

**Students not Suspects Policy Proposal**

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| **Contact details**  |
| Your name (Proposer of the policy) | Hadiza Adah |
| The name of a person who supports the policy (Seconder of the policy) | Ropafadzo Mugadza |

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| **Student Impact**  |
| Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how. | Yes I have, I have verbally spoken to students, and spoken to the Islamic, Afro-Caribbean and Nigerian society concerning the proposal and how it would affect them.  |
| How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students? | It decriminalises the functioning of the Prevent act in the university and ensures the university is a safe space for students where students do not fear prosecution. It creates a space where students can freely share ideas without fear of being reported as a risk of radicalisation. It further lobby’s the university to ensure they do not act extremely in their implementation of prevent. It also provides support to groups of students who may be negatively affected by the Prevent Act  |

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| **Policy Proposal**  |
| **The Union Notes** (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible. |
| **UPSU notes:**1. The government’s Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a statutory requirement on public bodies and ‘specified authorities’ – including universities – to ‘prevent people being drawn into terrorism’ and to implement the ‘Prevent’ agenda[[1]](#footnote-1).2. That CTSB (Counter Terrorism and Security Bill) seeks to make the controversial thePrevent and Channel strategies statutory[[2]](#footnote-2)3. CTSB will criminalise ideas in a climate where students and academics will become increasingly unwilling to speak out.[[3]](#footnote-3)4. The Prevent agenda, as part of the Government’s ‘anti-extremism’ work has been used to create an expansive surveillance architecture to spy on the public and to police dissent, systematically targeting Black people and Muslims.5. Under Prevent, lecturers have been known to 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, whilst politically active students have found themselves visited by counter-terrorism officers.6. The Government’s counter-terrorism/security policy is fundamentally flawed in its approach; its operant concepts of ‘extremism’ and ‘radicalism’ are ill-defined and open to abuse for political ends. Universities UK have raised serious concerns about freedom of speech and academic freedom in their parliamentary consultation.[[4]](#footnote-4)7. The Act further criminalises Muslims and Black people, and comes amidst a campaign of fear and demonisation from the government.8. That the National Union of Students (NUS) and University and Colleges Union (UCU) have both passed motions at their conferences opposing the Act and Prevent.Prevent has been unanimously rejected at the March 2016 NUT (National Union ofTeachers) conference. Warwick University staff condemned Prevent at their March2016 Assembly (96 in favour, 5 against, 13 abstentions)[[5]](#footnote-5) |
| **The Union Believes** (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in ‘The Union Notes’ |
| 1. Islamophobia is massively on the rise across Europe, is state-sponsored and legitimised by the mainstream media.2. The government’s identified ‘warning signs’ of “radicalisation” problematise and renders suspect those with mental health difficulties. They include:a. “A need for identity, meaning and belonging”b. “A desire for political or moral change”c. “Relevant mental health issues”.There is no legal definition for the terms radicalisation, extremism, non-violent extremism, radicaliser and British Values: these are just government definitions reflecting the Government’s agenda.3. That the Act could serve to isolate many students who already feel that the only avenue through which the Government will engage them is ‘anti-radicalisation’ initiatives, resulting in further alienation and disaffection.4. The Act discourages free expression and analysis of ideas. Academics, as well as anyone in a public sector job, should not have to be part of this surveillance.5. That universities and colleges are places for education, not surveillance: students are not suspects.6. The implementation of the Prevent Strategy on campus will not only isolate Muslim students but undermine the civil liberties of other groups such as environmental, political and humanitarian activists.7. As a Charity, we as a Students’ Union, are not legally bound to engage with Prevent and should seek to boycott it.8. The Prevent Agenda infiltration into counselling and mental health counselling is concerning: practitioners are encouraged to pathologise different cultures and identities, discouraging people from seeking help knowing they could be subject to surveillance and punishment.9. Alienating minority groups and those targeted by Prevent is actually counterproductive in the war on terror.10. Over half of referrals to Channel are now school age children, and there were more referrals within the first 5 months of 2015 than or the whole of 2014, or any year since its introduction. |
| **The Union Resolves** (Actions) Here you will describe the action you want to be taken, be specific. |
| 1. To constructively challenge the university, where legally possible, on the development and implementation of the Prevent Strategy.2. To mandate the relevant officer to work with the university towards implementing a system for reporting incidents of racism, discrimination or exclusion. This involves encouraging students to report any cases to the complaints and appeals team.3. To ensure that Islamic Societies receive the support from UPSU Advice Centre, which is independent and confidential, to support them with disputes or discrimination cases when needed. 4. To ensure that students are able to access information on their rights, and what help is available should they be concerned about Prevent.5. To support Islamophobia Awareness Month as an annual initiative.6. To work with campus trade unions including UCU on combating the Prevent strategy and its implementation on campus 7. To work with the university concerning how they are choosing to engage with prevent. This involves:a. Demanding publications about how the policy is operating within theUniversity and the Students’ Union. (This could be done via emails)b. Includes access to materials used to train university staff.c. Hold consultations with the wider student body on how this affects students.8. To support the NUS legal challenge and research into Prevent and alternatives9. To defend freedom of speech in line with the newly passed NUS policy.   |
| **Appendices/supporting information** Please include any supporting information relevant to your motion, this could include; consideration of how you would achieve any points in ‘The Union Resolves’, links to news articles or online publications |
| The government released the prevent strategy, and whilst it may seem like a good initiative, it does not clearly state what the terms are or what radicalisation is. A lot of terms in the prevent act are not clear enough, hence it will be difficult to implement them. Students stand a chance of being criminalised for speaking up or innocent comments. Currently, Mel Joyner (director of student services) is overseeing the implementation within the university. The SU has a good working relationship with her and we currently get updates around what approach the university is taking. This proposal seeks to continue this relationship and strengthen it. Through carrying out the projects we already do for example Islamic Awareness week, directing student to online information and encouraging students to flag up any incidents which occur. A lot of the resolves could be completed over emails (e.g getting information from the university on how they are implementing the prevent strategy) Below I have included some supporting information. Appendix 1 – Students’ Unions which have passed similar “Condemn Prevent” motions:1. London School of Economics and Political Science (LSESU)2. Kingston3. Bristol4. Birmingham5. Bradford6. City of London7. King’s College8. University College London (UCL)9. Durham10. Manchester11. Edinburgh12. Royal Holloway13. Brunel14. Goldsmiths, London15. Heriott-Watt16. Stirling17. Cardiff18. Aberdeen19. Birkbeck, London20. Oxford21. Exeter22. Sussex23. Strathclyde24. University of the Arts, London (SUARTS)25. SOAS, London26. Leeds27. Warwick28. University of East Anglia (UEA)29. Leeds Beckett30. Salford31. LancasterAppendix 2 – Further reading<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/26/enacted> <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/blog/Pages/counter-extremism-prevent-implications-universities.aspx> <http://www.preventwatch.org/cases/><http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-35823876><http://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/only-4-of-people-think-david-cameronsantiextremist-policy-works-a3215961.html><http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/when-my-school-received-counter-terrorismprevent-training-the-only-objectors-were-white-that-says-a6957916.html><http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03m5jh9>  |

1. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/26/enacted> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/26/enacted> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/dec/02/anti-terror-bill-making-radical-ideas-crime-campus [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/blog/Pages/counter-extremism-prevent-implications-universities.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/warwick-university-staff-praised-by-students-for-condemninggovernment-s-green-paper-and-prevent-a6926116.html [↑](#footnote-ref-5)