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.

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 Overseas Travel 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 Science Division’s Safety in Fieldwork guidance)?
iv. attended any related training offered by the University (e.g. Fieldwork Planning and Supervision organised by the University Safety Office, or workshops also organised by the Social Sciences Division)?

v. 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 your (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. For practical advice on information security, see the University’s Information Security website or consult your department/faculty guidelines.

For further guidance, in the first instance, please contact the University’s Prevent Steering Group (either via the Chair, Dr Glenn Swafford (glenn.swafford@admin.ox.ac.uk), or the Secretary, Sarah Cowburn (sarah.cowburn@admin.ox.ac.uk)) who may then redirect your query within the Steering Group as appropriate.