



QUILLIAM

**QUILLIAM UNIVERSITY  
SOCIETY**

**2015**



***'Constitution'***

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involved*

## CORE BELIEFS/PHILOSOPHY

The Quilliam university society is built on one simple principle: to promote the values of universal human rights as a means to counter extremism across all political spectra.

The universal human rights that we champion for at Quilliam is firstly 1) freedom, and 2) for every man, woman and child to be treated equally and held with equal worth, regardless of sexuality, faith, race or ethnicity.

The Quilliam societies itself have three main dimensions that together make the Quilliam society unique and characterise its shape. The three dimensions are that of: promoting human rights as a universal concept, discussing extremist ideologies, and discussing the policies around counter-extremism that makes Quilliam societies unique

Faith (which is currently prevalent in the discourses of both Far-Right and Islamist extremism), can be part of civil society's approach in its championing and promoting of universal human rights. Our promotion of human rights is a means to counter the extremist narratives and ideologies that espouse messages aimed at undermining our universal rights.

We also firmly believe that speakers who espouse divisive and un-tolerant narratives must not be legitimised by placed on a platform that is void of debate or discussion of the aforementioned views.

The Quilliam philosophy defines extremism as an ideological set of beliefs that are contrary to universal human rights, and which aim to be enforced as law against the will of society.

## AIMS

- To stand in solidarity with students from universities and other institutions in opposing extremist ideologies of all forms, including Far-Right, Islamist and Far-Left extremism.
- To promote the values of liberalism, free speech, human rights and pluralism.
- To celebrate diversity and multiculturalism on university campuses.
- To collaborate with other societies in hosting talks and debates on radicalisation, extremism and human rights.
- To raise money for organisations and charities that are committed to countering extremism, and reaching out to those who have been affected by extremism.
- To collaborate with other Quilliam societies across UK universities, and Quilliam, in providing a strong vanguard in support of liberal values against extremism.
- To organise socials which allow members to feel part of an inclusive community.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH QUILLIAM FOUNDATION**

Being aligned to Quilliam would mean that societies must adhere to the key principle values which Quilliam promotes. The main purpose of Quilliam: promoting universal human rights to counter extremism is so broad – a structured breakdown of what is not permitted is needed. However, it must be stated that we do not believe in micro-management, and that the society and its elected leader should have a great deal of autonomy.

### **Not Permitted**

- Working with, or giving credibility to, societies which contradict aspects of universal rights, such as equality and freedom.
- Actively encouraging extremist speakers to visit university campuses.
- Overly-aggressive and confrontational tactics against extremist societies. It is never acceptable to make anyone feel unsafe.
- Campaigning for international political causes whilst claiming to be a Quilliam representative, such as campaigning against theocratic regimes. It is however important to note that individual members of Quilliam societies can campaign within their personal capacity, as long as it adheres to our promotion of universal human rights.
- In relation to the point above, if the society does feel the need to campaign politically for international causes, it must be humanitarian (for example, the release of political prisoners whom exercised their human rights) – and it must be authorised by Quilliam.
- Project the view that extremism is the fault of religion, and that religion is the sole factor for extremism and terrorism.
- Project the view that counter extremism can only be resolved by legislation and authoritarianism – thus compromising our universal human rights and democracy.
- Promote the idea of “profiling” members of society.
- Allowing misconceptions or manipulated personal slander against Quilliam. Even when in personal disagreement with certain actions taken by Quilliam and its staff, misconceptions and actions against Quilliam and its philosophy of universal human rights should be addressed and refuted.
- Claiming to represent Quilliam. Quilliam society members represent the Quilliam University Society in any of their work, speeches etc. Quilliam reserves the right to disassociate itself individuals if we believe a member has acted against our core aims and beliefs.

- Society members should not keep the support coordinator in the “dark” about events. Although the event coordinator doesn’t have to be involved in the events process, it is important that society members inform the support coordinator to uphold transparency.

Quilliam will be proactively involved with the societies, and thus if it is perceived that the society is straying away from our foundational principles, Quilliam has all right to give an initial notification, and if the issue(s) are unresolved, formally cut ties with societies and individual members.

