



Modern Slavery Statement

Introduction

Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms, such as slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking - all of which have in common the deprivation of a person's liberty by another, in order to exploit them for personal or commercial gain.

Queen's University Belfast (Queen's) is committed to improving practices to combat slavery and human trafficking.

This statement is made pursuant to section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes Queen's slavery and human trafficking statement for the financial year ended 31 July 2023.

Overview

Queen's University is one of the leading universities in the UK and Ireland, with a distinguished heritage and history. The University is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Queen's is a member of the Russell Group, with an annual turnover of £460 million, over 25,000 students and 4,600 staff, the university plays a unique role in Northern Ireland and is a key partner within the Belfast Region City Deal.

The University's Annual Report sets out that sustainability is at the cornerstone of Strategy 2030 and Queen's is a signatory to the UN Accord.

Queen's Strategy 2030 is centred around four Strategic Priorities — Education and Skills; Research and Innovation; Global Reputation and Partnerships; Social and Civic Responsibility and Economic Prosperity — which build on a rich heritage of innovation, both economic and social, and focus on the global challenges aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Modern slavery risks are considered in relation to people working on campuses, supply chains, fundraising and investments, overseas employment and international partnerships.

Supply chains

Queen's supply chain is diverse with a wide range of direct and indirect goods, services and works procured. Where appropriate, procurement frameworks are utilised, established by collaborative consortia who assess and monitor risk.

Given the global reach of the supply chains, it is recognised that there is the potential risk of modern slavery occurring, especially in specific areas that are identified as high risk such as electronics, building materials and construction, facilities management, laboratory consumables, clothing, catering/food and office supplies.

Policies on slavery and human trafficking

It is Queen's responsibility to ensure environmental and socially responsible practice in all teaching, research and knowledge transfer activities, and this extends to the sustainable and responsible procurement of works, supplies and services.

In light of the obligation to report on the steps to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place, procurement policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to assess their effectiveness in identifying and tackling modern slavery issues.

Well-established procurement policies and procedures demonstrate commitment to acting ethically, and with integrity and are enhanced with each tender exercise to ensure that direct reference to slavery and human trafficking. Modern Slavery is included as a supplier response question for high-risk areas and included in the Invitation to Tender as a consequence, when relevant. Furthermore, incident response plans are required from high-risk suppliers.

It is acknowledged that Modern Slavery is a constantly changing global issue, and Queen's endeavour to consciously update and review processes for the detection of its existence in operations, and review approaches to monitor the effectiveness of such processes. Full consideration has been given to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and how this addresses Modern Slavery.

Due diligence processes for slavery and human trafficking

Modern slavery is now a contract clause in all procurement contracts that are on Queen's terms, this requires ethical sourcing of supplies and Queen's actively contribute to the sectoral Purchasing Consortium, of which we are a member, to ensure that Modern Slavery is considered in areas that have known risks.

As part of identifying and mitigating risk, Queen's works with sectoral Purchasing Consortium to review available risk assessment tools and techniques which can assist in the management of supply chain risk and have committed to the use of such tools. Queen's supports and has signed up to membership of Electronics Watch in September 2019.

Supplier adherence to the supplier code of conduct

In February 2021, the University endorsed a [Supply Chain Code of Conduct](#). This code is applicable to all suppliers and links directly to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The purpose of the Code is to create awareness across Queen's suppliers of social, ethical, economic and environmental issues. The Code helps suppliers understand the behaviours and standards that are expected of them and their supply chains when working on University contracts.

Queen's adopts a zero-tolerance approach to slavery and human trafficking. To ensure those in the supply chain comply with Queen's Code of Conduct, contracts with suppliers in risk areas are reviewed to ensure compliance with anti-slavery measures. Queen's has ensured that the matter has been highlighted on the Queen's [website](#) under the section that deals with information for suppliers and have enhanced minimum standards to include a section on Modern Slavery. Queen's support and contribute to the development of a free supplier planning tool enabling suppliers to track and report on actions taken on Modern Slavery.

In 2022-23, there has been focus placed on strengthening risk management in supply chains. The Code is now embedded in tendering processes and its acceptance by suppliers is monitored and reported to the Director of Finance. Procurement resources have been allocated and put in place in the period with focus placed on risk management in the supply chain.

In the next period, it is the intention to direct the procurement resources to matters of supply chain risk which include actions to ensure supply chain adherence to the code, the first section of which is in regard to Social Compliance and forced, involuntary and underage labour.

Training

To ensure a high level of understanding of the risks of modern slavery and human trafficking in supply chains, awareness training, delivered by the charity Unseen, is available as part of the procurement easy to access training. Procurement keep internal staff guidance refreshed to ensure that the issue of Modern Slavery is at the forefront.

All Procurement Office staff are also required to undertake annual training on Modern Slavery through the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply or by utilising the training provided by the Higher Education Procurement Association (HEPA). Queen's will continue to create awareness regarding the signs of Modern Slavery.

Reporting victims of Modern Slavery

In a University context, if you think someone may be a victim of Modern Slavery or if there is a risk of it occurring please report this without delay to the Procurement Office using the e-mail address procurement@qub.ac.uk.

Suppliers, staff or students may also use the [Whistleblowing process](#) which is available on the University Website and / or the confidential [Modern Slavery Helpline](#) on **08000 121 700**.

University Management Board
23 January 2024