'THEOS'

Supporting Faith and Belief Student Societies

A short guide for students' unions.

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Introduction

Faith and belief-related student societies play essential roles in universities. They build community and friendships, helping combat loneliness on campus. Many provide students with pastoral and spiritual support, and many contribute to wider society by driving social action work and charitable fundraising.

But at the same time, these societies often face challenges which limit the contribution they can make to campus life, including their capacity to build bridges across different groups. They need better resources and support from universities and students' unions in order to meet their potential of being key sources of cohesion on campus.

This guide is aimed at students' union staff members, to help you improve your support for faith and belief societies, and students of different religions and beliefs more widely. It is based on the findings of major new research into the experiences of and challenges facing faith and belief societies on campus: *Faith and Belief on Campus: Division and Cohesion* (2019).[1]

This research was undertaken by Theos, the UK's leading religion and society think tank, in partnership with the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University. You can download the report and executive summary here:

https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2019/07/03/faith-and-belief-on-campus-division-and-cohesion

The guide sets out how you can:

1. **Map your current provision for faith and belief societies**

2. **Equip your staff**

3. **Support your societies**

4. **Connect your societies**

5. **Generate new societies**

It also contains advice on handling freedom of speech issues on campus, and summarises the legal framework for this.

Why support faith and belief societies?

A huge number of students participate in activities organised by faith and belief societies. There are at least 888 of these societies on UK campuses, with an average of 6.3 in each institution. Christian Unions are the most common type of faith and belief society, followed by Islamic Societies. More than 18,000 students are estimated to be members of faith and belief societies, and many more attend their events without formally signing up.

Our research found that these societies make enormous contributions to campus life. There is huge diversity between different societies, with some being inward-facing (focusing on building community among their own members), and others looking outwards as well (engaging in the local community, or engaging in faith sharing). Their activities include:

Providing space to practise, learn about and develop students' religion or belief.

This is particularly important for students of minority religions or beliefs who may not have easy access to religious institutions in their local area.

Building community and friendships.

The societies can be crucial sites for combatting loneliness and supporting students with poor mental health.

Providing pastoral and spiritual support.

Leaders in these societies sometimes act as informal chaplains, acting as mentors and providing a listening ear to other students facing problems.

Creating opportunities for women's leadership and exploration of women's issues.

Women-led faith and belief societies act as critical sites for female empowerment, particularly for women of minority religious or ethnic backgrounds.

Giving back to the wider community.

Faith and belief societies contribute hugely to wider society in terms of social action projects and charitable fundraising.

Here is an example of the important work these societies can do. A President of a Sikh Society told us that he had been deeply lonely when he arrived at university, and had only found friends and settled into campus life when he founded the Sikh Society. Now he played a key role in supporting other members of the society – acting in effect as an informal chaplain, in a university which had no provision for Sikh chaplaincy:

> *I have people phoning me up, in the middle of the night, and they're like, 'This is what I'm going through today'. And they just need an ear to listen to. And I always try to open that up to them. I'm like, 'Look spirituality or religion isn't about judgment because God doesn't really judge, it's about us trying to listen to each other and really hear about what's going on'. So if there's anything to do with sex, drugs, violence at home, whatever, I'm here to listen to that so I can help you go to the right avenues about it.*

However, many societies face obstacles which limit the contributions they can make to cohesion on campus.[2] These include:

›› **Patchy support from universities and students' unions and patchy provision of needed space and resources.** While some universities offer high quality facilities and resources to students of different religions or beliefs, others do not, with students feeling insufficiently accommodated. This is a particular concern for Jewish and Muslim students, with some universities lacking suitable access to kosher or halal food or prayer facilities.

›› **Organisational and funding issues.** Committee members of the societies face significant pressures in terms of time and decision-making responsibilities which can sometimes be overwhelming. Some societies struggle to secure sufficient funds to carry out activities.

›› **Internal divisions over sectarian, denominational or ethnic orientations.** Some faith and belief societies are dominated by specific sects or ethnic groups, and students from outside those groups can feel excluded or assume (rightly or wrongly) that they would not be welcome.

›› **A lack of capacity to undertake interfaith activities.** Faith and belief societies are often willing to form collaborations with different societies, but logistical issues frequently prevent them from doing so. Societies that are primarily focused on faith-sharing are often less interested in forming collaborations with societies of different religions or beliefs.

Our findings show that faith and belief societies are often overlooked sources of cohesion and pastoral support on campus. They need much greater institutional and organisational support from their students' unions in order to flourish. The following sections set out how you can provide this.

