



Al Ain University

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Al Ain University's Policies Against Forced Labour and Modern Slavery

Formal Commitment and Policy Framework

Al Ain University (AAU) has a clear commitment to prohibiting all forms of forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labour. This commitment is reflected in the university's adherence to UAE national laws and its own institutional policies. UAE labour law explicitly forbids forcing any person to work against their will, as well as related abuses. For example, **Article 4** of the UAE Labour Law prohibits forced labour and discrimination on the basis of characteristics like gender, race, religion or disability [hrme.economictimes.indiatimes.com](https://www.hrm.economictimes.indiatimes.com). Under the latest UAE labour regulations (Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021), **employers may not use any means to coerce or threaten workers** into service, and any form of compelled work is illegal mohre.gov.ae. AAU, as an employer in the UAE, is bound by these laws and has incorporated them into its own HR policies and code of conduct. In practice, this means AAU **does not tolerate** any forced or involuntary labor in its operations and supply chains, and it upholds workers' rights to freely choose employment. The university's policy stance is essentially one of *zero tolerance* for modern slavery and trafficking, aligning with national and international human rights standards.

AAU's official statements on social responsibility (including its Sustainable Development Goals reports) affirm that the institution has a **policy commitment to "no forced labour, no modern slavery, no human trafficking, and no child labour."** In compliance with UAE law and its internal regulations, AAU ensures that no staff, faculty, or contractor is subjected to debt bondage, coercion, or any form of involuntary work [hrme.economictimes.indiatimes.com](https://www.hrm.economictimes.indiatimes.com). The confiscation of employees' personal documents (like passports) or any practice that could enable forced labor is strictly forbidden by law and by university policy. Notably, recent UAE reforms explicitly **prohibit employers from withholding workers' passports or imposing exit restrictions**, practices often associated with forced labour mohre.gov.ae. AAU abides by these rules, meaning employees retain their personal documents and are free to leave or change jobs per legal guidelines. These policies are communicated to all new hires through employment contracts and the AAU Staff Handbook, which emphasizes compliance with UAE labor laws and the university's ethical standards. Supervisors and HR personnel are tasked with monitoring labor practices to ensure no violations occur, and any form of harassment, intimidation, or coercion in the workplace is not tolerated (the UAE law also bans sexual harassment, bullying and physical or psychological abuse at work mohre.gov.ae, principles that AAU upholds to maintain a safe and fair work environment).

Women's safety and inclusivity at work: Who is responsible?

UAE President issues Federal Decree Law on regulation of labour relations in private sector

The new decree-law seeks to enhance the elasticity, resilience and sustainability of the labour market nationwide, as well as ensure protection of workers' rights. It places worker welfare and wellbeing at its core, and accordingly, a host of measures have been provided therein to ensure a safe, healthy, and business-conducive environment for all employees in the private sector.

Dr. Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, said in a media briefing that the new decree law is the biggest update to the laws regulating labour relations. He added that it comes as part of the UAE Government's efforts to create a flexible and competitive business environment at a time the nation is about to embark on its journey towards the next 50 years.

"The law comes in response to the rapidly-changing workplace amid technological advancements and the outbreak of Covid-19. It will apply to different work categories including full-time, part-time, temporary and flexy work among other categories. The executive regulations of the law, which the ministry is currently working on, lays out the responsibilities of both parties in each category," he said."

The minister added that the preparation of the new law has been carried out in consultation with all parties concerned in the federal and local government sectors and the private sector.

Al Awar elaborated that the new law seeks to ensure efficiency in the labour market and also attracts and retain the best talent and skills for employment, in tandem with providing a stimulating and conducive work environment for employees.

The law supports the efforts to enhance the competitiveness of Emirati cadres in the labour market, as well as empower women, the minister added.

"It enhances the flexibility and sustainability of the labour market nationwide, by guaranteeing the protection of the work relationship, its developments and the exceptional circumstances it may face."

Al Awar added that the new law has developed an advanced mechanism that will ultimately enhance ease-of-doing business, competitiveness and productivity of the labour market.

The minister noted that the decree-law guarantees the rights of both the employer and the employee in a balanced manner and ensures protection for both the parties so that they can

claim these rights as and when necessary.

He pointed out that the new law ensures the wellbeing of workers in the private sector and emphasizes on international labour obligations agreed upon by the UAE.