## **STRUCTURE & QUILLIAM SUPPORT**

The structure of each society will be decided by the society themselves. A popular form of organisation – but by no means mandatory – is to have a: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, General Secretary, Social Secretary, Public Secretary and Outreach Officer. All other formal procedures (such as socials or members fee) are decided by the society themselves.

Quilliam can offer the following forms of support to the university society et al;

### **1) Educational Support**

Quilliam and the support coordinator will utilise their high level of expertise and experience within the field to provide support to societies. This includes discussing the most effective means to reach a wider audience, recalling on the experiences Quilliam has had in 7 years of outreach programmes to help ensure success. Further support can come in the form of educational support i.e. discussing with the society the narratives espoused by extremist organisations and the relevant counter-narratives to challenge such harmful views.

### **2) Speakers**

Inviting speakers to the university who promote the liberal values we champion. This would include co-ordinating speakers from Quilliam, which include the highly acclaimed authority on extremism related issues, such as Sheikh Dr. Usama Hasan, Senior Researcher in Islamic Studies at Quilliam. Bringing in charismatic speakers that articulate the message of counter extremism in a meaningful manner will resonate more clearly with student audiences. However, not all speakers will be confined to Quilliam staff, and in conjunction with the society, the support coordinator will invite speakers to give presentations at events.

### **3) Delegated Point of Contact**

A dedicated Quilliam member of staff to assist with coordination and support wherever required. This can range from support for events, speakers and editing of footage for our creative arts campaign. Moreover, this also includes support for students who have felt effected by extremism and the issues around it.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Extremism:**

Extremism is an ideological set of beliefs that are contrary to universal human rights and seeks to be enforced as law against the will of others.

**Islamism:**

Islamism is the belief that any given interpretation of Islam should be imposed upon society. This is distinct from Islam, the religion, which is practiced by nearly two billion Muslims worldwide.

**Anti-Muslim Bigotry:**

A bigoted action (can be either non-violent or violent), and is classified as a malicious act aimed at a certain group of people. Bigoted acts can be targeted at Muslims but also people of other ethnicities and cultures. Anti-Muslim bigotry (as with all forms of bigoted actions) is classified as a form of extremism, and can constitute an act for the incitement of hatred and violence.

**Conservatism/Devotion:**

The practice of any faith, as rigorously and literally as any individual/community wants to. Extremist forms of the practice of faith only come when these individuals/communities believe - and/or - actively set out to enforce their interpreted faith on the will of others.

**MYTH BUSTERS*****“Silencing credible voices”***

Quilliam are firm opponents of the “no platform policy”, instead believing that extremist speakers should be debated and challenged – given that they are not inciting hatred/violence, or in the breach of the law. The term “credible” is a loose term and can be the subject of long and strenuous debate. Instead the notion that the society aims to “silence” speakers that do not incite hatred/violence is false, proven by our “Right-2-Debate” campaign (*see below*).

***“Quilliam Societies are created to spy on other societies”***

The Quilliam societies were not set up to “spy” on other societies or students. It will not have any engagement and contact with societies that oppose its views unless they so wish to create constructive and civil dialogue with the Quilliam societies – an ideal that we wish to promote.

***“Quilliam Societies speak for Muslims”***

Quilliam, nor any of its members, have ever stated to represent Muslims or be an Islamic organisation. As far as promoting rights to counter extremism, Quilliam societies welcome faith as an effective counter-measure to Islamism and in promoting universal rights. Quilliam does have an Islamic theological department led by Sheikh Dr Usama Hasan, but as a means to better demonstrate this aforementioned point, and does not claim to represent Muslims.

***“Any Quilliam Staff-Member’s Political Line is the ‘Quilliam’ Line”***

The short answer is no. For example, Maajid Nawaz had been a candidate for the Liberal Democrat party; it is not true to assume that everyone who has ever worked for Quilliam is a Liberal Democrat member or even a supporter of the political party. Quilliam was set up with a philosophical

understanding on how to counter extremism (see core beliefs above). Even when still ring fenced under Quilliam's philosophical line, different socio-political understandings of vastly complicated issues will arise.