1. MAPPING your provision

Start by initiating regular 'health check' meetings with committee members of each of your faith and belief societies. Ideally these meetings will be conducted by the permanent member of staff in the students' union who will take on the religion or belief brief (see below). Use the conversations to find out:

- **The societies' current and planned activities**

- **Their goals (short and long-term)**

- **Any challenges they are facing**

- **Their relationships (if any) with external support structures – such as chaplains or local faith leaders, or national umbrella organisations supporting students of particular religions or beliefs**

- **Their internal pastoral support structures (if present) and how these work. Some societies may have formal pastoral committee positions (such as Head Brothers and Sisters in some Islamic Societies); in others, pastoral support may be provided informally by the main committee members, as we saw in the Sikh Society example.**

The purpose of these regular 'health check' meetings is to help you to understand how each of your faith and belief societies functions in practice; what external support structures for them are already in place and working well; and what further support they may need from the students' union.[3]

Keep a record of these conversations to help you track developments within the societies and identify any problems that emerge over time. For example, you could create a spreadsheet recording when you last spoke to members of a society; the current size of the society (both formal and active membership); current activities; any challenges identified; and any actions or goals set.

Some of your faith and belief societies may already be receiving support from national umbrella organisations for particular religions or beliefs. Some of these organisations help their associated societies to put on events, suggest suitable external speakers, and advocate on the students' behalf at a national level. You can contact them for advice on supporting your societies.[4]

Be aware that there may be religion or belief groups meeting regularly on campus which are not formally affiliated to the students' union. Try reaching out to these students to see what their needs are and how the students' union can support them.
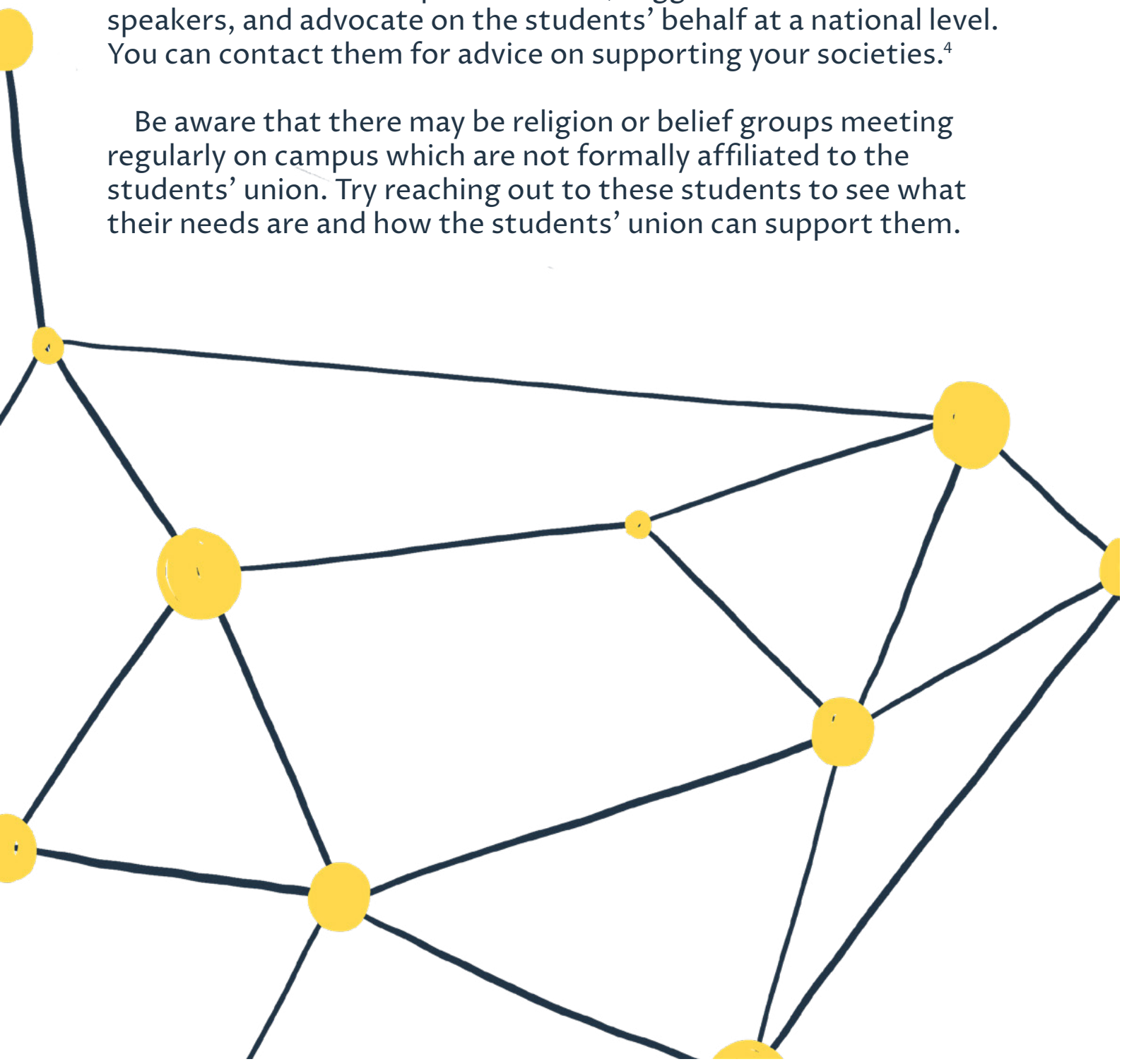
2. EQUIPPING your staff

