Birkbeck’s Prevent response has been developed in the context of the College’s mission, to provide flexible and part-time Higher Education for students of all ages and diverse backgrounds. Most of our teaching is in the evening and many of our students are mature, with over 40% aged over 30. Our student body numbers 11,500, plus 1,500 enrolments on open access modular short courses. We have about 3,500 postgraduate taught students and 6,500 undergraduates, with an increasing population of students taking our intensive evening undergraduate degrees. Many of our students have daytime commitments including careers and family responsibilities. We have about 800 international students.

We are located in buildings around Bloomsbury and are close neighbours with the University of London and other University of London Colleges including SOAS, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the UCL Institute of Education. We do not operate halls of residence ourselves, and most of our students commute between the College and their own homes, although some international students live in the University of London’s halls.

Birkbeck is a diverse and complex community whose members come from different backgrounds, have different experiences and are at different stages in life. While there may be students who fit the standard expectation of being young, isolated, and possibly vulnerable to ideology, equally there are mature, professional local people and many students and staff who are dedicated to sincerely held beliefs about politics, society and freedom.

As a community, we value being able to operate inclusively, with diverse views and expressions and vigorous debate. We seek to work collaboratively with the Students’ Union and the Trade Unions in all areas of joint interest, and note the reservations that these organisations have expressed about Prevent. Birkbeck values its own radical beginnings as a college specifically for working people and much of our academic culture is built on diverse concepts of radicalism.

Nevertheless, we have due regard to the law, to our duty of care to the students, staff and visitors who make up the College community, and to the need to safeguard vulnerable individuals. We are taking practical steps to assure the College community that we are meeting the duty in a way that complements the College’s ethos and is of genuine benefit to individuals.

The College has set up a working group, chaired by the College Secretary and bringing together academic and operational staff and the Students’ Union, to develop and implement our response to Prevent. Much of this is set out in the risk register and action plan uploaded separately, with supplementary information as required in the HEFCE circular letter 02/2016 in this document below.
Senior management and governance oversight of the implementation of Prevent duty obligations and engagement with Prevent partners

We have convened a working group including the Vice Master, College Secretary, Academic Registrar and senior staff in HR and Estates, plus the General Manager of the Students’ Union (SU), to co-ordinate and implement our response, as set out in the risk assessment/action plan. The working group will meet each term, to consider and if needed refresh the risk assessment/action plan, and to oversee and ensure progress in implementation.

Members of the Prevent response working group have established a working relationship with Camden Council’s Prevent officers and have had several useful meetings.

As Birkbeck’s main buildings are so close to the University of London, SOAS, UCL Institute of Education and LSHTM buildings, we already co-operate routinely with these institutions on campus and security matters and have shared our responses to the Prevent duty. Birkbeck is also a member of the Bloomsbury Colleges (Birkbeck, SOAS, LSHTM and the Royal Veterinary College), whose Heads of Administration meet regularly and have discussed and shared updates on implementation of the Prevent duty.

We have briefed our Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), which is the College’s senior management group, and our governing body, on the Prevent obligations and our response. The briefings are attached as Appendix A.

Engaging with and consulting students on the institution’s plans for implementing the Prevent duty.

Our normal process for consulting with students is through the Students’ Union. As noted above, the SU General Manager is a member of the working group. As he has been absent due to illness we have also engaged with the interim General Manager, who has been invited to join the working group, and consulted directly with the students on the SU Executive, in particular on the revised Freedom of Speech and Safeguarding policies.

We plan to publish a safeguarding website, for all staff and students, with information on safeguarding and the Prevent duty including contact information for advice and referral, Freedom of Speech, event booking, safeguarding, computing and social media policies and procedures, the risk assessment and action plan, and training and briefing material. We intend to do this at the end of the 2015-16 academic session, in July 2016.

Training appropriate staff about Prevent.

Our front of house and student centre staff have participated in training provided by the Camden Prevent team. Three members of the working group have participated in the BIS WRAP online training. We have developed a training plan for wider groups of staff, intended to be consistent with the WRAP training and incorporating the briefing material being developed by the Leadership Foundation once this is available.
General briefing and training will be offered to all staff, with more specialised training for particular groups including those working in room bookings and organising events, those working at the front of house and those with safeguarding responsibilities. The draft plan is attached as Appendix B. The Prevent response working group will keep it under review during termly meetings to ensure it is up to date.

