

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025

Introduction

This statement is published in accordance with section 54(1), part 6 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and sets out the actions taken by Birkbeck, University of London during the financial year ended 31 July 2025 to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in our operations and supply chains.

Birkbeck is committed to upholding human rights and maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct. We have a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms.

Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It includes slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, and human trafficking. As a public institution, we recognise our responsibility to act with integrity and to ensure that exploitation has no place in our community or supply chains.

This statement has been approved by the Board of Governors and will be reviewed annually.

Organisational structure

Birkbeck, University of London was established in 1823 as the London Mechanics' Institute by Dr George Birkbeck, with a mission to widen access to higher education. For many years, Birkbeck has offered degree-level study opportunities for working adults and mature students, particularly through evening teaching, enabling learners to balance study with employment and other responsibilities.

Today, Birkbeck provides flexible daytime and evening programmes across a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The University is organised into three faculties, supported by central professional services, and operates from its main campus in Bloomsbury, central London. Our activities include teaching, research, and engagement with local, national, and international partners.

Birkbeck is governed by a Board of Governors and led by the Vice-Chancellor. As an exempt charity under the Charities Act 2011, the University is regulated by the Office for Students (OfS). Procurement and supply chain activities are overseen by a dedicated team, which works to support compliance with the Modern Slavery Act and to promote high standards of ethical conduct throughout the University's operations.

During the year, the University reported annual turnover of £98 million, other operating expenditure (including agency and contract staff costs but excluding staff costs) of £30 million and employed 1,001 full-time equivalent staff (FTE).

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 adult 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 our business relationships. We continue to implement and enforce 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 University's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the various ways in which we meet our duties.
- [Gender Pay Gap](#) – looks at pay disparity across the organisation.
- [Dignity at Work and Study](#) – supports our provision of an inclusive working and learning environment.
- [Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure](#) – encourages staff to improve and maintain the required level of conduct.
- [Public Interest Disclosure \("Whistleblowing"\) Policy](#) – 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 provides advice to staff and ensures our people policies and procedures, including those related to recruitment, are consistently applied across the institution.

We use the London single pay spine structure and are accredited as a London Living Wage employer (since 2015). We are committed to paying staff at least the London Living Wage.

To identify inconsistencies between policy and practice, we undertake institution-wide staff surveys. These include questions about the experiences of staff in relation to bullying,

harassment, discrimination, and work-life balance. The results are compared against past surveys and sector benchmarks, with action plans developed to make improvements where required. Survey results, analysis, and actions are included in our institutional Athena SWAN submission.

Staff are expected to uphold the seven principles of behaviour on Standards in Public Life (“Nolan Principles”) within all day-to-day activities. This includes our clear commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery.

Specialist training is provided to relevant staff involved in procurement and supply chain management. Staff may be qualified Members of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (MCIPS) or working towards the qualification, with additional training available to keep knowledge current.

Our Supply Chains

Given the size and complexity of our supply chain, we recognise that risks of human exploitation may exist within extended supply chains. This awareness strengthens our commitment to working proactively with our suppliers to prevent such abuses.

Birkbeck supports a wide range of academic and campus operations through a large and diverse supply base. In 2024/25, there were 3,143 active suppliers on our finance system. This list is dynamic, with new suppliers onboarded throughout the year following due diligence conducted by our procurement and payments teams.

Our expectations for suppliers are clearly set out in tender documentation and reinforced through ongoing engagement. Our robust due diligence processes support our efforts to contract with suitable and responsible organisations. The majority of our spending is with a cohort of formally contracted suppliers, appointed either directly by Birkbeck or through eligible public sector framework agreements. Supplier evaluation considers capability, capacity, supply chain practices, and adherence to modern slavery legislation.

We are members of several purchasing consortia, principally the London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC). These memberships give us access to UKUPC frameworks and consortia-negotiated contracts, which we use where appropriate. The LUPC is committed to supporting international human rights standards, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and the UK Government's National Action Plan to implement the UNGPs. Through our LUPC membership, we are also associate members of Electronics Watch, which works to achieve respect for labour rights in the global electronics industry through socially responsible public purchasing in Europe. Sector-wide collaboration reinforces the positive behaviours regarding social, ethical, economic, and environmental practices expected from our suppliers.

