



Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement

Introduction

Founded in 1495, the University of Aberdeen is Scotland's third oldest university and the fifth oldest in the UK. The principle of serving the public good is enshrined in the University's founding purpose, to 'be open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others' and its new strategic vision [Aberdeen 2040](#). In keeping with this principle, the University takes a zero-tolerance approach in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms.

Today, the University employs over 3,400 staff and teaches over 15,000 students from countries around the world. In line with our Sustainability and Social Responsibility Policy, which aims to set best practice standards meeting or surpassing the requirements of legislation.

This statement reflects our commitment to act ethically, transparently and with integrity in all our business dealings and relationships, to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and to establish and maintain effective systems and controls which ensure the University is not contributing to modern slavery in any way. For greater impact and socially responsible transformation, in line with the University's strategic vision 2040, it is committed to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Aiming to draw attention to the SDGs and aligning academic institutions with the work of the UN Global Compact, the [University of Aberdeen Business School is now a signatory to the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education \(PRME\)](#).

Purpose of the Statement

This statement is made pursuant to Section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and sets out the steps the University has taken and will take to identify and prevent such practices from taking place in any of its supply chain and in any part of its own business.

University Employees

The University Human Resources Policies set out our commitment to workplace rights at the University. The risk of modern slavery occurring in the University's workforce is mitigated by ensuring that staff are recruited following robust recruitment policies. We are rigorous in checking that all new recruits on our home campuses have the right to work in the UK. We also employ all staff and workers (temporary services/casual staff) on standard terms and conditions of employment.

The University adheres to the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and implements its own Whistleblowing Policy regarding concerns about potential corruption, fraud, or other malpractices within the University.

The University is an accredited Living Wage (Scotland) Employer who has been certified by the [Living Wage Foundation](#) and implemented the new Accredited Living Wage rate in December 2020.

A due diligence approach is taken with service providers who regularly work onsite at the University to pay the Living Wage and, through our Contract Management process, continue to review this with them.

Supply Chains

The University of Aberdeen procures a wide range of goods, services and works. Our supply chains fall under the following main categories:

- Laboratory Supplies (equipment, chemicals, pharmaceuticals etc.)
- Estates, Buildings and Facilities Management
- Computer Supplies and Services (including Audio Visual equipment)
- Professional Services
- Utilities

We have a published [University Procurement Strategy and Action Plan](#) which details our principles and practices and outlines how we take steps to ensure an ethical procurement approach.

The University is a member of Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges Ltd (APUC), the procurement centre of expertise for Scotland's universities and colleges. We have contributed to and adopted the [APUC Code of Conduct](#) as the University's Code of Conduct ensuring consistency in approach to the Supply Chain. In asking relevant suppliers to adopt the Supply Chain Code of Conduct we collaborate with others to demonstrate a commitment not to use forced, involuntary or underage labour.

Through the APUC SUSTAIN web-tool and database, suppliers are asked to provide details of measures they take in relation to modern slavery in their supply chain, including any third-party accreditations and assessments to evidence this. Where risks have been identified, we work with APUC or contact suppliers directly to deal with any social responsibility issues. The SUSTAIN tool is being further developed by APUC into the SCM (Supply Chain Management) – Sustain tool which will be fully launched in the coming year. It will include further questions around Contractors' modern slavery statements as well as the original question set.

Also, each regulated procurement process conducted by the University requires tenderers to disclose whether the bidder or any member of their organisation with decision making powers has been convicted in the last five years of any offence under [Part 1 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#), or under any provision referred to in the Schedule to that Act. Tenderers that confirm such a conviction will be excluded from the process unless they can successfully demonstrate that they have taken sufficient measures to demonstrate compliance with this Act.

We have an expanding programme of transnational education projects, which includes setting up campuses in countries that may have different labour standards and practices and different legal recourse for victims of exploitation. In accordance with our recently updated transnational project approval and governance procedures, we have no appetite at all for an initiative that conflicts in any way with this Statement. We will conduct proactive human rights due diligence from the inception of all such projects and will require our overseas partners to assess and address their own modern slavery risks, sharing their findings and actions with us.

The University of Aberdeen is a [founding member](#) of [Electronics Watch \(EW\)](#) and continues to support the organisation. EW is a European organisation set up to drive improvements in labour conditions of IT supply chains and provides a structure compliant with EU public legislation to

investigate, monitor, and address labour issues in IT products supplied to public sector organisations. Members benefit from the collective push to improve labour standards.

The University utilises APUC IT Framework Agreements and EW aligned terms and conditions have been embedded within those. The University IT hardware data shared with APUC is used to identify high risk areas and enable targeted worker monitoring. APUC has partnered with EW and is working on a project to analyse social media posts by workers in electronics supply chains to trigger further investigations. This project is already providing transparency and outcomes that merit addressing by some leading brands and their supply chains.

Steps Taken During Last Financial Year

In line with the University's Procurement Policy & Procedures, suppliers continue to be sent the University of Aberdeen Supply Chain Code of Conduct and companies must confirm they adhere to the Code of Conduct, in order to enforce and promote sound social, ethical, environmental and economic practises. In accordance with its review cycle, the Code was updated in March 2020 and adopted by the University later in the year, including a change of name to the University of Aberdeen Sustain Supply Chain Code of Conduct.

Members of the Procurement Team attended a workshop on "The Importance of Modern Slavery Statement in Higher Education" at the Conference of University Purchasing and a webinar by CIPS (Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply) on "How changes to the Modern Slavery Act will affect you". Due to Covid-19 further training opportunities have been postponed but it is expected these will be made available on-line.

A Project Board has been set up to oversee the University's role in the construction by its Qatari partner of a new campus as the second phase of its Qatar operation. The Board is setting up a Human Rights Monitoring Group to oversee and scrutinise the development of the Phase 2 project and subsequent build, completion and opening of the new premises from the perspective of assurance of an appropriate standard of human rights, consistent with this Statement.

Next Steps

The University will continue to address areas of concern around modern slavery with identified suppliers and their supply chains where appropriate.

The Procurement Team will attend further training on the new APUC Supply Chain Management – Sustain portal and expect to make use of the tool once it is fully launched.

It is the intention of the University to explore the options to raise awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking within our supply chains. To explain to staff what Modern Slavery is and how to spot the risks.

We will continue to develop knowledge and understanding of the high-risk industries. To learn from and utilise the academic knowledge that exists within the University.



David Beattie
Director of Finance
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