

Modern Slavery Policy

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Introduction

1.0 The Open University Modern Slavery Policy outlines our aim to ensure that no modern slavery or human trafficking in any form is taking place in our supply chains or in any part of our institution. The policy will be reviewed annually.

Scope

2.0 This policy applies to all people working for the Open University and its subsidiaries in any capacity and location, including

employees, research students, agency workers, contractors, suppliers, and partnership organisations. Suppliers will be required to demonstrate that the safety of all staff is accorded utmost priority. Implementation of the policy is the shared responsibility of all staff at the Open University.

- 2.1 This policy does not apply to Open University students, but if you have any suspicion that a student may be subjected to modern slavery or human trafficking, please refer any concerns to the University Safeguarding Team at: Safeguarding-Referrals@open.ac.uk.

An overview of Modern Slavery

- 3.0 Modern slavery is an umbrella term, used within the UK and defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It covers the offences of human trafficking and slavery.
- 3.1 According to the latest Office of National Statistics report, issued in March 2020, modern slavery is a serious crime being committed across the UK in which victims are exploited for someone else's gain. It can take many forms including holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. Modern slavery crimes may involve, or take place alongside, a wide range of abuses and other criminal offences such as grievous bodily harm, assault, rape, or child sexual abuse.

- 3.2 Victims of modern slavery can be men, women, and children of any age across the world. There is an assumption that victims of modern slavery are often trafficked to the UK from other countries, but residents of the UK are also among the victims that are exploited in the UK and other countries. The crime is often obscured from the authorities and the public. Victims are either hidden away, unable to leave their situation, or may not come forward because of fear, or shame.
- 3.3 Reports of modern slavery have been steadily increasing since the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015. According to the Gov.UK 2022 Annual Report on Modern Slavery, the number of potential victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) rose to nearly 17,000 in 2022, representing a 33% increase compared to the preceding year (12,706) and the highest annual number since the NRM began in 2009.
- 3.4 Of these referrals claiming exploitation in 2022:
- 78% were male and 21% female.
 - 52% of cases were whilst an adult and 41% as a child (the age at exploitation was unknown in 6% of cases).

The Modern Slavery Act

- 4.0 The Modern Slavery Act was passed in 2015, requiring all companies with a turnover of more than £36 million, operating in the UK, to publish an annual slavery and human trafficking statement outlining their approach to identifying and eradicating slavery in their supply chains.

- 4.1 While the risks of modern slavery in the Open University's direct activities are likely to be low, there are potential risks of modern slavery through goods and services we procure that can be linked to supply chains around the world. In 2020-21, the University spent over £120m on goods and services from over 3,000 third-party suppliers.
- 4.2 Ninety percent of this £120m spend was for goods and services in the categories of marketing and communications, consultancy services, IT software and hardware, course materials production and various estates management services, including catering, guarding, and cleaning.

Prevention of modern slavery and human trafficking

- 5.0 The Open University is committed to creating an inclusive university community and contributing to an inclusive and just society where people are treated with dignity and respect, where inequalities are challenged, and where we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances.
- 5.1 The Open University will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time, money, and effective internal arrangements to ensure compliance with statutory duties and use all reasonable endeavours to ensure modern slavery and human trafficking do not exist within its supply chains.
- 5.2 This is achieved through implementing our behaviour standards, Equality Scheme principles, responsibilities, and objectives, plus People Services and Procurement policies and

procedures. These must be adhered to by all employees and workers, subsidiaries, and third-party suppliers.

5.3 The Open University's objectives are to:

- Identify and assess potential risk areas and use processes to remove the potential for slavery or human trafficking wherever possible.
- Raise awareness of all staff and workers to the risk of modern slavery, particularly those whose work is involved with at risk areas and locations.
- Implement processes to scrutinise the recruitment procedures of the University and its partner institutions, supply chains, agents, etc.
- Require suppliers to take all reasonable steps to eradicate modern slavery in their supply chains, through the roll out of the Netpositives tool and the Sustain Code of Conduct.
- Ensure staff know how to raise and report any concerns relating to modern day slavery and human trafficking that are identified.

5.4 The University also has a Whistleblowing Policy. This enables members of the University and associated persons to report where they see that something is going wrong with the procedures and processes of the University.