During 2024/25, our spend through 30 UKUPC framework agreements was distributed as follows:

- Information and Communication Technology: 10%
- Library: 7%

- Professional Services: 31%
- Audio Visual: 45%
- Estates: 3%
- Travel: 2%
- Laboratory: 2%

The LUPC takes a risk-based approach to managing suppliers, engaging in long-term relationships with framework suppliers on issues of modern slavery, human trafficking, and wider human and labour rights in global supply chains. Requirements on these topics are integrated into the procurement lifecycle, from initial evaluation via the Supplier Questionnaire (SQ), to tender drafting and evaluation, and throughout contract management.

Our supply chain management processes are regularly reviewed and updated in response to new risks, legislation, and sector guidance. We continue to work with our suppliers to raise awareness of modern slavery risks and to promote high standards of ethical conduct throughout our operations.

Our Progress

Staff Training

This year, we made the BUFDG e-learning module on modern slavery available to all staff via internal online training tools. Regular communications are scheduled to encourage uptake. Members of the procurement team also completed specialist training on protecting human rights in the supply chain, delivered by APUC and the University of Greenwich.

Supply Chain Review

We reviewed eight suppliers in our catering supply chain, established regular reporting, and recommended ongoing monitoring to ensure compliance. For suppliers below the Modern Slavery Act threshold, we began inviting them to sign up to the APUC/LUPC Supply Chain Code of Conduct.

Contractor and Supplier Management

We strengthened our processes for managing contractors and suppliers. Contractor induction procedures, including modern slavery awareness, were required as part of tender submissions for our internal framework for minor and intermediate works. Where information was missing, our Estates team followed up before awarding contracts. For lower-value contracts, we adopted the LUPC short-form contract template, which includes a modern slavery clause in line with the Procurement Act 2023.

Raising Awareness

The Modern Slavery Working Group agreed to promote the Unseen charity's Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline to students in employment, staff, and the wider university community. Unseen is a UK-based charity supporting victims of modern slavery and human trafficking, offering a confidential helpline for advice and reporting concerns.

Supplier Onboarding and Risk Assessment

We enhanced our supplier onboarding process in Business World by categorising new suppliers using the HE Procurement Code to assess supply chain risk. We engaged with suppliers using a bespoke modern slavery questionnaire, which will be included in tender packs for future below-threshold tenders.

Legislative Compliance

With the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 in February 2025, the procurement team undertook training and professional development to ensure understanding of the new requirements. We reviewed and updated our policies and procedures to ensure compliance and maintain best practice. We continue to follow government procurement policy notes (PPN) and ensure our modern slavery statement meets current guidelines.

Our plans for the future

In the coming year, we are committed to building on our progress and further strengthening our approach to tackling modern slavery and human trafficking. Our key objectives are to:

- **Develop and implement key performance indicators (KPIs)** to measure the effectiveness of our actions in preventing modern slavery. These KPIs will enable us to track progress, assess the impact of our initiatives, and inform future improvements.
- **Streamline supplier communications** by regularly reviewing and closing inactive supplier accounts on our finance system. This will enable us to focus our communications and engagement efforts on active and higher-risk suppliers, ensuring that important information and requirements regarding modern slavery reach those most relevant to our operations.
- **Embed supply chain standards** by incorporating the Supply Chain Code of Conduct (APUC/LUPC) into our evaluation procedures for contracts below the Find a Tender (FTS) threshold, in line with the Procurement Act 2023. This will ensure further consistency across our suppliers in respect of ethical conduct and compliance with modern slavery legislation.
- **Increase transparency within the supply chain** by considering the adoption of the Transparency in Supply Chains (TISC) platform (<https://tiscreport.org/features/dashboards>) to monitor the activity and compliance of our most prominent suppliers. Utilising this platform will enhance our ability to identify risks, track supplier performance, and demonstrate accountability.
- **Strengthen supplier assurance** by conducting further assurance reviews of modern slavery compliance among our high-value suppliers, including those involved in major projects. Ongoing monitoring will be supported by reporting tools such as Electronics Watch, helping us to identify issues early and work collaboratively with suppliers to address them.

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon Davis".

Simon Davis
Deputy Chair of Governors
For and on behalf of Birkbeck, University of London

December 2025