

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2019

Introduction

Birkbeck, University of London (Birkbeck) is committed to protecting and respecting human rights through continuous improvement of practices. We have a zero tolerance policy in relation to modern slavery.

This statement is designed to satisfy the requirement of section 54(1), Part 6 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 by informing students, staff, companies and the public about the College and its policy with respect to modern slavery, human trafficking, forced and bonded labour and labour rights violations in its supply chains. This statement communicates the activities undertaken during the financial year ended 31 July 2019, and the objectives for the financial year ending 31 July 2020.

Organisational structure

Birkbeck is a unique institution providing access to degree education for working Londoners through the provision of teaching in the evening. As a consequence, most of our students are mature and have jobs, caring or other responsibilities during the day. The fact that we are different from the majority of higher education providers in the UK (who mostly teach young undergraduates during the day) often means that Government policy and other external factors have a different, and often unexpected, influence on Birkbeck. Based in the heart of Bloomsbury, we are a leading research university and a vibrant learning community offering over 200 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Academic activities are organised into five schools which are subdivided into nineteen departments, supported by various central services.

Founded in 1823 by the philanthropist Dr George Birkbeck, the College is a body incorporated by Royal Charter and an exempt charity under the terms of the Charities Act 2011. Under the Charities Act, universities are overseen by the Office for Students as principal regulator with the responsibility for ensuring that universities fulfil their obligations under Charity Law.

During the year the College reported annual turnover of £105.6 million, other operating expenditure (including agency and contract staff costs but excluding staff costs) of £33.5 million and employed 1186 full time equivalent staff. The College wholly owns one subsidiary called Birkbeck College (Cambridge House) Limited.

Our mission

The principal aims of Birkbeck are to:

- provide flexible and part-time higher education courses which meet the changing educational, cultural, personal and career needs of students of all ages: in particular, those who live or work in the London region.
- enable mature students from diverse social and educational backgrounds to participate in our courses.
- make available the results of research, and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate.
- maintain and develop excellence in research and provide the highest quality research training in all our subject areas.

Our commitment

Our workplace policies and procedures demonstrate our commitment to acting ethically and with integrity in all of our business relationships. We continue to implement and enforce effective systems and controls and use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that slavery and human trafficking are not taking place in our supply chain.

The College's comprehensive range of policies and procedures set out our commitment to workplace rights and ensure that our employees are treated fairly with dignity and respect. These policies, which are reviewed regularly, include, but are not limited to:

- [Equality and Diversity](#) - sets out the College's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the various ways in which we meet our duties
- [Gender Pay Gap Report](#) - looks at pay disparity across the organisation
- [Dignity at Work and Study](#) - is intended to support our provision of an inclusive working and learning environment
- [Formal Grievance](#) and [Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedures](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure \("Whistleblowing"\)](#) - enables staff to report improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- [Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy](#) - sets out our responsibilities and position on bribery and corruption.

The College's Human Resources department provides advice to staff and ensures that HR policies and procedures, including those related to recruitment of staff, are consistently applied across the institution.

The College uses the national single pay spine structure which is operated by most higher education institutions in the UK. Birkbeck has been accredited as a London Living Wage employer since 2015

and is committed to paying staff – whether they are permanent employees or third-party contractors and suppliers – the London Living Wage.

To identify possible inconsistencies between policy and practice the College undertakes institution-wide staff surveys. These include questions about the experiences of staff in relation to instances of bullying/harassment/discrimination and the ability to manage work-life issues as employees of the College.

The results are compared against past surveys and sector benchmarks. Action plans are developed to tackle issues that are identified. The Survey results, analysis and actions are shared within the institution and included in the institutional Athena SWAN submission.

Supply chains and risk areas

While the risks of modern slavery in our direct activities is likely to be low, we recognise that there are risks through the goods and services that we procure linked to supply chains around the world.

We continue to access a series of frameworks through the use of consortia and the suppliers we use to deliver our activities, and our own operations, continue to be primarily UK and EU based. We contract with a range of suppliers, from large international IT companies to local cleaning, catering, security companies and suppliers providing manual or lower skilled workers for services that are likely to be at greater risk of exploitation – e.g. cleaning companies, or workers producing technology components for IT goods overseas. These areas will continue to be the focus of our attention in the coming year. During 2019/20 we will be insourcing cleaning and night security thereby reducing our risks in these supply chains.

Our established, central team of dedicated procurement professionals continue to manage procurement processes and provide support and guidance to the organisation.

Our progress

During the year we:

- implemented a new finance system which has increased transparency in the purchasing process. This enables us to continue rationalising our supplier base and gain a better understanding of our supply chain
- introduced our new supplier registration form which requires all new suppliers to confirm compliance with the provisions of the Modern Slavery Act. Terms and conditions of contract specify the standards we require from contractors with regard to the welfare of their staff and those in their supply chain
- introduced the e-learning course provided by the Higher Education Procurement Association (HEPA) and British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG) on a Guide to Modern Slavery and Protecting Human Rights in the Supply Chain
- obtained and reviewed anti-slavery statements from first tier (direct) suppliers and those required to produce them.

The College is a member of the London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC) consortium, which allows any department to make use of the consortium-negotiated agreements and contracts. The LUPC remains committed to supporting the UK Government's National Action Plan to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The College is also actively seeking to work with other consortia such as Crown Commercial Services (CCS) in areas such as construction industry related frameworks.

Our plans for the future

In the coming year we will continue our work in combatting slavery and human trafficking in our supply chain. The College will continue to closely monitor its supply chains with a view to mitigating any risk of human trafficking, slavery or any form of human rights abuse within those supply chains. The College will apply all due diligence and work in a spirit of openness and transparency with its supplier partners in order to reduce that risk.

Our key objectives are to:

- ensure this statement is prominently displayed on the College's website along with our previous versions
- continue to raise awareness of modern slavery within the organisation through the e-learning courses on a Guide to Modern Slavery and Protecting Human Rights in the Supply Chain
- insource the supply of cleaning and night security
- develop a modern slavery audit template and carry out a pilot audit of a College supplier.
- develop tender processes further and expect greater transparency from bidders around labour costs to highlight where there may be some indication of modern slavery in the supply chain
- review research due to be published in 2019/20 on initiatives being undertaken in the higher education sector to identify where commonality can be established in identifying supply chain risks.

Approved by



Sir Andrew Cahn
Chair of Governors