/H→	Preparation for the Protection of Premises (Terrorism) Act (Martyn's Law) to ensure we are prepared for an incident and able to respond effectively	M/H↑	Work on the Protect duty to continue in 2024	Director of Estates and Facilities	External consultants engaged in a security review including preparation for Martyn' Law.
3	Reputational damage Poor communication with media and stakeholders	<p>Media enquiries</p> <p>Social media mentions</p> <p>Internal information</p> <p>External information from stakeholders</p>	M/H↑	Procedures for managing internal and external communications if issues arise with specific issues or events	M→	Procedures and routes of escalation established	Deputy Director of Communications	As above, the Israel/Hamas conflict has raised the risk environment

	Risk	Indicators	Impact before	Mitigation	Impact after	Action	Owner	Update
				Monitoring of media/social media		Establish mechanisms for monitoring media/social media	Deputy Director of Communications	
	Decision making in relation to safeguarding, events and external speakers is not justified or sufficiently transparent			Agreed procedures in Freedom of Speech / External speaker /safeguarding policy and procedures		Annual report via Academic Board	Director of Student Services	
4	College IT facilities used to receive, research or communicate inappropriate content	Complaints by students, staff or visitors	M↑	College Computing Regulations set out acceptable and unacceptable computer use	M↑	College Computing Regulations revised to rule against downloading, creating, transmitting or storing material that is indecent, threatening or discriminatory. Updated policies agreed October 2022	CIO	The threat landscape has changed with the risk of cyber incidents as well as incidents on our premises, linking this area with IT security. There is a risk of threat from State actors as well as individuals Information Services frontline staff will be included in future Prevent training Following the Cyber Incident in July 2024 the IS team are on heightened alert with additional


	Risk	Indicators	Impact before	Mitigation	Impact after	Action	Owner	Update
								security defences instigated including 24x7 monitoring and alerts
			L/M↑	Consideration given to filtering internet access	L/M↑	Considered SPC 2016; agreed costs outweigh benefits	CIO	Reconsidering filtering policies given the current climate
				Ethics procedures to protect those conducting approved security sensitive research		Included in Responsibilities and Procedures for Ethical Review document	DCSG	We will consider risk to individuals from online bad actors (eg via Linked In) in 2024
5	Impact of events or issues in nearby or partner organisations	<p>Events in the Bloomsbury area</p> <p>Complaints; negative media interest</p> <p>Information from neighbouring/partner institutions</p> <p>Information from local police/Prevent officers</p>	M↑	Sharing information on current risks and developments with neighbours.	M↑	<p>Ensure contacts, areas of responsibility and routes of communication are established and agreed</p> <p>Use security network contacts</p>	Head of Facilities	<p>As above our neighbour institutions SOAS and UCL have had pro-Palestine encampments There have also been demonstrations and protests close to our campus potentially disrupting our activities and have needed to manage the impact of this.</p> <p>We supported the University of London, the owner of the land where the SOAS encampment was, in obtaining an injunction to prevent further occupations.</p>

	Risk	Indicators	Impact before	Mitigation	Impact after	Action	Owner	Update
	External organisations using our premises or misleadingly linking us to their views	As above		Management of specific issues and events in line with risks 2 and 3 above, including events and free speech panels as needed		As in risks 2 and 3 above	Deputy Director Estates Resources	This has also become a cybersecurity risk
				Regular monitoring of the Multi Faith Room to ensure use policy is followed and the facility is accessible to all		Regular checks by staff		
				Raise awareness of Multi Faith Room policy		Expectations of use are posted on the website		
				Faith, Philosophical Belief and Religion statement for students		Policy posted on website		

Prevent annual accountability declaration

Throughout the year and up to the date of approval, Birkbeck College:

- has had due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism (the Prevent duty)
- has provided to OfS all required information about its implementation of the Prevent duty
- has reported to OfS in a timely way all serious issues related to the Prevent duty, or now attaches to this document any reports that should have been made, with an explanation of why they were not submitted
- has reviewed, and where necessary, updated its Prevent risk assessment and action plan

Name	Sir Andrew Cahn
Role	Chair of Governors
Signed	
Date	2/12/24

I confirm that I have the authority to sign on behalf of the governing body, or proprietor where there is no governing body.

Declarations should be signed by the chair of the governing body or proprietor (where a governing body does not exist) or a person within the provider who has received delegated authority to sign such declarations on behalf of the governing body or the proprietor. This declaration would be treated as confirmation that the provider has had due regard to the Prevent duty.