***“What is the society's relevancy - your activity is already being covered by proposed activity by societies such as Debating.”***

While offering a platform for free speech and open debate, societies such as Debating Society are not campaign or issue-specific, and thus cannot cover Quilliam University Society's crucial function of promoting human rights as a means to counter extremist narratives and ideologies.

Furthermore, it is the society's three dimensions of promoting human rights as a universal concept, discussing extremist ideologies, and discussing the policies around counter-extremism that makes Quilliam societies unique. Our campaign for the #RightToDebate is shared and forwarded by other societies and Student Union officers in its stated aims, but it is precisely our discussions around its importance and message of partnership that help its promotion.

In other words, Amnesty international societies promote women's rights, but that does not mean that the FEMSOC's should be rendered irrelevant. In fact, both societies are known to frequently work together and is commonly cited as a great partnership to promote the specific issues of women's rights and the discussions around it.

***“Quilliam is synonymous with PREVENT”***

As a think-tank, Quilliam has always strived to influence policy-makers on the issue of counter-extremism. Quilliam has always taken a nuanced approach when making policy recommendations on this issue. Although we are in the shared belief with the British Government over the need for a PREVENT programme, it does not necessarily mean Quilliam as an organisation has always been behind every single policy and mechanism. Jonathan Russell – senior political liaison at the Quilliam Foundation – recently produced a [report](#) on the PREVENT programme outlining numerous criticisms and policy recommendations.

***“Quilliam is against the devout practice of faith (in particular Islam)”***

Quilliam is not, and has never been, against the devout practice of any faith. Quilliam only debates the fusion of any religion with the political belief that 'non-believers' - or member of inferior gender/ethno-culture - should be subdued and rendered second-class citizens. Quilliam sees no contradiction between devotion and human rights. Quilliam recognises the benefits to religious education as a means to counter extremism, as demonstrated by Sheikh Dr Usama Hasan's outreach work.

For more information on Quilliam's work on Sharia and its coherence with human rights, please see: <http://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2010/12/sharia-doesnt-mean-what-islamists-claim-it-means.html>

### *“All politically active Muslims are Islamists”*

No. Many Muslims are involved in politics without seeking to introduce Shari’ah as state law or claim political sovereignty for God. There is a difference between being inspired by religious beliefs as an individual, and seeking to impose those beliefs on society as a collective. We encourage Muslims to engage in democratic politics as citizens – who happen to be of a certain faith – not as ideologues with an Islamist-centric approach.

### *“All Conservative Muslims are extremists”*

No. Despite raising a host of other social questions, many conservative Muslims oppose Islamism. Indeed, in spite of numerous references to Islamic scripture, pre-modern authors, and classical Islamic history, Islamism is largely a product of urban politics in the 20th century. Conservative Muslims’ opposition to aspects of modernity often includes an opposition to Islamism.

### *“Quilliam doesn’t take into account foreign policy in the process of extremism”*

Quilliam does take into account the impact foreign policy may have in causing alienation and grievances – thus playing a catalytic role in the process of extremism. However, Quilliam argues, as with all religious-political-societal factors, that they must be framed within an extremist ideology to simplify and rationalise divisive extremist belief or action.

### *“The Quilliam Foundation is funded by Government”*

Quilliam had been funded by the Government in the past, but in the year 2011 Government funding ceased. Quilliam gets funding from many different sources including the private and public sector and individual donations. This isn’t to say that Quilliam will not apply for Government funding in the future through publically available grants, which any organisation that is eligible can bid for.

### *“The Quilliam Foundation is a Government ‘stooge’”*

The Quilliam Foundation – be it when it was funded by Government pre-2011 and to date – has always been consistent with its message. Quilliam has questioned government policies on numerous occasions. Examples of which can be viewed online.