Eradicating modern slavery in supply chains

- 6.0 The Open University publishes a [statement on eradicating modern slavery in supply chains](#) annually, approved by the VCE and signed by the Vice Chancellor. The statement can be found on the front page of the University's public-facing website.
- 6.1 Any breaches of the policies outlined in this OU Statement may result in the University taking disciplinary action and/or terminating its relationship with an organisation or supplier.

Responsibilities

- 7.0 Everyone must take responsibility for preventing modern slavery and human trafficking.
- 7.1 All employees and workers at the Open University must:
- Follow University Policy and Procedures.
 - The University has a suite of Procurement, and People Services policies and procedures to support the prevention of modern slavery and human trafficking. These include, but are not limited to the Procurement Policy, Bullying and Harassment, Whistleblowing, Domestic Abuse Policy, and Guidance, plus the Safeguarding Policy.
 - Familiarise yourself with the signs of modern slavery and human trafficking. Refer to Appendix A in this document for a list of indicators of modern slavery and human trafficking. In practice it is not easy to identify a potential victim – there are many different physical and psychological elements to be considered.

- Raise the alarm.
- 7.2 If you suspect someone is being exploited or ill-treated, then you should discuss your concerns with your line manager and, if the individual is in immediate danger, contact the Emergency Services on 999, or 112 from outside the UK.
- 7.3 If the individual you are concerned about has caring responsibilities for children, young persons, and/or vulnerable adults, this must be reported to the Safeguarding team for immediate action under the University's statutory safeguarding responsibility, regardless of whether these individuals themselves are deemed to be at risk or not.
- 7.4 Safe Space Reporting is available via an online tool through which staff, students, learners, and visitors are encouraged to report incidents of assault, bullying, harassment, hate crime, or sexual harassment. It also provides information about what you can do if these incidents happen to you, or to someone you know, and where you can find support: <https://report-and-support.open.ac.uk>.
- 7.5 The National Crime Agency has a helpline to call if you suspect modern slavery, this is 08000 121 700 or the police on 101.
- 7.6 Whilst this policy does not apply to Open University students, if you have any suspicion that a student may be subjected to modern slavery or human trafficking, please refer any concerns to the University Safeguarding Team via: Safeguarding-Referrals@open.ac.uk.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8.0 Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, or trades union membership status.

Useful references

9.0 The following documents should be referred to in conjunction with the modern slavery policy and can be accessed as below:

Internal references

[OU Statement on Eradicating Modern Slavery in Supply Chains](#)

[OU Equality Scheme 2022-2026](#)

Bullying and Harassment Policy

[Whistleblowing Policy](#)

[Procurement Policy](#)

Safeguarding Policy

External references

[Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance for England and Wales \(and non-Statutory guidance for Northern Ireland and Scotland\)](#)

[Modern Slavery Information](#)

[National Crime Agency](#)

Governance

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Appendix A

Indicators of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

In November 2021, the Government published a list of indicators for modern slavery. In practice it is not easy to identify a potential victim – there are many different physical and psychological elements to be considered as detailed below.

For a variety of reasons, potential victims of modern slavery may also:

- be reluctant to come forward with information
- not recognise themselves as having been trafficked or enslaved
- tell their stories with obvious errors and/or omissions

Mental health and psychological indicators of modern slavery

Psychological indicators of modern slavery may include:

- Expression – of fear or anxiety
- Depression – lack of interest in engaging in activities, lack of interest in engaging with other individuals, hopelessness
- Isolation or alienation
- Attachment and identity issues – can create detachments from others or an over-dependence (or both) – this can include a dependency on exploiters
- An inability to regulate emotions – for example a persistent shifting between sadness, forgiveness, anger, aggression, frustration and/or emotional detachment or emotional withdrawal

- Difficulties with relationships – difficulties with trusting others (either lack of trust or too trusting) causing difficulties in relationships and difficulties assessing/addressing risks or warning signs in relationships
- Loss of autonomy – for example difficulty in making simple decisions, tendency to acquiesce to the views/desires of others
- Memory difficulties – either problems with concentration/attention or poor memory for past events e.g. 'gaps' or confusion about events
- Dissociative episodes and re-experiencing phenomena such as flashbacks
- Other indicators may include:
 - hostility
 - aggression
 - difficulty concentrating
 - self-harm
 - suicidal ideation
 - an attitude of guilt, self-blame, shame, or low self-esteem
 - psychosis or the presence of hallucinations and delusions
 - substance misuse and addictions

