

PRO-003

Sustainable Procurement Policy

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Introduction

Unite students is the UK's largest and most established manager and developer of purpose-built student accommodation. We provide a home for around 74,000 students each year, across 25 UK cities. Unite Students works in partnership with more than 60 Higher Education institutions and lets rooms directly to students. Our purpose is to provide a home for our culturally diverse customers, offering them a strong foundation for academic and personal success. Our Sustainability strategy sets out our approach to ensuring we operate in a responsible and sustainable way, generating environmental, social and economic value for our stakeholders.

In support of this, Unite Students aim to procure in a manner which reduces our impact to the environment and considers the ethical, economic and social impact of all purchases. Unite Students are aware of the social and environmental costs of our supply chain and intend to act on all opportunities that exist to significantly reduce this.

1.1 Purpose

Unite Students take our Environment, Social and Governance responsibilities seriously. One of the ways in which we strive to minimise the impact of our activities on the planet and communities in which we work is through delivering sustainable solutions in our supply chain - a continuous process achieved by working collaboratively and innovatively with our Suppliers in the products and services we procure.

This policy sets out the minimum requirements expected not only of Unite Students, but also of the companies with which we work. Furthermore, it provides the framework for our Supplier Code which sets out the specific ethical practices that we expect of our Suppliers regarding its colleagues, governance and supply chain - in fact, not only of our Suppliers, but also of our Suppliers' Suppliers, and so on.

Specifically, this policy:

- a) Provides the sustainable and ethical basis upon which the procurement function shall source products and/or services.
- b) Ensures all colleagues involved in the purchasing of goods and services do so in an ethical and sustainable manner; and
- c) Provides clarity for our supply chain on the sustainable and ethical basis on which they are expected to supply their goods and services to Unite Students.

1.2 Scope

This policy extends to all involved in the procurement or purchasing of goods and services, including our procurement team, our colleagues, and our Suppliers.

1.3 Responsibilities

The Procurement function are responsible for defining the Sustainable Procurement Policy and respective strategies upon which the supply chain should be sourced and managed, always, and closely in conjunction with the wider business and the Energy & Environment team. All members of the Procurement function are responsible for adhering to the Policy, communicating, vetting, and upholding its principles during supplier selection and management, reporting, and taking action where non-compliance is identified.

All Suppliers, including potential Suppliers, are expected to ensure that they understand and abide by the content of this Policy before, during and after doing business with Unite Students.

All Unite Students employees are responsible for adherence to the Policy.

Heads of Department and / or Functional Directors are responsible for ensuring there is clear and consistent messaging about our sustainability policy in procuring and purchasing goods and services before, during, or after trading. They are accountable for reporting and taking action where non-compliance is identified.

1.4 Definitions

Anti-corruption: Designed to prevent dishonest or fraudulent conduct, within a political context¹.

Carbon Footprint: a measure of the amount of carbon dioxide release into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organisation, or community².

Carbon Footprint Equivalent (CO2e): a metric unit measure use to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases on the basis of their global-warming potential (GWP), by converting

¹ SOURCE Oxford Dictionary

² SOURCE: Oxford Dictionary

amounts of other gases to the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide with the same global warming potential³ CO₂e/tonnes are the standard metric that Unite Student uses.

Circular Economy: an economic system based on using renewable resources, eliminating waste, and reusing and recycling material goods¹³

Eco-Friendly or Environmentally Friendly: A product or service which is not environmentally harmful⁴, considered throughout the products life cycle and demonstrated through a robust LCA (defined below).

Ecological: involved with or concerning ecology¹⁴.

Embodied Carbon: All the carbon dioxide emitted in producing materials from the energy used to extract and transport raw materials as well as emissions from manufacturing processes⁵.

Environmental Product Declaration⁶: A report which details what a product is made from and how this will impact the environment from cradle to grave; the outcome of a life cycle assessment (LCA) has been performed.

ESG: Environmental, Social and Governance⁷.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions: Any gas that could absorb infrared radiation emitted from Earth's surface and reradiating it back to the Earth's surface⁸. **Global Warming Potential (GWP):** a measure of how much energy the emission of 1 ton of a gas will absorb over a given period, relative to the emissions of 1 ton of carbon dioxide. It allows comparison of the global warming impacts of different gases.⁹

³ SOURCE: Eurostat Statistics Explained

⁴ SOURCE: Oxford Dictionary

⁵ SOURCE: UCLA

⁶ SOURCE: [ESG: The Report](#)

⁷ SOURCE: Cambridge Dictionary

⁸ SOURCE: www.britannica.com

⁹ SOURCE: EPA

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA): A process for evaluating the effects that a product has on the environment over the entire period of its life thereby increasing resource-use efficiency and decreasing liabilities ¹⁰.

Suppliers: All third-party companies that supply Unite Students with goods, materials, products and services, including contractors and sub-contractors.

Sustainability: Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs¹¹.