It is essential that your students' union/university has staff members who can work closely with your faith and belief societies to help them organise and overcome problems. Our research found that the ideal arrangement at a university is a permanent staff member in the students' union who has been given a religion or belief brief, alongside a strong chaplaincy team. The students' union staff member provides the faith and belief societies with practical support to achieve their goals and navigate the union's policies, while the chaplains provide essential pastoral support to individual students.

a — Assign a permanent member of the students' union staff a religion or belief brief

This person will be responsible for helping the faith and belief societies to flourish. Ideally, it should be a permanent member of staff (not a sabbatical officer) in order to develop long-term relationships of trust with the societies and to retain institutional understanding of those societies within your union.

b — Ensure this staff member (if not all staff members) receives appropriate religious literacy training

This means that the staff member needs to be sensitive to the needs of students of diverse religions or beliefs, and be confident about discussing with them their beliefs, practices, values and needs.

What is religious literacy?

Various understandings of **'religious literacy'** have been proposed in recent years.[5] Religious literacy is about a combination of relevant knowledge and skills. As a working definition, we suggest that to be religiously literate the staff member should have:

- A basic level of knowledge about the beliefs, practices and traditions of the main religion or belief traditions in Britain (including atheism or Humanism), and about the shape of our changing religion or belief landscape today.[6]

  This should be complemented by an appreciation that these traditions are changing, porous and mutually influencing, and that there are important differences between them. For example, some traditions are more concerned with correct behaviour and religious practices than with correct beliefs. This has implications for what students need on campus: for example, some religious students may be more concerned with adhering to religious dietary requirements (and having the facilities to do so) than with worship or prayer.

- An awareness of how beliefs, inherited traditions and textual interpretations might manifest into the actions, practices and daily lives of individuals in different ways. Crucial to this is an understanding of the diversity within religious traditions, and of the fact that the same text, or religious principle, can be interpreted in different ways by different individuals.

- A critical awareness, meaning that an individual has the ability to recognise, analyse and critique stereotypes about religions or beliefs, and can engage effectively with, and take a nuanced approach towards, the questions raised by religions or beliefs.

- A sophisticated ability to engage with religion or belief groups in a way which promotes respect and plurality, and which enables effective communication about religion or belief.[7]

The staff member with a religion or belief brief also needs to have a good understanding of the practical issues that may arise on campus for students of different religions or beliefs – such as difficulties in accessing appropriate facilities for prayer or for observing religious dietary requirements, and difficulties that may arise regarding exams that are held during special religious periods like Ramadan.[8]

There is no right or wrong way to improve your religious literacy. It is best to receive training from specialists who understand the university sector. For example, the Faith & Belief Forum provides a range of training workshops to help university staff understand the experiences of students of different religions or beliefs and how they can be supported better. The organisation also has expertise in stimulating interfaith activity on campus.

See https://faithbeliefforum.org/programme/faith-and-be-lief-training-for-universities/

In addition, you could ask for advice from your university's chaplains. Speak to colleagues in other nearby universities to find out if they have accessed particular training.

You can also access useful resources online. FutureLearn, in partnership with The Open University, offers a free, short online course on religious literacy, aimed at professionals working in a variety of sectors.[9] AdvanceHE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) has produced useful guidance booklets on a number of religious traditions, which include summaries of their beliefs and practices as well as practical issues that university staff should be aware of regarding them.[10]

The NUS also offers several online resources for students' union staff about how to manage tensions on campus (including relating to religion or belief) and how to create spaces for dialogue.[11]

C

Work towards ensuring that the provision of chaplains and faith advisors in your university reflects the major religions and beliefs on your campus

While many universities provide chaplains, often they are primarily Christian. Having connections with chaplains (salaried or voluntary) from all the major religions and beliefs on your campus helps students of different backgrounds feel supported and welcome. Make the case for diverse chaplaincy provision to your university management.[12]

There are a number of organisations and networks that you can contact when looking to recruit new chaplains.
For example:

Anglicans:

The Church of England Education Office. See the National Further Education and Higher Education Policy Advisor https://www.churchofengland.org/more/education-and-schools/education-contacts

Catholics:

Catholic Chaplains in Higher Education
https://ccche.org.uk/

Non-conformist, Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians:

The Free Churches Group. See the Education Officer
https://www.freechurches.org.uk/staff

Muslims:

Association of Muslim Chaplains in Education. It offers various services including a review of university provision for Muslim students https://www.amced.org.uk/

Jews:

University Jewish Chaplaincy. It operates under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi
https://www.mychaplaincy.co.uk/

3. SUPPORTING societies

The staff member with a religion or belief brief should allocate a suitable proportion of their working time to supporting and developing faith and belief societies.[13] They should:

A. Hold regular 'health check' meetings with faith and belief society committee members to identify problems and help them achieve their goals

Where these societies are new or small, the staff member should advise the society members on strategies for ensuring the long-term survival of the society.

