

## **University Research Ethics Sub-Committee Guidance on the Prevent Duty when submitting an Ethics Application**

Within a Research Ethics application, one of the questions on the 'scope' tab refers to security sensitive research:

### **Security Sensitive Research**

Does your research fit into any of the below categories:

- -Research commissioned by the military,
- -Research commissioned under an EU security call,
- -Research involving the acquisition of security clearances,
- -Research concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

There is a lack of definitional clarity in these terms which may cause confusion among applicants.

The driver for this question is the University's obligations under the Terrorism Act (2006) and Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015) – also known as the PREVENT duty. (For more information on this, see 7.23-7.24 of the [Research Ethics Procedures](#)). This broadly applies to current terrorist activity which is considered to be of relevance to UK security, UK nationals or the global war on terror. The intention is not to stop research but to ensure that security-sensitive material which could be construed as supporting or promulgating terrorism is not distributed. Ethical scrutiny will also protect researchers from suspicion and potential criminal investigation.

So, projects which **would** need reporting under these requirements would include:

- Studies on any of the groups currently proscribed by the Home Office – see [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations policy paper](#)
- These would include for example
  - Studies of the activities of current far-right groups, e.g. infiltration of the far right into music scenes
  - Studies of current international terrorist networks

The following types of project **would not** normally need reporting:

- Historical studies of terrorism, e.g. French reign of terror; colonial (e.g. Boer War) studies; history of the IRA
- Mainstream media analysis of reporting of terrorism, e.g. using the Lexis Nexis database or British Newspaper Archive to analyse discourse and text
- Research on general public perceptions of terrorism, e.g. via interviews or surveys

If in doubt, supervisors should discuss with their School Research Ethics Coordinator who may in turn consult the Chair of the University Research Ethics Sub-Committee.