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Wrong Muslim voices on campus

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British universities must do more to head off Muslim extremism, writes TOM GALLAGHER

There is mounting evidence that universities are one of the weakest links in the struggle to halt the advance of radical Islamism in Britain. Extremist groups are targeting Muslim undergraduates, offering them a simplistic narrative of victimhood in which to make sense of their lives.

The response of university officials has all too often been timid and sluggish. Too many have gone along with the Government strategy to increase student numbers while diluting the quality of degrees, especially in the humanities and social sciences.

This means many Muslim graduates will fail to establish themselves in the labour market. The word will spread that university is only a prelude to casual or low-paid jobs, which aids extremists grooming a young generation to reject Britain and embrace an international identity championing Islamic revolution.



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Most Muslim students will realise that anti-Western agitators offer a road leading nowhere. But they don't have the loudest voices on campus and university heads need to make sure that it remains a place of safety for them by facing down the extremists.

But that is not enough. Government needs to have a strategy for promoting upward mobility in the Muslim population. Many young men should be steered away from university and into vocational training for jobs that will offer them the financial stability that will elude many graduates. High-earning Muslim tradesmen would be good role models for young Muslims.

Muslim students have entered higher education en masse in the last five years. Many display enthusiasm and energy not always shown by their secular and jaded white counterparts. But they are not the majority. To prevent cynicism and alienation among many Muslim students, politicians and academics need to take a hard look at what higher education offers them. ■

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Professor Gallagher is speaking at today's Policy Exchange seminar, "Why Are Britain's Universities Incubating Islamist Extremism?"