Physical indicators

Some physical indicators may only be identified by trained medical professionals. Physical indicators of modern slavery may include:

- Physical injuries – these may have unclear explanations as to how or when they were sustained, they may be untreated, or

partially treated, or there may be multiple or unusual scars or healed fractures

- Work related injuries – often through inadequate personal protective equipment or poor health and safety
- Physical consequences of captivity, neglect, poor environmental conditions – for example, infections including tuberculosis, chest infections or skin infections, malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies or anaemia
- Neurological symptoms – for example, headaches, dizzy spells, poor memory, poor concentration, problems with cognition, post traumatic epilepsy
- Dental problems – from physical abuse and/or neglect of dental hygiene
- Deterioration of pre-existing chronic medical conditions – these may be untreated (or poorly treated) chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension or cancers
- Cardiovascular or respiratory symptoms – often chest pain, palpitations, breathlessness (may be due to anxiety, but poor health in victims means that such symptoms need exploring)
- Gastrointestinal symptoms – abdominal pain or health conditions related to swallowed, internally placed or ruptured packets of illegal substances
- Non-specific symptoms – fatigue, weight loss, fainting
- Chronic pain – this can be from specific injuries or may be more generalised “all over body pain”, exacerbated by lack of sleep and stress, or may be psychosomatic

- Medically unexplained symptoms – symptoms without an identifiable physical cause are common. They can be non-specific such as headaches, dizziness, or back pain, or may be related to trauma to a particular part of the body, for example, abdominal pain in rape victims
- Disfigurements: cutting, burning, or branding may be used as a means of punishment or to indicate ownership by exploiters. Victims are sometimes forced to undergo cosmetic procedures, for example, breast implantation, use of skin lightening creams. Disfigurement can also be the result of self-harm and attempted suicide
- Post-operative pain, infection or scarring from organ harvesting, particularly of a kidney

Situational and environmental indicators of modern slavery

Situational and environmental indicators of modern slavery:

- Withheld passports or identity documents, contracts, payslips, bank information, health records
- Lack of information about rights as workers in the UK as well as support and advice services
- Lack of information about a person's rights as a visitor in the UK or a lack of knowledge about the area they live in the UK
- Acting as if coerced or controlled by another
- Going missing for periods
- Fearful and emotional about their family or dependents
- Limited English, for example only having vocabulary relating to their exploitative situation

- Restriction of movement (noting that victims are not often 'locked-up', but movement can be restricted) or being held in isolation
- Withholding wages (including deductions from wages)
- Debt bondage
- Abusive working and/or living conditions
- Excessive overtime

Information taken from:

[Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales \(under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015\) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland.](#)

Appendix B

Glossary of terms

Modern slavery	<p>Modern Slavery is the term used within the UK, defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015.</p> <p>These crimes include holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after.</p>
Human trafficking	<p>Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labour or commercial sex act. Traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to lure their victims and force them into labour or commercial sexual exploitation.</p>
Safeguarding	<p>Safeguarding adults includes protecting their rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. People and organisations work together to prevent the risk of abuse or neglect, and to stop it from happening.</p>
The Public Sector Equality Duty	<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is a duty on public authorities to consider how their policies or decisions affect people protected under the Equality Act. Private organisations and individuals do not have to comply with the duty.</p> <p>The Public Sector Duty under Section 149 of the</p>

Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to pay due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations between groups of people and this means public authorities must consider how their policies and decisions affect people protected under the Equality Act.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine characteristics that are protected from unlawful discrimination: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 does not extend to Northern Ireland, but s.75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) has issued guidance on the duty under s.75, which is available on its website.

Whistleblowing	Whistleblowing occurs when an individual raises concerns, usually with their employer or a regulator, about a workplace danger or illegality that affects others. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 is the key piece of UK legislation protecting individuals who 'blow the whistle' in the public interest.
Supply chain	A supply chain is the entire process of making and selling commercial goods, including every stage from the supply of materials and the manufacture of the goods through to their distribution and sale.