



For Immediate Release, Friday 17 November 2006

NUS, UCU, UNISON, FOSIS (the Federation of Student Islamic Students), and the ECU (Equality Challenge Unit) take seriously the threat of terrorism and believe that all those who would advocate or carry out attacks like those in London last July, must be isolated, identified and stopped.

The guidance* issued to universities and colleges today - whilst improved from previous leaked drafts - will however not solve all the issues, nor does it give sufficient emphasis to concrete steps to improve good campus relations.

University and college staff and students need to be given simple, clear advice about who to contact in their institution if they suspect violent extremism or terrorist activity of any kind. Any link with the authorities should be through a senior member of staff designated for that purpose.

Where this guidance is to be implemented at local level, it should only be after consultation with the recognised staff unions and student unions.

Implementation should not focus on individuals' religion and ethnicity, since this can jeopardise trust and confidence between staff and students and between staff, students and their institution.

Any implementation should recognise that demonising Muslims is unacceptable and dangerous - whether in educational institutions or in communities. Students and staff should be assured by their institutions that there is no intention of adding to a climate of Islamophobia.

Enquiry, discussion and debate must continue to flourish in universities and colleges. Radicalism must not be conflated with terrorism.

Freedom of debate is essential if educational institutions are to continue providing a moderating environment where people learn about different cultures and communities, ideas are challenged and diversity is valued as integral to the role of the institution.

There should be absolute respect for academic freedom as statutorily defined and there should be no criminalisation of legitimate debate.

All institutions should have a robust strategy for defeating racism and Islamophobia and promoting better race relations on campus. Assistance from the ECU is available to facilitate this.

(The document 'Preventing Extremism Together' provides some useful suggestions as does 'Promoting Good Campus Relations' published by Universities UK (UUK), ECU and Guild UK with support from UCU, NUS and Unison.)

Universities should be encouraged to connect with the communities they serve as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

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National Union of Students, University and College Union, Unison, Equality Challenge Unit, Federation of Student Islamic Students

*Promoting Good Campus Relations: Working With Staff and Students to Build Community Cohesion and Tackle Violent Extremism in the Name of Islam at Universities and Colleges. DfES