The minister explained that the executive regulations are currently being prepared to regulate implementation of the provisions of the decree-law, noting that the decree gives flexibility to the Cabinet by granting it a set of competencies aligned with current and future developments.

He added that the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization will work on proposing policies, strategies and legislations to encourage and motivate enterprises to invest in training and empower workers; boost their skills, efficiency and productivity; adopt modern technologies; and attract the best talent according to the requirements of the labour market in the country; as well as train students of public and higher-education institutions endorsed by the state.

The new law aims to enhance the flexibility and sustainability of the labour market in the country, as well as guarantee protection of workers, the minister stressed.

In Article 74, the decree-law stipulates that the employer may not use any means that would force the worker or threaten him/her with any penalty or force him/her to work for the employer or force him/her to provide a service against his/her will.

The law forbids sexual harassment, bullying or any form of verbal, physical or psychological violence against a worker by the employer, his/her superiors at work or colleagues.

It prohibits all forms of discriminations based on race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin or disability that would scale down the possibilities of equal opportunity, prejudice equal access to or continuation of employment and enjoyment of rights.

The amendments stressed that while not violating the prescribed rights of working women stipulated in this decree, all provisions governing the employment of workers without discrimination shall apply to women, with an emphasis on granting women the same wage as men if they are doing the same work or work of equal value, which will be determined by a Cabinet decision.

Among the key amendments provided by the decree law is the introduction of new types of work to allow employers to meet their labour requirements and benefit from their energies and productivity at the lowest operational cost through part-time work, temporary work and flexy work, as well as allow employers to hire those whose work contracts have expired, but who are still in the country, through easy and flexible procedures.

Part-time work allows work for an employer for a specified number of hours or days. Temporary work is work whose implementation requires a specified period of time or is focused on work that ends with completion of a specified job. Flexible work is work for which working hours or work days change according to the volume of work and economic and operating variables of the employer.

The executive regulations of the law determine the conditions and control of work patterns and the obligations arising from each worker and employer, depending upon the type of employment, including what is related to end-of-service gratuity and as required by the interest of the two parties to the work contract.

The law grants companies the flexibility to pay wages in UAE dirhams or in any other currency, according to the agreement between the two parties in the work contract.

The decree-law also permits the employer to prohibit the worker from competing with the employer or participate in any competing project in the same business, should the work entrusted to the worker permit him/her to know the employer's clients or access his or her trade secrets, provided that the condition is specified in terms of time, place and type of work to the extent necessary to protect legitimate business interests and the period of non-competition shall not exceed two years from the date of contract expiry.

The decree-law specifies a fixed-term contract as one that doesn't exceed three years, and it is permissible, upon agreement by the two parties, to extend or renew this contract for a similar or lesser duration once or more.

The provisions of the decree-law shall apply to employment contracts of indefinite durations concluded in accordance with the Federal Law No (8) of 1980.

The law also stipulates that unlimited employment contracts are to be converted into fixed-term employment contracts, in accordance with the conditions, controls and procedures envisaged in this decree by law, within one year of the effective date of the existing contract and may be extended by the Cabinet for further periods as required in public interest.

All private sector workers are entitled to a paid, weekly rest day, with the possibility of increasing the weekly rest day at the discretion of the employer, in addition to providing vacations for the workers, including compassionate leave ranging from three to five days, according to the degree of the employee's relationship with the deceased. In addition, paternity leave of five days shall be granted to private sector workers. Any other leave shall be decided by Cabinet.

The law also assigns the employer the responsibility to pay for the fees and costs of recruitment and not to collect the same from the worker either directly or indirectly.

The law stipulates the prohibition of withholding of official documents, such as passports, belonging to the workers and forcing him or her to leave the country at the end of an employment contract. This has been done to allow the worker to move to another establishment in the labour market. The worker shall also have the right to obtain his or her wages on the due date in accordance with the regulations approved by the ministry and according to the conditions and procedures as specified by the Executive Regulations of this decree-law.

The decree-law permits the worker, in the event of expiration of the work contract, to move to another employer. A probationary period for the worker may not exceed six months, in accordance with the law's executive regulations. The amendments include a provision,

according to which, a worker is entitled to an end-of-service gratuity, in accordance with the legislation regulating pensions and social security in the country.