B. Assist the societies with advertising their presence and any events they put on

Our research found that some of these societies (particularly the smaller ones) struggled to advertise their events effectively. There are simple steps that students' unions can take to support societies in this regard, such as advertising the societies' events via the union's social media.

C. Provide annual training before the start of each academic year to incoming faith and belief society committee members

The organisational skills to be covered could include budgeting, advertising, event planning, society democratic structures, navigating the external speaker processes, handling internal tensions and sensitive issues, and signposting students to appropriate pastoral support. This training could be given in workshops dedicated to faith and belief societies, in recognition of their similar activities and challenges. Consider inviting external groups with expertise in interfaith dialogue, such as the Faith & Belief Forum, to help deliver such training. You could also organise a follow-up training workshop at the start of the second term of the academic year, to help committee members learn from their experiences in the first term.

D. Organise Meet and Greet events focusing on religion or belief during Welcome Week which are alcohol-free

Students' unions can help new students find friends of the same tradition by organising welcome events focused on religion or belief. Such events would help faith and belief societies to recruit new members, but would also help students whose traditions are not represented by a specific student society to meet each other. The events would also encourage friendship formation between people of different religions or beliefs.

These events should be alcohol-free. Teetotal students of different religions and beliefs often feel excluded during alcohol-based social events, and as such sometimes struggle to make friends during general Welcome Week activities.

E. Advocate for the provision of suitable facilities and resources for all major religions or beliefs on campus

Some universities do not offer suitable provision of physical spaces like prayer rooms or special kitchen facilities for the preparation of kosher or halal food. We found that some Muslim and Jewish students in particular felt unable to practice their religion as they wished as a result. In addition, Muslim and Jewish students may be negatively affected by university timetables, for example finding it difficult to attend lectures scheduled on Fridays due to Friday prayers or Shabbat, or struggling in exams which fall during Ramadan or other religious festivals.

A lack of accommodation of the needs of religious students can leave them feeling unsupported or unwelcome on campus. Students' unions should identify what those needs are through the regular 'health check' meetings, and should call for the university management to address them. Students' unions should also be aware that these needs may change with each new intake of students.

4. CONNECTING societies

Faith and belief societies often struggle to undertake interfaith activities because of organisational and logistical challenges. Students' unions can make a big difference to cohesion on campus by actively encouraging different faith and belief societies to collaborate.[14] The staff member with a religion or belief brief should:

A. Encourage faith and belief societies to engage in joint events and social action projects

The staff member should convene regular meetings between committee members of the societies. These societies often face similar problems, for example in terms of organisation and (for smaller societies) low levels of participation. Committee members in different societies have much to learn from each other.

The staff member should also encourage them to identify common goals and areas for potential collaboration. One-off discussion events or social events between two or three different societies are a good way to start. The students should also be encouraged to consider forming cross-society partnerships on social action projects (whether local, like helping the homeless, or national or international), which have the greatest potential for building long-term friendships across religion or belief lines. The Faith & Belief Forum or other interfaith organisations can help you to encourage these activities on campus.