Our security, cleaning and catering services are provided by contractors. All the security staff have participated in Prevent training. We do not operate any halls of residence, so the cleaning and catering staff have limited contact with students. We will discuss with the contractors what approach they are taking for their clients with Prevent duties, and whether training is needed for their staff.

Sharing information internally and externally about vulnerable individuals, where appropriate.

We are treating our Prevent duty response as part of our overall duty of care towards students, staff and visitors, linked to increasing investment in student support and wellbeing resources. We have developed a Safeguarding Policy, attached as Appendix C, which has been approved by Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). It sets out contacts for concerns about vulnerable individuals, who may be students or staff to be referred to, and provides for a Safeguarding Panel, responsible for considering individual cases and where appropriate making referrals for additional support. This includes the College counselling services, the NHS and the police.

We have agreed with the Camden Prevent officers that if a concern about an individual being drawn into violent extremism arises we will contact them to seek advice on potential referral. We will do this through the Safeguarding Panel.

We will change our terms and conditions for student enrolment for 2016-17 and onward to be clear that we may share personal information with other agencies to ensure our compliance with the law. We expect to start enrolling for 2016-17 in May 2016 and will have the terms and conditions in place before enrolment.

SPC has also approved a policy and procedure for students who have disclosed a criminal conviction, attached as Appendix D.

Sharing information about external speakers with other institutions, where legal and appropriate (if not covered in the policies for external speakers and events).

The externally booked events / external speaker procedure in our revised Freedom of Speech Policy includes a provision for sharing information about external speakers with other relevant parties, to support good campus relations.

Ensuring sufficient pastoral and chaplaincy support for all students (including arrangements for managing prayer and faith facilities).
We have a multi faith prayer and contemplation room with expectations of use agreed by a working group of students and staff of different faiths, intended to ensure the facility is accessible to all. These are clearly signalled and monitored and are attached as Appendix E.

The room has an access controlled door and students and staff who wish to use it can have their student/staff card activated for access. It is on the regular route walked by reception and security staff and is also checked several times each week to ensure that it is kept free of personal belongings and accessible to all.

The University of London multi faith Chaplaincy offers support to all in the University of London community and we post their contact details outside the multi faith prayer and contemplation room so that students and staff can get in touch with them.

The use of the institution’s computer facilities (hardware, software, networks, social media), to include consideration of filtering arrangements and of academic activities that might require online access to sensitive or extremism-related material.

We have amended the College Computing Regulations to rule against downloading, creating, transmitting or storing material that is indecent, offensive, threatening or discriminatory. Please see http://www.bbk.ac.uk/its/regulations/. We will also review the Wireless Network Policy and staff policy on internet and email to ensure they reflect Prevent guidance, by the end of the academic session 2015-16.

Strategic Planning Committee has considered a briefing on filtering, which is attached as Appendix F. For the reasons set out in the briefing, SPC agreed that the cost and complexity of introducing content filtering would outweigh the benefits.

We will review our Research Ethics Code of Practice to include procedures for staff and student researchers who need to access sensitive or extremism related material. We will take this through the College Ethics Committee in summer 2016.

We have also produced draft social media guidelines for students, intended to support good communications, community cohesion and safeguarding in general as well as offsetting the risks of transmission of illegal content. Please see Appendix G.

Engaging with students’ unions and societies, which are not subject to the Prevent duty but are expected to cooperate with their institutions.

We have co-opted the General Manager of the Students’ Union, and the Interim General Manager during his current absence, onto our Prevent response working group. Birkbeck College Students’ Union premises consist of offices and a membership reception. The bar and catering outlets are managed by College contractors. The SU and its clubs and societies use College space, booked under College terms and conditions, for their events.

As the SU General Manager has been absent due to illness, and the SU is currently undergoing a strategic review, we have not been able to engage with the SU officers over Prevent training, but will do so once the SU’s management is re-established.
This report, and the risk assessment/action plan and events/external speaker procedures uploaded separately, have been approved by the Master, Professor David Latchman, who is Birkbeck’s accountable officer.

Katharine Bock
Deputy College Secretary
31 March 2016