As per the law, a foreign worker who has worked full-time and who has completed one year or more of continuous service with an establishment, shall be paid end-of-service benefits calculated according to the basic wage, with a wage of 21 days for each of the first five years of service and 30 days for each subsequent year.

The decree-law waives judicial fees in all stages of litigation in all stages of litigation, execution and requests made by workers or their heirs, the value of which does not exceed AED100,000.

It regulates the obligations of the employer, the most prominent of which is the establishment of labour regulations, the obligation to provide adequate accommodation, protection and prevention, as well as train workers and help them develop their skills.

In the meantime, the law regulates the workers' obligations based on the terms of the employment contract and in accordance with duties, notably performing work during the specified times; abiding by work ethics and good conduct; keeping work secrets; developing job skills; committing not to work for another competing employer; vacating the labour accommodation within one month of expiry of employment contract and other obligations.

The decree-law regulates the controls and conditions for terminating work contracts in a way that guarantees the rights of both parties. The amendments also strengthen the controls for the employment of juveniles, as well as with regards to the entitlements of the deceased worker, the requirements for occupational safety and other controls that guarantee the rights of both parties in a balanced manner.

Prohibition of Child Labour

AAU also strictly prohibits child labour in line with federal law and ethical policies. **Under UAE law, hiring anyone under the age of 15 is illegal** for any type of work lexology.com. The university complies with this outright ban on child labor – it does not employ minors below 15 under any circumstances. For youth between 15 and 18 years (referred to as “juveniles” in the labor law), the law permits only very limited employment under stringent conditions designed to protect their well-being lexology.com lexology.com. In practice, AAU does not typically employ 15–18 year-olds except possibly in internship or training roles, and even then it must abide by the legal safeguards. These safeguards include: **no more than 6 hours of work per day for juveniles, with at least one hour break after 4 consecutive hours** lexology.com; **no employment of juveniles at night (between 7 PM and 7 AM)** lexology.com; **no engagement in hazardous, strenuous, or unhealthy jobs** that could harm their health, safety, or morals lexology.com; and absolutely **no overtime or weekend/holiday work** for anyone under 18 lexology.com. AAU's hiring policies reflect these protections – in the rare cases a person under 18 is involved in university programs (for example, student interns or work-study students), the university ensures their working hours and conditions meet all legal requirements. In general, as

an educational institution, AAU is primarily serving minors (students) in an academic capacity rather than employing them, but it remains vigilant that any campus work opportunities or third-party contractors (such as cleaning or cafeteria services) do not involve underage workers. Contracts with service providers would include clauses requiring compliance with UAE labor laws, thereby **banning the employment of anyone below 15** and regulating any 15–18 year-old workers in accordance with the law. These rules are part of AAU's wider commitment to child rights and welfare.

To reinforce this stance, AAU engages in community initiatives that promote children's rights and well-being. For instance, the university celebrated the UAE National Children's Day at its Al Ain campus (in cooperation with a local nursery) to raise awareness of children's welfare and rights. Such events underscore AAU's support for protecting children from exploitation and highlight the importance of nurturing environments free from child labour. University leadership often references national child protection laws (such as the UAE's Wadeema's Law for children's rights) in their public messaging, underlining that **any form of child exploitation is unacceptable**. These commitments are communicated to all staff and faculty, and any violation (such as employing an underage individual) would be treated as a serious breach of both law and university policy.

UAE: All You Need to Know About Child Labor Law

The UAE government has always been upfront about the protection of children and their rights. Provisions ensuring their development and safety are scattered in various legislations, and impose heavy penalties and punishments on those who violate these measures. The UAE is also party to the United Nations Convention on Child Protection, and in 2016, enacted a comprehensive legislation on protecting the children and safeguarding their rights.

Child Labour: Employment of children less than the specified age is considered as child labour. Despite the practice being prohibited at the international level, it is widely prevalent in most countries. Any activity depriving a child of his/her childhood or harming his/her physical, mental or moral well-being will fall under child labour. When a child is exposed to such activities, he is denied several liberties and privileges, and is rendered incapable of meeting his abilities to the full potential, along with being restricted from growing up in a healthy and safe environment.