B. Help societies to set goals for interfaith

This could be done during the regular 'health check' meetings with the individual societies. The goals need to be realistic and achievable – for example, small societies could aim to organise one small-scale collaboration with another faith or belief society per term.
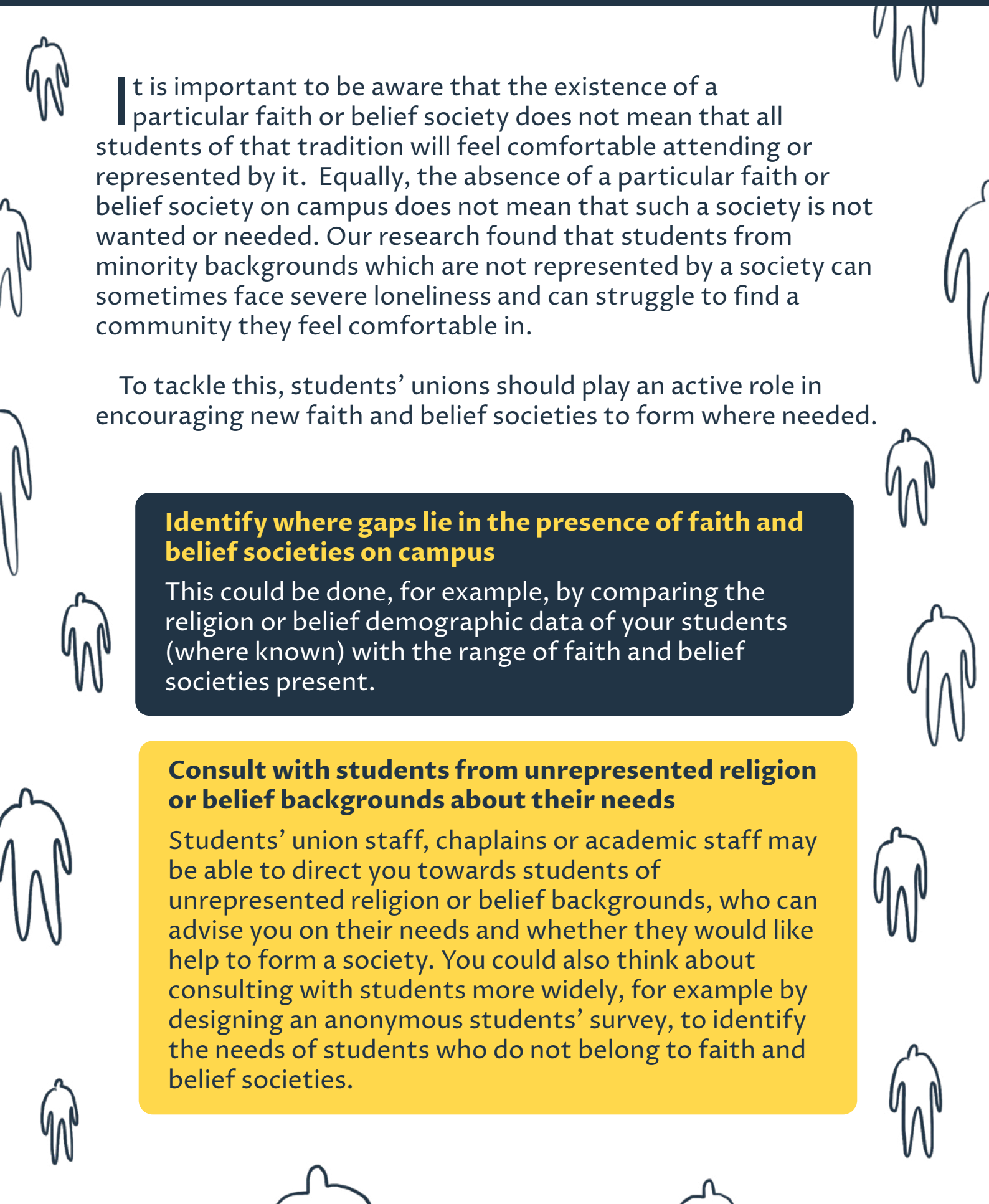
C. Consider establishing an 'interfaith buddy' scheme

Such a scheme could involve connecting students of different religions and beliefs (whether part of formal societies or not) at the start of the academic year, and encouraging them to meet regularly to discuss particular topics. The discussions could be self-organised or facilitated by an external person, for example a chaplain or faith advisor.[15]

5. GENERATING new societies

It is important to be aware that the existence of a particular faith or belief society does not mean that all students of that tradition will feel comfortable attending or represented by it. Equally, the absence of a particular faith or belief society on campus does not mean that such a society is not wanted or needed. Our research found that students from minority backgrounds which are not represented by a society can sometimes face severe loneliness and can struggle to find a community they feel comfortable in.

To tackle this, students' unions should play an active role in encouraging new faith and belief societies to form where needed.

Identify where gaps lie in the presence of faith and belief societies on campus

This could be done, for example, by comparing the religion or belief demographic data of your students (where known) with the range of faith and belief societies present.

Consult with students from unrepresented religion or belief backgrounds about their needs

Students' union staff, chaplains or academic staff may be able to direct you towards students of unrepresented religion or belief backgrounds, who can advise you on their needs and whether they would like help to form a society. You could also think about consulting with students more widely, for example by designing an anonymous students' survey, to identify the needs of students who do not belong to faith and belief societies.

6 Handling freedom of speech issues

Contrary to popular narratives, freedom of speech is not in crisis in UK universities and most students feel free to express their views.[16]

However, our research found that a minority of students feel under pressure to self-censor their views – such as students with socially or politically conservative views; students who support the policies of the Israeli government in the Israel/Palestine conflict; and some (though not all) Muslim students who feel unfairly targeted by the Prevent Duty. Additionally, some students may feel they need to avoid requesting speakers who may be seen as having controversial or extreme (though lawful) views.

Universities and students' unions should be conscious that some of their policies, such as those for the fulfilment of the Prevent Duty or external speaker vetting processes, can potentially contribute to a chilling effect on freedom of speech. Staff members should be mindful of the importance of freedom of speech when carrying out these duties, and moreover feel confident that they can prioritise that freedom while doing so.[17]

University staff: Be aware that fulfilling the Prevent Duty does not require you to deny a platform to speakers with potentially controversial views

Universities do not have to deny platforms to external speakers who have potentially controversial or extreme views but who do not pose a high risk of drawing people into terrorism. The *Prevent Duty Guidance* document produced for the Higher Education sector [18] by the Home Office does not apply to extremism that does not pose this risk.