### *“Quilliam Societies will call us extremist for not agreeing with them”*

This is not the case, any opposition doesn't constitute extremism. As expressed previously, within Quilliam itself, there is a wide range of differing views on complicated political-social issues. Views that constitute extremism are views that reject our universal human rights. Consequently, we believe to have the right, in an appropriate setting, to challenge these views through civil debate. This is not a novel concept, i.e. ‘Feminist’ societies challenging patriarchy.

Even when the Quilliam society disagrees with the views of other societies and students on the issue of human rights, dialogue and debate will only be established if consensual. Because although we

disagree with extremist ideologies, an individual maintains the right to hold their beliefs – but this does not mean that an individual’s beliefs should be free from criticism, including that of our own.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### ***Why is it a national bodied society?***

In the promotion of universal human rights, there seems no reason why it should not be, nor is it unique i.e. the “Young Greens Society.” Furthermore, current actions taken by the NUS to stand against the [condemnation of ISIS](#), all the more makes our case stronger that newly created university societies are needed to promote universal human rights.

Additionally, Quilliam acknowledges that statutory legislation for universities, (that deem it responsible for the prevention of radicalisation on their campuses), can be misused to curtail freedom of speech on [university campuses](#). Therefore these societies are intended to act as vanguards for the freedom of universities - by emphasising that non-violent extremist ideologies/ideologues must be contested, and not be made illegal.

### ***Is it promoting Islam?***

Neither Quilliam, nor its university societies, promote any faith/religion. Our promotion for freedom of religion as a means of countering extremism finds no clash or contradiction with any faith. The Islamic faith is compatible, if not a potential aid, to human rights. The confusion lies (for some) in the fact that Quilliam has an Islamic authority within its team; led by Sheikh Dr Usama Hasan. Sheikh Hasan’s work is invaluable in helping to counter the narratives expressed by extremist ideologues (*from all political spectra*) claiming Islam is incompatible with human rights and/or Britain.

### ***Does it campaign in international politics?***

Quilliam is founded on countering extremism domestically (UK). It does not campaign to play a role in the shaping of international relations - unless they are humanitarian. For example, supporting a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; freedom for non-violent political prisoners and etc.

### ***Do Quilliam Societies work together? Do they work with other societies?***

All Quilliam societies should aim to have a constructive working relationship with each other. It is Quilliam’s philosophy, and the heart of the societies’ aims, to partner with other societies and other students in the same aim of promoting universal human rights. It is imperative for the society to emphasise partnership amongst different societies, as the best means to promote human rights effectively to counter extremism.

## CAMPAIGNS

Tailored campaigns and partnership strategies are left to the individual societies to manage and construct. However, it is fundamental that every society should champion the “Right-2-Debate” campaign as being an integral campaign that every society should promote. This is to further our argument that counter-extremism is most effectively implemented by civil society through debate as opposed to a solely legislative approach.

## METHODS OF OUTREACH

The methods of outreach are again left to the responsibility of each society. However, we do expect that each society will make full use of certain vessels that will help promote the cause i.e. the use of social media, events and debate initiatives.

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### Quilliam Society Campaign – “Right-2-Debate”

The Quilliam Society at universities believe in the promotion of universal human rights - pluralism, democracy & liberalism – as the only way to effectively counter extremism (across all political spectra) on university campuses.

The Quilliam Society will promote these aforementioned values in unison with existing societies and students that have consistently strived for these ideals.

Quilliam, nor its university societies, advocate for the banning of any speaker on universities that does not preach the incitement of hatred and violence, or in breach of the law. Instead, Quilliam believe that these speakers should be engaged with and debated with, to stay true to our tenant of democratic freedom.

**Quilliam has not, and never has, believed in the banning of this aforementioned category of speakers** – As a reference point please see: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/politics-blog/11602453/Making-an-opinion-illegal-is-not-going-to-stop-terrorism-from-happening.html>

<http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/events/quilliam-co-founder-and-chairman-testifies-in-uk-parliament/>

**Quilliam believes in the power of civil society to challenge extremist views**, and believes that Quilliam university societies will aid in the empowerment of students to challenge extremism.

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