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**The UK government and Muslim students  
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**From November the UK government will begin working with the Federation of Student Islamic Societies in the UK and Ireland (FOSIS) to try to better understand Muslim students. This policy is likely to backfire given that FOSIS are unrepresentative of Muslim students and regularly give a platform to extremist speakers.**

The Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) has announced [plans](#) to "commission a study exploring the views and attitudes of Muslim students in England" involving a poll of 1500 Muslim students and focus groups, overseen by a steering group consisting of representatives from the National Union of Students (NUS), the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and FOSIS.

FOSIS leaders are influenced heavily by a narrow form of political Islam, inspired by Islamist parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood, and the group regularly gives a platform to extremist speakers at British and Irish universities.

In November FOSIS will give a platform to Dr Azzam Tamimi at universities in the UK and Ireland on at least three separate occasions. Tamimi will speak at the FOSIS Palestine [Conference](#) 2008 at Nottingham University on 1st November and two [events](#) at Trinity College in Ireland on "Islamic Revivalism in the 20th Century" and "Chronicles of Islamic Political Thought" on 7th and 8th November.

Azzam Tamimi is a senior member of the Muslim Association of Britain, the British wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, who has been criticised for his alleged links to Hamas and his public comments justifying suicide bombing and inciting jihad against non-Muslims. In 2006 he told one [BBC](#) interviewer: "if I can go to Palestine and sacrifice myself I would do it." Tamimi is also an opponent of Muslim integration. Speaking at an event in Manchester in August 2006 he [told](#) the audience, "We are Muslims in Europe, not European Muslims."

Contrary to government beliefs, FOSIS is not representative of Muslim students. FOSIS represents and is made up of - as its name makes clear - Islamic Society (ISOC) members. A [poll](#) carried out by YouGov and the Centre for Social Cohesion of over 600 Muslim students earlier this year found that those active in their campus ISOC only make up 11.25% of Muslim students. The survey also found that active ISOC members are more likely to subscribe to Islamist beliefs as well as being more likely to support religious violence, punishing Muslims who convert to other religions and the introduction of a worldwide caliphate based on Sharia law.

Douglas Murray, the director of the Centre for Social Cohesion, says:

"The government is right to identify the need to better understand the Muslim student population. Muslim students hold a diverse and broad range of beliefs and opinions. However, relying on FOSIS as a consultative body and treating them as representative of all Muslim students, risks disproportionately empowering a small number of highly conservative, and sometimes Islamist, individuals at the expense of the majority of Muslims."

"The government should treat Muslim students as full, equal and diverse individuals, rather than as a bloc who can only be addressed and understood through self-appointed representatives such as FOSIS."

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The Centre for Social Cohesion is an independent think tank

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