Universities are free to decide for themselves how best to handle controversial external speaker requests, taking into consideration their legal duty to have 'due regard' to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and their legal duty to have 'particular regard' to uphold freedom of speech within the law as far as they reasonably can.[19]

Conditions to mitigate the risks can be put in place instead of cancelling an event, such as requiring that the event should be recorded or have an independent chair. For an example of how to balance the Prevent Duty and the duty to uphold freedom of speech, see guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission about freedom of speech in universities.[20]

<u>Students' union staff:</u> Ensure that freedom of speech forms part of your fundamental considerations when handling requests for controversial speakers

The legal duty to uphold freedom of speech within the law applies to universities, not to students' unions. However, students' unions are required to comply with their university's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice. In addition, in updated guidance for students' unions the Charity Commission has stated that freedom of speech "should form part of the fundamental consideration of the activities of an SU in furthering its educational objects". The Charity Commission guidance also states that where students' unions wish to adopt a No Platforming policy, the trustees must be able to demonstrate clearly that the policy is in line with their legal duties.[21]

Students' union staff should feel confident that they can host speakers with controversial or offensive views. Make sure that detailed records are kept of the process undertaken to vet external speakers, and of the deliberations about how to reduce any risks speakers might pose to the charity (such as reputational risk). Be aware that reputational risk can arise by cancelling events as well as by allowing them to proceed.[22]

Appendix: A university's legal duties relating to freedom of speech in England and Wales

Various laws affect how universities and students' unions handle external speakers. These have been summarised in guidance issued in 2019 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), compiled with assistance from the Department for Education, the Home Office, the Office for Students, the Charity Commission and the National Union of Students among other bodies. [23]

It should be noted that the legal framework set out here applies to England and Wales only; there are different legal requirements in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. [24]

The laws include:

Human Rights Act 1998

This Act says that all public bodies must comply with the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. This includes Article 10, the right to freedom of expression. Public bodies and the state can interfere with an individual's right to freedom of expression but only in specific circumstances, such as for the protection of the rights of others; and such interference must be a proportionate response to address the issue. The right to freedom of expression cannot be restricted just because other people may find it offensive or insulting.

Most publicly funded universities count as public bodies for the purpose of the Human Rights Act. Most students' unions are separate organisations from their parent universities. They are not likely to be considered public bodies for the purpose of the Act, and so are not required to comply with it directly. [25]

Education (No. 2) Act 1986

This Act places a legal duty on universities to take "reasonably practicable" [26] steps to ensure freedom of speech within the law for their members, students, employees and visiting speakers. This includes making sure that, as far as possible, no individual or group is stopped from using the university's premises for any reason connected with their beliefs or views. External speakers invited to speak on campus should not be prevented from doing so, unless they are likely to express unlawful speech or their attendance would lead the university to breach its other legal obligations, and there are no reasonably practicable steps that can be taken to reduce these risks.

The duty does not require universities to protect freedom of speech at the expense of the safety of members, students, employees and visiting speakers. So it is reasonable for a university to cancel an event if there is a threat of violent protests, and if no reasonably practicable steps (such as increased security within reasonable cost) can been taken.

The Act places its legal duty on universities, not students' unions directly. But students' unions are affected by it because the duty applies to students' unions' premises. Further, students' unions are required to follow their parent university's code of practice about securing freedom of speech within the law. [27]

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 / the Prevent Duty

This Act requires that universities have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". [28] In carrying

out this duty, the Act requires them to have "particular regard" to their duty to uphold freedom of speech under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.[29]

When carrying out this duty, universities need to have regard to the *Prevent Duty Guidance* (2015) issued by the Home Office. Concerning external speaker events, the guidance says that universities should consider the likelihood that views expressed at the event may "risk drawing people into terrorism".[30]

It was clarified in a judicial review in 2017 that the guidance is only relevant where the views being expressed risk drawing people into terrorism. Justice Ouseley stated that the guidance does not apply to "non-violent extremism... [if it] does not create a risk that others will be drawn into terrorism".[31] He also stated that while universities must consider the guidance when fulfilling their Prevent Duty, they are not required to 'follow' it to a particular outcome in their decision-making.[32] In 2019 the Court of Appeal judges confirmed these points, but found that one paragraph (paragraph 11) of the guidance is unlawful and needed to be revised.[33]

The EHRC's guidance gives an example of how universities should manage their Prevent Duty and duty to uphold freedom of speech. In the example, a speaker is invited who has "a history of associating with violent extremists and making statements that could risk drawing people into terrorism". The speaker has publicly distanced him/herself from these statements "but continues to associate with extremist groups". The EHRC advises that the university would need to assess the level of risk that this speaker would draw people into terrorism and take steps to reduce those risks. The EHRC also notes that neither prohibiting the event nor allowing it to go ahead would necessarily be unlawful, since it is down to the university decide how best to balance its legal responsibilities.[34]

Criminal Offences

Speech can be restricted legitimately if it would break the law. Criminal offences in this area include speech which causes fear or

provocation of violence; causes a person harassment, alarm or distress; is intended or is likely to stir up hatred on grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation; or amounts to a terrorism offence. Criminal law balances individuals' right to freedom of expression with the protection of other people from threats, abuse and harassment.[35]

