

Modern slavery and exploitation can happen at universities. Students, staff, and the things universities buy can all be at risk.

Students

All students can be vulnerable to modern slavery at university, but some students are at higher risk.

If students are struggling financially, they might be more likely to experience modern slavery, especially in these ways:



Forced sexual exploitation: While sex work is different from modern slavery, research shows that being involved in the sex industry can make people more likely to be forced into sexual exploitation and trafficking. As more students turn to sex work for money, their risk of exploitation goes up.¹

County lines (drug trafficking): Some criminal networks use financially vulnerable students to transport drugs from rural to urban areas.²

International students are especially vulnerable because they might not know the local culture well, feel isolated from their home countries, or lack support. Exploitation of international students can include not paying them fairly, bad working conditions, or making them do illegal things.

Some international students might even be tricked into working without the right to do so after their student visa expires.³

Universities often use agents to bring in international students. Some agents may do dishonest things like charging too much, faking documents, or lying to students about opportunities in the UK.

Staff

University staff members, especially those in low-paid jobs, can also face exploitation. This might include not getting paid enough, working long hours, dealing with bad or unsafe conditions, or being intimidated.



Some staff members might be exploited because of their immigration status or not knowing their rights. **High-risk categories for exploitation: construction, catering, cleaning, security and maintenance.**⁴

Procurement

Universities buy things that might have modern slavery or exploitation in their supply chains.

High-risk goods for modern slavery in the supply chain:

Information communications technology (ICT), audio visual technology (AVT), laboratory consumables, office supplies, food, general catering supplies, and clothing (including staff and student uniforms).⁵