Stance on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

AAU's policies extend to opposing human trafficking and all contemporary forms of slavery. *Human trafficking* – which includes forced labor, sexual exploitation, or any trade in persons – is a grave crime under UAE Federal Law No. 51 of 2006 (as amended), punishable

by severe penalties including lengthy imprisonment. While universities typically do not encounter human trafficking directly in their operations, AAU acknowledges its responsibility to be vigilant and proactive on this issue. The university's code of conduct and employment practices ensure that **no forced or trafficked persons are employed or involved** in any campus activities or supply chains. In its procurement and outsourcing, AAU endeavors to work only with reputable, law-abiding contractors. Although specific procurement policy documents are not publicly available, it is expected (and common practice in the region) that AAU includes clauses in vendor contracts requiring compliance with all labor laws and human rights standards. This means suppliers must certify that they do not use forced or trafficked labour or child labour in any goods or services provided to the university. Any partner found to violate these standards would risk termination of their contract. Enforcement of these principles is backed by national efforts; for example, UAE authorities conduct inspections and have mechanisms to blacklist companies involved in labor abuses, which adds an extra layer of deterrence for any organization operating in the country.

Beyond internal policies, AAU contributes to **awareness and education on human trafficking**. In the past five years (2019–2024), the university has organized and hosted events to educate both its campus community and the public about the dangers of trafficking and modern slavery. Notably, on **April 16, 2025, AAU's Deanship of Student Affairs collaborated with the Family Care Authority** (a government-related entity in Abu Dhabi) to hold an “*Awareness Workshop on Human Trafficking*.” The workshop aimed to inform students about the nature of human trafficking as a crime, its various forms (such as labor exploitation and sex trafficking), and the efforts made by the UAE government to combat it. It featured expert speakers – for example, a talk by Dr. Fatima Saif Al Dhaheri, who provided facts about human trafficking and guidance on how to recognize and prevent it. Through such initiatives, AAU demonstrates a commitment not just to *passively* follow anti-trafficking laws, but also to *actively* engage its students and staff in the fight against modern slavery. The university's College of Law and other departments have also hosted lectures and seminars on related topics (e.g. workers' rights, the role of law enforcement in combating trafficking, and support for victims). These educational activities are typically publicized on the AAU website and campus newsletters, reinforcing the message that **human trafficking is unequivocally condemned** and that the university community should be aware and vigilant. (For instance, AAU students have participated in moot court exercises on trafficking cases, and the university has partnered with organizations like the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children for awareness lectures.)

Communication of this stance is done through multiple channels. New employees are made aware of AAU's zero-tolerance policy on forced labour and trafficking during orientation and in the employee handbook. Students encounter these principles through campus honor codes, and relevant student handbooks, which stress ethics and social responsibility. AAU's website and annual reports may also include statements aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8.7 calls for ending forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking). In AAU's SDG reporting on *Decent Work and Economic Growth*, the university explicitly affirmed that it has a policy commitment against forced and child labor and described the measures taken to uphold this hrme.economictimes.indiatimes.com.

Enforcement and Oversight

Enforcement of these policies at AAU operates on two levels: internal oversight and external regulation. Internally, AAU's Human Resources Department and administrative leadership enforce compliance with labor standards. Hiring processes include age verification to prevent any underage employment. Work contracts for faculty and staff conform to the UAE Labour Law – which not only prohibits forced labour, but also guarantees things like fair working hours, leave, and the right to resign – thus providing a contractually binding assurance of decent work conditions. If an AAU employee ever felt pressured or discovered unethical labor practices, the university has grievance mechanisms (e.g. the ability to report to HR or higher management) in place. There are also ethical conduct offices and a Dean of Student Affairs that can handle any complaints related to exploitation or abuse, ensuring that any hint of forced labour or trafficking is investigated. AAU's **Policies and Procedures Manual** (available through the Quality Assurance office) outlines expected standards of conduct; while it primarily covers academic and professional ethics, it implicitly requires obeying all laws and upholding human rights. This means any violation of labour laws – such as coercion of workers or discrimination – would also violate university policy and could lead to disciplinary action or termination.