Charity Law

Many universities and students' unions are charities and must comply with charity law requirements. For example, a charity must act only in ways which further its charitable purposes (usually to further students' education) and are for the public benefit. Its trustees must be able to show how they have decided to mitigate any risks associated with a speaker or event. They must also avoid exposing the charity's reputation to undue risk. The EHRC has clarified that this includes considering the reputational harm that may arise to a charity if it prevents a planned speaker event from going ahead as well as, conversely, any risks that may arise from allowing it to proceed.[36]

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act requires universities to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). They must consider the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and advance equal opportunities and good relations between people who have a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.[37]

This means universities must consider how they can promote equality and minimise tensions on campus. When an event on a divisive topic or with a controversial speaker is proposed, the university must consider the potential impact on students who may feel vilified or marginalised by the views expressed. This does not mean, however, that the event cannot go ahead if there is a risk of controversial speech, since the university must also comply with its duties to uphold freedom of speech within the law.[38]

Endnotes

1   This research was conducted in a partnership between Theos, the UK's leading religion and society thinktank, and Dr Kristin Aune of the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University. You can download the full report here https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/Reportfiles/Theos---Faith-and-Belief-on-Campus---Division-and-Cohesion.pdf and an executive summary here, including the summarised recommendations https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/Reportfiles/Theos---Faith-and-Belief-on-Campus---Executive-Summary.pdf

2   See also NUS (n.d.) *What are the common problems students of faith and belief face?* http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nus-digital/document/documents/14284/85655867b24a942d7a03b-9450d5e69bc/4%20What%20are%20the%20common%20problems%20students%20of%20faith%20and%20belief%20face.pdf and NUS (n.d.) *What is the experience of students of faith and belief on campus?* http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nusdigital/document/documents/14269/e2b14221d29dddcb-d0276048df8c09b0/2%20What%20is%20the%20experi-ence%20of%20students%20of%20faith%20and%20belief%20on%20campus.pdf

3   See also NUS (n.d.) *What faith and belief groups exist on your campus?* http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nusdigital/document/documents/14277/d892cf093a37396cc8fb91a63e-a577f1/3%20What%20faith%20and%20belief%20groups%20exist%20on%20your%20campus.pdf

4   The national umbrella organisations include: Agapé Student Life [Christian]; British Organisation of Sikh Students; Catholic Student Network; Christians in Sport; Federation of Student Islamic Societies; Humanist Students; Just Love [Christian]; Muslim Student Council [Shi'a / for Ahlul Bayt Societies]; National Hindu Students' Forum (UK); National Secular Society; Student Christian Movement; UCCF: The Christian Unions; Union of Jewish Students.

5   Another useful definition is provided by Adam Dinham and Stephen Jones, who understand religious literacy as "having the knowledge and skills to recognise religious faith as a legitimate and important area for public attention, a degree of general knowledge about at least some religious traditions, and an awareness of and ability to find out about others". Adam Dinham and Stephen H Jones (2010) *Religious Literacy Leadership in Higher Education: An Analysis of Challenges of Religious Faith, and Resources for Meeting Them, for University Leaders*, p. 6. https://research.gold.ac.uk/3916/1/RLLP_Analysis_AW_email.pdf

6   For details on the UK's current religion or belief landscape, see Commission on Religion or Belief in British Public Life (2015) *Living with Difference: Community, Diversity and the Common Good*. Woolf Institute, pp. 12-19. https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/assets/file-downloads/Living-with-Difference.pdf

7   This definition is adapted from the definition given by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education. See APPG on RE (2016) *Improving Religious Literacy: A Contribution to the De-bate*, p. 6. http://www.nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-971-ap-pg-on-re-improving-religious-literacy-full-report.pdf

8   For more details of such practical issues, see our full report: Simon Perfect, Ben Ryan and Kristin Aune (2019) *Faith and Belief on Campus: Division on Cohesion*. Theos, pp. 73-99. https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/Reportfiles/Theos---Faith-and-Belief-on-Campus---Division-and-Cohesion.pdf

9   See https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/why-religion-matters

10   These are part of the *Faith Guides for Higher Education* series. See: David Mossley and Simon Smith (2010) *A Guide to Buddhism* http://www.mmiweb.org.uk/publications/hefaithguides/bud-dhism.pdf;
Gregory A. Barker (2005) *A Guide to Christianity* https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/resources/guide_to_christianity_in_he.pdf;
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Eleanor Nesbitt (2005) *A Guide to Sikhism* https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/resources/guide_to_sikhism_in_he.pdf

11 See https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/learning-resources/faith-and-belief/good-campus-relations/managing-conflict

