SUPPLIERS’ GUIDE to PROCUREMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

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Feedback:
Any comments or feedback that you have will reach the University Procurement team if you complete and send the attached form.
**Aims**

The University of Aberdeen is committed to obtaining the best value possible from all of its business transactions. Procurement at the University of Aberdeen will apply the highest ethical standards in terms of: our treatment of suppliers; our sustainable approach; the personal conduct of our buyers and legal compliance.

Our approach to procurement, our aims and procedures have been developed in accordance with the following legislative and policy frameworks. Please click on the Links below for more information on these.

- **The Rules**: The Public Contracts Regulations (Scotland) 2006 may be found here.
- **Suppliers’ Charter**: we have subscribed to this Procurement Scotland initiative, see here for details.
- **Diversity, Equality, Sustainability and CSR**: a statement on the University’s procurement approach is here.
- **Code of Ethics**: the University’s Procurement Code is based on that of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, see here for details.

It would not be possible to meet the high standards we’ve set and achieve best value from our transactions without the full co-operation and commitment of our suppliers and contractors; this guide is published to explain the regulatory environment we work in, how our procurement business is conducted, and what we expect from our suppliers. The intention is to increase the visibility of our procedures to improve our suppliers’ understanding and help them to help us.
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I get my firm onto the University of Aberdeen’s preferred supplier list?
A: The University of Aberdeen does not operate such a list. We do have suppliers who hold contracts at an institutional, regional, sectorial or national level, and our staff are advised to use contracted suppliers for their requirements whenever possible.

Q: Can my company become a contracted supplier to the University?
A: Most of our high commonality items are drawn from collaborative or consortium agreements. All suppliers are welcome to tender for these agreements, either on their own or working jointly with other firms. These are normally high value contracts so firms are encouraged to regularly monitor contract notices that are published in the Supplement to the European Journal of the European Communities. (Details of these notices may be found on: http://simap.europa.eu.)

Lower value contract opportunities are advertised on the Public Contracts Scotland portal www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk., and there is a link to this on our Procurement webpage www.abdn.ac.uk/procurement. For low value, specialist supplies or services, invitations to tender may be issued directly to firms.

Q: I’ve received an order that appears to be from the University; how do I know that it is genuine?
A: All of our orders carry an order number, the buyer’s name and a telephone number; this is never a mobile telephone number. If you have the slightest doubt about the validity of an order, please contact Procurement immediately, and certainly before you supply anything. Procurement can be reached on: 01224 274467 or procurement@abdn.ac.uk. (We don’t want to increase the chance of fraud by describing in detail what our standard orders look like.)

Q: We are a small local firm interested in trades work. How can we qualify to supply trades services to the University of Aberdeen?
A: If there is interest in local trades work, it may be useful to contact our Estates Directorate directly (www.abdn.ac.uk/estates) or email: estates@abdn.ac.uk.
Q: What are the terms and conditions that apply to University orders and contracts?

A: There is a reference and/or a link to the University of Aberdeen’s “General Conditions of Purchase” on every official purchase order that is issued by the University; these terms form the basis of agreement between us and our suppliers, and there may be additional terms included in the text of the order. Our standard set of terms may be found by clicking here: www.abdn.ac.uk/procurement/terms-conditions.

University of Aberdeen contracts do not have a single standard set of terms as they are all individually tailored to the requirement, but they are normally incorporated in the agreement which is signed by both the University and the contractor.

Q: If I am unhappy about the outcome or the way my firm has been treated during a tender exercise, what can I do?

A: Following receipt of tenders, and before any contract has been signed, firms which have not been selected will normally receive a formal communication advising them of the outcome. There will always be a period allowed for questions or feedback before the award is finalised, and in the instance of a full tender over the Public Contracts value threshold, this period is 15 days (or 10 days if communications are issued electronically).

If you are not satisfied, there are courses of action open to you. Please always contact the Contracts Officer who signed the Notice of Intention to Award first, and as quickly as possible; contact details will have been provided in the Notice letter.

If you have a grievance you want escalated, then the Head of Procurement will ensure that all issues are dealt with promptly (email: procurement@abdn.ac.uk).

Further steps you can take are:

- Alerting the Scottish HFE Procurement Centre of Expertise, APUC, to your problem (enquiries@apuc-scot.ac.uk), or the


Q: Who do I contact in Procurement to make my firm’s name known to them?

