

Modern Slavery Risks in the Higher Education Sector



The higher education sector faces unique and complex modern slavery risks across its value chains, including in research activities, student engagement, supply chains, donations and partnerships.

Risks to students 	<p>Language barriers, limited knowledge of their work rights, cost of living challenges or family pressure can leave students vulnerable to forced labour, human trafficking and forced marriage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Student recruitment through subcontracted agencies – Student placements with limited due diligence – Student home or workplace exploitation, where universities have a unique role to inform students of their rights and options for support
Risks in research activities 	<p>Universities may contribute to or be directly linked to modern slavery risks, through their research activities and partnerships. Risks often intersect with other human rights concerns and counterparty risks related to sensitive technologies, sanctions and national security.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Research partners with human rights concerns – Research with vulnerable populations – Research in high risk locations – Dual use research, where the research application may inadvertently cause human rights harm
Risks in supply chains 	<p>Like other large organisations, universities may contribute to or be directly linked to modern slavery through complex supply chains, where there is limited visibility of working conditions, and through services that engage temporary, migrant or subcontracted labour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – On campus services (e.g. cleaning, construction) – Lab and teaching consumables – Electronics – University merchandise
Third party risks 	<p>Universities may be directly linked to modern slavery through their relationships with third parties that have documented reports of human rights violations or who demonstrate limited capacity to identify and address modern slavery risks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Partners, investments and funders with human rights concerns