

British values and the curriculum – GCSE Sciences

The Prevent duty requires providers and practitioners to exemplify British values in their practice and to use opportunities to explore British values and to challenge extremism.

British values are defined as including:

“democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs.”

This includes complying with the Equality Act 2010 and preventing discrimination against those with protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

The Prevent duty also includes an expectation that staff will encourage students to respect other people with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

In implementing the Prevent duty in GCSE Science classes and other settings where teaching and learning takes place, it is expected that this is much more likely to be effective through naturally occurring opportunities rather than specially contrived situations. It is also acknowledged that there will be other colleagues supporting the delivery of the science curriculum, for example, laboratory and IT technicians. This guidance should therefore be read alongside other specific material relating to the Prevent duty and support staff, visitors, vocational qualifications and mathematics. There are also strong links to critical thinking and General Studies syllabuses.

Behaviour in teaching and learning settings

Tolerance and respect characterise effective learning as set out in the Equality Act and where those with protected characteristics receive fair treatment so that all are treated equally. Individual colleges and providers will capture these expectations in their mission and values statements and also in codes of conduct for students. In implementing these standards teachers, tutors and lecturers will be exemplifying and promoting British values.

Applying British values to your subject area: Example

The law and democracy

Many learning opportunities in GCSE science subjects will be framed by complying with health and safety legislation. This will include the role of risk assessments in defining and addressing risks. Opportunities will arise to discuss British law in this context.

There are a diverse range of topical scientific issues at GCSE level that will allow students to explore the nature of scientific evidence and the interplay between scientific communities, the media, politicians and policy makers. Students of GCSE Science(s) will find it necessary to distinguish between opinions based on valid, repeatable and reproducible evidence and opinions based on non-scientific ideas (for example, prejudice or hearsay).

Individual liberty

Students of GCSE Science subjects will have opportunities that will allow them to use their knowledge and understanding to pose scientific questions and define scientific problems. This may include providing evidence from both primary and secondary data and understanding the perspectives of others. The GCSE Science curriculum will also introduce students to the idea that science can't provide the answers to some questions, for example, where beliefs, opinions and ethics are important.

Learners will usually have considered what their options were and used their individual liberty to select from them before they chose their course or apprenticeship. They will also have choices to make while they take their current qualification and they will often have choices to make as they consider further education, training or careers after completing the apprenticeship or course.

Challenging extremism

The Prevent duty is not intended to stop students or apprentices debating controversial ideas. If students or apprentices make comments that could be regarded as extremist, staff should encourage the students or apprentices to consider:

- what they have said
- where the views they are expressing came from
- whether the evidence they have is accurate and full
- whether they have received a partial or incorrect interpretation of evidence
- alternative interpretations and views
- whether they need to make a referral to the designated safeguarding lead.

Staff should use opportunities to challenge extremist narratives through discussions with students or apprentices. If staff do not feel confident in challenging extremist ideas with their students or apprentices, they should ask for support.

If students or apprentices behave in a way that contravenes the equality and diversity aspects of the code of conduct that they have signed, then this is a disciplinary issue, e.g., refusing to work with a gay student or apprentice or a student or apprentice of a different ethnicity.

British values	Examples from GCSE Sciences
Rule of law	Genetic testing and genetic engineering as applications of science that have made a positive difference to people’s lives (1aS4) • Discuss risks, benefits, ethical issues and regulations associated with gene technology (1aS4)
Democracy	How have the laws come about, e.g., pressure from the public, politicians and media for safe products? Use of democratic process to enable or restrict scientific developments, e.g., methods of energy production, genetic engineering, development and use of chemicals
Individual liberty	Limitations on freedom through health and safety legislation and the rules of the laboratory to ensure safe practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career and education choices that students make and limitations on these freedoms, e.g., exam results • Individual freedom to accept or use life support in maintaining circulatory and respiratory systems; • Individual freedoms to decide whether to donate organs for transplantation • Individual freedom to use or not use birth control • Individual freedom to have genetic screening • Individual lifestyle choices that influence health • Restraints on freedom in relation to the use of GPS or mobile phone technology to track the movements of individuals
Tolerance and mutual respect of different faiths and beliefs and promotion of the Equality duty	The approaches to solving scientific problems that are part of GCSE Science qualifications require students to show tolerance and mutual respect in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour in the laboratory and classroom • Creation of an effective working environment whether in a college, ILP or the workplace through tolerance and mutual respect • Health and safety: implications of clothing and other items of religious significance • Understanding of the influence of different faiths and beliefs in some decisions which impact on science and healthcare.