

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2020

Introduction

The following statement is published in accordance with section 54(1) part 6 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It is intended to communicate the activities undertaken during the financial year ended 31 July 2020, and the objectives for the financial year ending 31 July 2021 in our continued efforts to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in our supply chain.

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 £108.7 million, other operating expenditure (including agency and contract staff costs but excluding staff costs) of £26.9 million and employed 1,183 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.

A 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.

Our Human Resources department provide advice to staff and ensure our people policies and procedures, including those related to recruitment of staff, are consistently applied across the institution.

We use the national single pay spine structure which is operated by most higher education institutions in the UK. We are accredited as a London Living Wage employer (since 2015) and are committed to paying staff the London Living Wage.

To identify possible inconsistencies between policy and practice we undertake 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 make improvements where required. The survey results, analysis and actions are included in the institutional Athena SWAN submission.

Staff whose primary job function is procurement are either qualified Members of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (MCIPS) or are actively working towards the qualification.

Our supply chains

We are committed to protecting and respecting human rights through continuous improvement of purchasing practices. The Procurement Team is committed to tackling modern slavery within our procurement, contract management and supply chain management operations.

While the majority of our suppliers are based in the UK we do purchase goods and services from international sources.

Our complex and diverse supply chains support our teaching and research functions, they fall broadly into the following categories:

- Estates development and infrastructure;
- Professional services;
- Laboratory supplies;
- IT and telecoms;
- Library services;
- Utilities;
- Travel;
- Janitorial and security provisions;
- Catering services and supplies;
- Furniture;
- Office supplies & print services

We are a member of the London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC) consortium. This allows us to make use of the consortium-negotiated agreements and contracts which we do wherever possible. The LUPC remains committed to supporting the UK Government's National Action Plan to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

We also work with other consortia available to the College including Crown Commercial Services (CCS) in areas such as construction industry related frameworks.

Our progress

During the year we continued using our supplier registration form which requires compliance with the provisions of the Modern Slavery Act for companies with a turnover of £36m and over. We also continued to review anti-slavery statements as part of our tender evaluation and new supplier registration processes. In addition:

- We brought our provision of cleaning and night security inhouse and we now directly employ these staff thereby reducing our risks in these supply chains
- We updated our terms and conditions of contract with the latest terms and conditions issued by HEPA
- Staff involved in sourcing and tendering activities completed the British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG) e-learning course on a Guide to Modern Slavery and Protecting Human Rights in the Supply Chain

- We completed a pilot audit with a supplier in the IT category using a recognised modern slavery questionnaire template
- The Procurement Manager along with representatives from nine other Higher Education Institutions began working with a PhD research project looking at modern slavery reporting in universities. The work is ongoing and relevant outcomes will be used to inform our future statements.

Our plans for the future

In the coming year we will continue our work in combatting slavery and human trafficking in our supply chain. We will monitor our supply chains and will apply all due diligence in a spirit of openness and transparency with our supplier partners in order to reduce that risk.

In addition to ensuring our modern slavery statement is prominently displayed on our website along with our previous statements our key objectives for the coming year will be:

- To extend the BUFDG e-learning courses on a Guide to Modern Slavery and Protecting Human Rights in the Supply Chain to department requisitioners
- To extend the piloted modern slavery questionnaire to suppliers in our higher risk categories such as IT Services and Estates
- For the Procurement Team to complete refresher training on Ethical Procurement provided by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply to maintain their knowledge of the subject
- To request that prospective suppliers provide information on social value and sustainable development in their responses against award criteria, for evaluation purposes as part of our framework call-off and tender procedures
- To take forward the work of becoming an affiliated member of Electronics Watch, an independent organisation working to achieve respect for labour rights in the global electronics industry through socially responsible purchasing.

Approved by



Sir Andrew Cahn
Chair of Governors

For and on behalf of Birkbeck, University of London
November 2020