GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS WHOSE RESEARCH MAY POTENTIALLY FALL WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE 'PREVENT' DUTY

The Prevent duty, set out within the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, requires higher education institutions to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

The government's Prevent duty guidance states that relevant higher education institutions need to balance their legal duties in terms of both freedom of speech and academic freedom, whilst also protecting student and staff welfare. The approach at the University of Oxford is cognisant of those duties and is focused overwhelmingly on student and staff welfare. The University's main concern is researcher safety; researchers may be exposed to radicalising materials or visit areas in cyber or physical space where they could be put in danger (from the others in that space or if this could put themselves at risk of prosecution). If this is the case, this needs to be considered and addressed in any application for ethical review.

For researchers applying to the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) for ethical review and approval, some of the related issues and questions to consider might include:

1. Could your research potentially come within the scope of the Prevent duty? In particular, are there risks of you being drawn into actively supporting violent or unlawful extremism or terrorist ideologies, groups or actions? If so, how has this been discussed with your research supervisor(s) or head of department as appropriate?

2. Have you consulted any relevant professional guidance (e.g. the Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers) to consider your own physical and psychological safety?

3. If your research involves overseas travel, have you:
    i.   completed a travel risk assessment (see Safety Office Travel and Fieldwork guidance)?
    ii. made arrangements for maintaining contact with (or reporting regularly to) your supervisor/principal investigator/other named contact within the University while you are away?

4. If your research involves extended periods of fieldwork (either within the UK or overseas) or involves long-term observation of participants, have you:
    i.   consulted any relevant professional guidance (e.g. the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice)?
    ii. if relevant, considered methodological principles which are also relevant to ethnographic research (e.g. around participant-observer ground rules, being an insider, avoiding over-attachment, immersion) and how to manage any associated risks?
    iii. consulted any relevant University guidance (e.g. the University's and Social Sciences Division's Safety in Fieldwork guidance)?

<ol type="i" start="4">
attended any related training offered by the University (e.g. <u>Fieldwork Safety Overseas</u>, organised by the University Safety Office or <u>Preparation for Safe Fieldwork</u> organised by the <u>Social Sciences Division</u>)?
made arrangements for debriefing after fieldwork (e.g. with your supervisor, colleague(s), peer group)?

5. If your research will involve you accessing, downloading, creating, storing or transferring materials related to violent or unlawful extremism or terrorism ideology (electronically or in paper form), how will you ensure that the materials are safely held and accessed only by you (and your supervisor(s))? The concern related to the Prevent duty is that data about websites you access and/or the materials you collect and create for academic and research purposes are kept securely by you so that other people cannot access, copy or hack your research resources. See also the University's '<u>Guidance on research involving security-sensitive research material</u>'. For practical advice on information security, see the University's <u>Information Security</u> website and contact the University's Research Data Team (researchdata.ox.ac.uk) or consult your department/faculty guidelines.

6. If your research requires access to the Dark Web, please also follow <u>CUREC's Best Practice Guidance (06) on Internet-based research</u>.

7. If you encounter online materials which should be reported to the UK Home Office, please use the government's <u>reporting portal</u>. If you encounter large quantities of data (not suitable for the reporting portal), please contact the Computer Sciences Departmental Research Ethics Committee (via <u>their email address</u>) which can put you in direct contact with UK law enforcement Counter Terrorism teams for data transfer.

8. If a proposed research study involving human participants and personal data potentially raises issues relevant to the Prevent duty, this must generally be reviewed via the full application (CUREC2) process, for ethically more complex research. However, a CUREC application could potentially be treated as low-risk (e.g. assessed via a CUREC1 or CUREC1a form) if the research will not involve prolonged direct exposure to the radicalising materials (e.g. using a dataset to train machine learning classifiers). Advice should be sought, on a case-by-case basis, from the relevant ethics committee.

9. Further advice may also be sought from the University's <u>Prevent Steering Group</u> (or via <u>their email address</u>) which has been established to consider how the University should best give effect to the Statutory Prevent duty.