12 For more details on the importance of chaplaincy in UK universities, see Kristin Aune, Mathew Guest and Jeremy Law (2019) *Chaplains on Campus: Understanding Chaplaincy in UK Universities*. Coventry University, Durham University and Canterbury Christ Church University, p. 133. https://pure.coventry.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/23413135/Chaplains_on_Campus_full_report_final_PDF_.pdf

13 See also NUS (n.d.) *What can we do to begin engaging with faith and belief societies?* http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nus-digital/document/documents/14279/96d8fe09c70b3013cb4b-51861b3cae45/6%20What%20can%20we%20do%20to%20begin%20engaging%20with%20faith%20and%20belief%20societies.pdf

14 For further guidance see NUS (n.d.) *Building an interfaith and belief forum* http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nusdigital/document/documents/14306/0397fde79f7e0378cf172fb-4d10d5150/4.%20Building%20an%20interfaith%20and%20belief%20forum.pdf; NUS (n.d.) *Creating an action plan for inter-faith and belief activities* http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nusdigital/document/documents/14304/64348154001d4c-f340a477c4aed3edd2/3.%20Create%20an%20action%20plan.pdf; NUS (n.d.) *What activities can we do that are new and innovative?* http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nusdigital/document/documents/14285/63f3bf1cdc7996aa600908bb-57faa7bf/8%20What%20activities%20can%20we%20do%20that%20are%20new%20and%20innovative.pdf;

NUS (n.d.) *What is social action and how can it help the campus community?* http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nus-digital/document/documents/14283/9ca98ff428ab50529d-c8620a142c6305/9%20What%20is%20Social%20Action%20and%20how%20can%20it%20help.pdf

15 For an example of an interfaith buddy scheme, see https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/Faith-Centre/Programmes/Inter-faith-Buddies

16 A representative survey of over 2000 UK students in 2019 found that most students feel comfortable expressing their views at university. Most did not think that freedom of expression is threatened in their own university. More felt that freedom of expression is threatened in the UK overall (51%) than in their university (22%). However, a minority (25%) felt unable to express their views because they are "scared of disagreeing with my peers". 32% of Leave supporters, and 34% of Conservative Party supporters, felt unable to express their views, compared with 23% of Remain supporters and about a fifth of students with left-leaning views. The survey also found that students hold similar views to the general population on the value of freedom of expression. Jonathan Grant et al (2019) Freedom of expression in UK universities. The Policy Institute, pp. 8, 16, 18 https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/freedom-of-expression-in-uk-universities.pdf

17 For details on the legal duties applying to universities and to students' unions in England and Wales regarding freedom of speech, see the Appendix.

18 Home Office (2015) *Prevent Duty Guidance: For Higher Education Institutions in England and Wales*, p. 4. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/prevent-duty-guidance-for-higher-education-institutions-in-england-and-wales

19 These points were clarified in a judicial review in 2017. See *Butt v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2017] EWHC 1930 (Admin), paras. 30, 98 and 99. https://www.bindmans.com/up-loads/files/documents/CO-6361-2015_-_Butt_v_Secretary_of_State_for_the_Home_Department_-_Final...pdf

20 Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019) *Freedom of Expression: A Guide for Higher Education Providers and Students' Unions in England and Wales*, pp. 24-5. https://www.equali-tyhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/freedom-ex-pression-guide-higher-education-providers-and-students-un-ions-england

21 Charity Commission for England and Wales (2018) *Charity Commission Operational Guidance (OG 48) Students' Unions*, sections 7 and 8. http://ogs.charitycommission.gov.uk/g048a001.aspx

22 EHRC (2019) *Freedom of Expression in England and Wales*, pp. 20-1.

23 Ibid.

24 For Scotland, see Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019) *Freedom of Expression: A Guide for Higher Education Providers and Students' Unions in Scotland*. https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/freedom-expression-guide-high-er-education-providers-and-students-unions

25 EHRC (2019) *Freedom of Expression in England and Wales*, pp. 11-12, 15.

26 Education (No. 2) Act 1986, s. 43.

27 EHRC (2019) *Freedom of Expression in England and Wales*, pp. 13-15, 22.

28 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, s. 26.

29 Ibid, s. 31.

30 Home Office (2015) *Prevent Duty Guidance*, p. 4.

31 *Butt v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2017] EWHC 1930 (Admin), s. 30. https://www.bindmans.com/uploads/files/documents/CO-6361-2015_-_Butt_v_Secretary_of_State_for_the_Home_Department_-_Final...pdf

32 Ibid, s. 98.

33 *R (on the application of Salman Butt) v The Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2019] EWCA Civ 256 https://www.bindmans.com/uploads/files/documents/R_(Butt)_-v-_SSHD_(Final).pdf

34 EHRC (2019) *Freedom of Expression in England and Wales*, p. 25.

35 Ibid, p. 17.

36 Ibid, p. 21

37 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The PSED only applies to the ninth protected characteristic, marriage and civil partnership, in relation to employment issues.

38 EHRC (2019) *Freedom of Expression in England and Wales*, pp. 18-19, 26.

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Please do get in touch if you have any further questions.

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