A: There are seven staff in the team and they all look after different commodity areas. There is some information on our names, contact details and activities on the Procurement web-page, or, if you would like to send a short message detailing the goods or services your firm can offer, you are welcome to send an email to: procurement@abdn.ac.uk.

Please don’t send a flyer loaded with a lot of graphic images as this quickly over-loads mailbox quotas!
Q: What does the University of Aberdeen spend on goods and services annually?

A: Our total non-staff expenditure, including major and minor works, is over £70M a year. More than 28% of this goes to suppliers in the local (Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire) area.
**Practices**

As well as making broad statements about our aims, we recognise that commitments have to be reflected in the way we do business. In order to improve understanding of our practices we have provided information on our normal routes to procurement.

**A word of warning: please DO NOT supply goods or services to anyone within the University without a Purchase Order (or a contract number for a higher value transaction). Invoices sent to the University of Aberdeen without this reference will be returned without discussion.**

There are three different ways our staff might directly approach a firm to obtain a quote or purchase goods or services:

1. **Below £25,000:** Day-to-day operational purchasing is devolved to Schools and Sections. Buyers may approach suppliers to request a written quote. It is their duty to obtain competitive, written quotes for all supplies valued at £1000 and above, and select the one which provides best value. You may therefore be asked to quote, but may not be asked to supply every time.

2. **£25,000 and above:** Suppliers will be requested to participate in a formal tender exercise and provide written offers.

3. **£100,000 and above:** Central Procurement will be involved in the formal tendering exercise and all contract notices will be advertised on the Public Contracts Scotland portal ([www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk](http://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk)), or above £156,000 on the Supplement to the European Journal, please see: [http://simap.europa.eu](http://simap.europa.eu).

Other than the above, most of the commonly used items bought by staff at the University of Aberdeen are obtained from existing, collaborative contracts. These agreements are put in place by bodies such as;

- APUC Ltd (Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges: [www.apuc-scot.ac.uk](http://www.apuc-scot.ac.uk))
- Procurement Scotland: ([ps-enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ps-enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)), OR one of the higher education working groups, for example the National Working Party for Laboratory Supplies ([www.nwpls.procureweb.ac.uk](http://www.nwpls.procureweb.ac.uk)).

These organisations consolidate requirements regionally or nationally and tender on behalf of consortium or collaborative groups for the supply of commodities such as: PCs and laptops; stationery; computer consumables; general laboratory supplies or audio-visual equipment. All firms have the opportunity to tender for these products, but, because of the values involved, the contracts are required to follow the Public Contracts Regulations (the “EU” regulations – see the “Aims” section above), and all contract notices are advertised in the Supplement to the European Journal.
Procedures

For Purchases below £25,000

As a public sector body we have a duty to demonstrate that we are obtaining best value as all of our purchase transactions are made with public money.

Where there is more than one supplier available and the purchase is valued between £1000 and £25,000, our departments and sections have a duty to obtain competitive quotes, rather than formal tenders, before making a decision to purchase, and any quotation selected which was not the least expensive must have a technical justification for the selection recorded on file.

For Purchases of £25,000 and above

This is our recommended practice for all tenders worth £25,000 or more.

| Stage 1: | Buyer to research the market |
| Stage 2: | Buyer writes the specification of requirements |
| Stage 3: | A contract notice is published or invitations to tender are issued (depending on the value) |
| Stage 4: | Interested firms supply qualifying information |
| Stage 5: | Appropriately qualified firms are invited to tender |
| Stage 6: | Winning tender is selected and all tenderers are notified of the result |

Stage 1: Research the requirement.

The first contact a supplier may have with the University is a buyer or requisitioner gathering information on the product or service that they need in order to establish:

- Is it available from an existing collaborative contract (APUC/HE/Procurement Scotland)?
- Which firms are in the market to supply?
- Can the supplier provide useful technical product information?
- For budget purposes what the approximate cost is.

Stage 2: Specification

From the market research the buyer will develop a specification of requirements. As well as the technical description expressed in terms of performance, minimum standards or outputs etc., the specification will include a request for “whole-life” costing information. The buyer will expect to obtain details from tenderers relating to cost elements such as: delivery, installation, testing, warranties, training, running costs, service and maintenance charges and the cost of wearing or consumable parts for the life of the contract or the equipment.