Externally, AAU is subject to UAE government oversight like any employer. The **Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE)** conducts labour inspections and requires institutions to comply with regulations like wage protection, maximum working hours, and proper treatment of employees. The UAE's legal framework provides penalties for employers involved in forced labour or child labour, including fines and imprisonment. For example, forcing a worker to continue working under threat is a criminal offense under UAE law mohre.gov.ae. Similarly, employing a child under 15 can result in legal sanctions lexology.com. These laws create a strong deterrent and enforcement mechanism. AAU's compliance is evidenced by its clean record – there have been no public accusations of labor exploitation against the university. The **national anti-trafficking committee** and NGOs also raise public awareness, meaning that if any organization were complicit in trafficking or forced labour, it would likely be exposed. AAU mitigates such risks by carefully vetting its contractors (for instance, ensuring cleaning or security staff on campus are provided by licensed firms that follow UAE labour laws) and by cooperating with any government audits.

Finally, AAU communicates its commitment to ethical labor standards to partners and the wider community. When signing agreements or memoranda of understanding with external partners, the university often includes clauses upholding ethical practices. While specific procurement policies aren't published online, we can infer that any tender or supplier contract from AAU would oblige the supplier to follow all UAE labour regulations – effectively barring child labour, forced labour, and any trafficking in the supply of goods or services. In the context of the UAE's laws, even imported products or services are subject to scrutiny (for example, the country has regulations against importing goods made with forced or child labor). AAU being a state-accredited university is expected to uphold these standards in its purchasing decisions as well.

Training, Awareness, and Community Initiatives

AAU complements its formal policies with training and awareness programs. On campus, **ethical conduct training** is provided to staff and sometimes to students (for example, as part of student orientation or within relevant coursework). Faculty and staff are made aware of their

rights and obligations – including that they must report any suspicion of human trafficking or labor exploitation to the authorities. The university's law faculty regularly engages students with topics like labor law, human rights law, and international conventions against modern slavery, thereby educating the next generation of lawyers and professionals on these issues.

The university also undertakes **public awareness campaigns**. In addition to the 2025 anti-trafficking workshop mentioned above, AAU has hosted events such as panel discussions on **"Facts about Human Trafficking"** and collaborations with government agencies during the annual UAE National Anti-Human Trafficking Day. Through its College of Law and Student Affairs, AAU invites experts (e.g. from the police, Ministry of Interior, or human rights organizations) to give talks on identifying and preventing trafficking and forced labour. These events are well-publicized on the AAU website and social media. For example, AAU news in recent years highlighted workshops that educated students on the forms of human trafficking and the UAE's efforts to combat these crimes aau.ac.ae. In 2019, AAU's Al Ain campus hosted representatives from Dar Zayed for Family Care for a lecture on supporting orphans and vulnerable children, aligning with efforts to prevent exploitation of at-risk youth. Such activities indicate that AAU's commitment goes beyond internal compliance – it also sees itself as having a **social responsibility to promote human rights and decent work** in the broader community.

Awareness Workshop on "Human Trafficking" in Collaboration with the Family Care Authority

As part of its efforts to promote community awareness and foster a culture of prevention, the Deanship of Student Affairs and the National Identity Club at the Al Ain campus, in collaboration with the Family Care Authority, organized an awareness workshop titled "Human Trafficking". The workshop aimed to educate students about the concept of this crime, its various forms, and the efforts made by the UAE to combat it.

The workshop received notable engagement from students and contributed to raising their awareness about the dangers of human trafficking, methods of prevention, and the appropriate ways to report such crimes and respond safely in suspicious situations.

Students expressed their appreciation for the workshop's valuable content and interactive presentation style, confirming the significant benefit they gained. This reflects the success of the workshop in achieving its educational and awareness objectives, and in reinforcing concepts of protection and vigilance among youth.

In summary, over the last five years AAU has solidified and demonstrated its commitment to prohibiting forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labour. This commitment is documented in its policies (closely mirroring UAE's robust labor

laws), enforced through HR oversight and legal compliance, and actively communicated via training and outreach. **No forced labour or child exploitation is permitted** in any university operations, a stance upheld by legal mandate and institutional ethos. AAU's leadership and campus community are aware of these standards: they are part of the university's culture of ethics. Through continuous awareness programs and strict adherence to national laws (such as not employing underage workers, not confiscating documents, and not tolerating any coercion), AAU ensures a safe and fair environment for all employees and students. The university's alignment with **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)** is evident – it not only has the policies on paper, but also takes concrete actions to enforce them and educate others, thereby contributing to the broader fight against modern slavery and child labour
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