The specification will also detail what is important to the buyer, ie. The significant elements which will lead to selection complete with corresponding weightings.

Stage 3: Contract Notices

The second contact a potential supplier might have will be following the advertisement of a notice of tender. At present all higher value purchases of £100,000 and above are advertised on the Public Contracts Scotland portal*, and contract notices above the “European threshold” are subsequently published in the Supplement to the European Journal except when the supplies may be drawn from an existing contract or framework agreement which has been pre-tendered. In this situation only those firms participating in the collaborative agreement will be invited to tender.
In the longer term (by 2011) it is planned that all University of Aberdeen contract notices worth £50,000 and above will be advertised on the Public Contracts Scotland* web-page (www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk).

For contracts below the thresholds detailed here, it is permissible for the buyer to invite tenders from firms identified as potential suppliers at the “Research” stage provided that the market was adequately explored, all possible firms are invited to participate and no appropriate supplier is prevented from tendering.

*Please note that the University of Aberdeen’s “Buyer Profile”, which carries all of our past and present contract notices on the Public Contracts Scotland portal, is accessible from the University’s Procurement web-page: www.abdn.ac.uk/procurement.

Stage 4: Qualification Stage
It is our normal practice to use a qualification stage before inviting firms to tender. The notices will only contain a brief summary of the requirement; this will include a description, estimate of value and the required delivery. These notices will request that interested firms supply information on their technical capacity, capability and their financial position. The information provided here is important and will be used to select firms suitable to be considered for the supply.

The third contact: all firms which responded with a qualified application to tender which was not selected to progress to the tender stage should receive a communication advising of this decision with the reasoning behind it.

Stage 5: Invitation to Tender
Firms which have emerged successfully from the qualification stage will receive an invitation to tender (fourth contact). All tender exercises for requirements of £100,000 or above will be managed using Procurement Scotland ePS electronic sourcing software, presently provided by QA-IQ. All other invitations to tender will be issued by post or email for the foreseeable future. The documents contained in a normal ITT package are as follows:

- Invitation to Tender letter;
- Acknowledgement template;
- Instructions to Tenderers;
- Form of Tender (including Certificate of Tender);
- Specification of Requirements (as described above);
- Any other supporting information.

Stage 6: Selecting the Winning Tender
The Tender Committee will examine all tenders and rate them according to the Selection Criteria and the Weightings allocated. All submissions will be assessed, the short-listed tenderers may be requested to participate in a series of site visits or presentations, and any final details will be clarified before a final selection will be made.

The final contact will normally be when a preferred tender has been identified; then the firms which were not selected should receive a communication advising that they have been unsuccessful, and will be advised of how their offer related to that of the winning firm, along with a narrative provided by the Tender Committee. The unsuccessful tenderers will be given the opportunity and time to question the decision made or the feedback that has been provided before any contract is placed.

The winning firm will also receive a notice of intention to award, and provided that there has been no issue raised by the other firms involved (and subject to agreeing supply terms with the University) a contract will be awarded. In order to get payment details entered on to our finance system, a New Supplier Form will also have to be completed.
Technology

The University of Aberdeen’s Procurement Team, in common with many large public sector organisations in Scotland, is always trying to make its commercial processes more efficient. We aim to achieve this by using the most advanced technology we have available to us to simplify and speed up our transactions. This is often difficult to achieve while fully complying with complex public sector regulations.

The systems that we presently use to conduct our business, and that suppliers will come into contact with, are as follows:

1. University of Aberdeen contract notices are advertised electronically on the Public Contracts Scotland portal: www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk;


3. Most of our purchase orders are generated and sent electronically via the e-Procurement Scotland (Pecos) procurement system. At its simplest level this might just involve receiving purchase orders to an email address, and suppliers are encouraged to use this system if they can. The first time we deal with you, you will be asked to complete a form (New Supplier Form) to provide detailed information on your firm.

4. Some suppliers which are unwilling or unable to receive orders electronically will have orders produced on COA/Cedar, our present finance management system, and these will be sent by fax, scan or post, or be telephoned through.

5. Suppliers responding to tender notices will be requested to use the e-Procurement Scotland/QA-IQ electronic tendering system to apply to tender, send their offers and communicate with the Procurement section during a tender exercise.

6. An imminent development will be the introduction of an electronic invoicing system which will channel orders to suppliers, then return an invoice to the University’s Accounts Payable section. This is likely to be launched in 2011.

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