1.5 References

The Sustainable Procurement Policy works in conjunction with or as additional parts to the following documents:

Procurement PRP-01 Sole Trader Policy

Procurement PRP-03 Approved Supplier Standards

Procurement PRP-05 Group Specification Policy

Group Sustainability Policy

Unite Students Environmental Policy

¹⁰ SOURCE: European Environment Agency

¹¹ SOURCE United Nations Brundtland Commission

¹³ SOURCE: Collins Dictionary

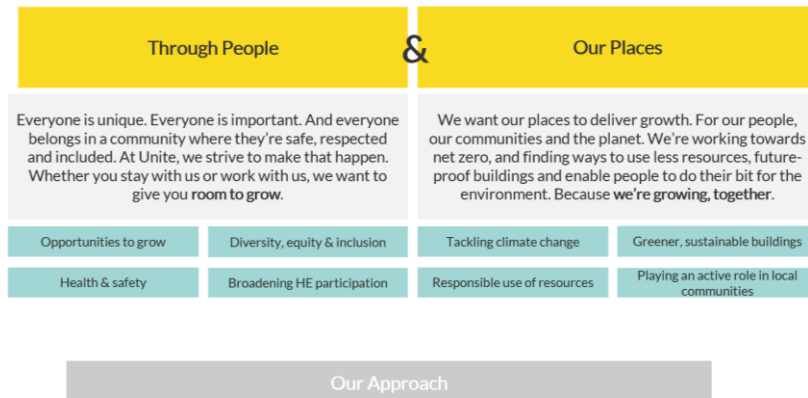
¹⁴ SOURCE: Collins Dictionary

Sustainable Procurement Policy

2.1. Intent

To provide the sustainable and ethical principles upon which Unite Students shall source its products and services and manage its supply chain. Unite Students shall always uphold its Sustainability Strategy (figure 1) in the way it procures its goods and services and in the way it works with its' supply chain, specifically how we “always operate with integrity and transparency” to:

- Tackle climate change
- Achieve Greener sustainable buildings
- Make responsible use of resources
- Play an active part in our communities
- Ensure health and safety standards are upheld
- Ensure diversity, equality and inclusion in our supply chain.



Our goal is to lead on sustainability and raise standards in the living sector. Our governance and processes ensure that working responsibly and sustainably isn't optional, that we always operate with integrity and transparency.

Figure1 – Unite Students Sustainability Pillars

As such the principles within this policy, shall always be considered and planned in Procurement Source Plans, and assessed as part of any resulting tenders and supplier section processes.

2.2 Principles

Principle 1: Ethical Sourcing – we will always operate with integrity and transparency

In selecting and working with other companies, we look to our Suppliers to:

- a) Have a supply chain code of conduct in place, or agree to follow and communicate that of Unite Students
- b) Strive to be a member of recognised responsible sourcing scheme certifications, such as BES6001, ISO14001, ISO50001 or any other material related equivalent standards
- c) Be a fair, clear, and transparent business - have a zero-tolerance policy on bribery or corruption, all procurement activity will be undertaken in accordance with the highest standards of business and personal ethics in accordance with our Supplier Code and Anti-Bribery Policy.
- d) Pay at least the minimum wage to their staff; Preference will always be shown to suppliers signed up to the Living Wage Foundation, and we are committed to ensuring our Supplier adopt its principles.
- e) Have policies in place to confirm that no employee below the minimum legal age of employment is used. Where Suppliers legally use employees under 18 years of age, they must have policies that prioritise the best interests of personal development for under 18s.
- f) Implement policy ensuring they comply with local laws regarding working hours and overtime, and that they make efforts to reduce excessive working hours and promote good work-life balance.
- g) Ensure employees are treated with respect and dignity and are not subject to inhumane or harsh treatment or any other form of harassment, threat, or intimidation, during their regular employment or as a result of disciplinary procedures.
- h) Records of any disciplinary proceedings should be maintained, and penalties should not include wage deductions.
- i) Provide a healthy and safe working environment by ensuring employees are given appropriate training to carry out their required role in a safe and productive manner.
- j) Must not use forced, indentured or compulsory labour, or require monetary deposits from employees in order to start or continue their employment. Employees should have the right to leave of their own will after reasonable notice has been served. Terms of employment should be communicated to employees clearly in an easily understandable contract, agreed and signed by both employer and employee.

- k) Have a formal equality diversity and inclusion policy, discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated in our supply chain against any protected characteristics or any other kind of discrimination or prejudice.
- l) Must allow employees freedom of association. If the law restricts freedom of association and collective bargaining, then employers should facilitate alternative means of representation for staff.
- m) Implement a proactive approach to tackling modern slavery and labour exploitation and work to eliminate these practices in our wider supply chain, responding promptly and honestly when asked by Unite Students to participate in our Modern Slavery assessment.
- n) Give consideration to working conditions which align with our DEIB values, including encouraging, training and personal development of colleagues. We expect our Suppliers to develop the skills and talent of their colleagues, recruit locally and provide opportunities for graduates, trainees, apprenticeships, and work experience.
- o) Maintain confidentiality regarding all information accessed and complies with all GDPR legislation.

Principle 2: The Environment - we shall tackle climate change, achieve greener sustainable buildings and make only responsible use of resources

All Tier 1 and 2 Suppliers should have both an ESG and Sustainable Procurement policy along with a set of goals in relation to these. We will look for how our Suppliers are able to demonstrate that they are changing their behaviours to achieve these goals and how they are able to assist Unite Students in achieving ours.

Specifically, we look for the following from our supply chain and in the purchase of any goods, materials or services:

Reduce usage

- (a) When undertaking purchases, due diligence is expected of all Unite Students employees to ensure the item(s) need to be purchased (i.e., there are no alternatives to purchasing new) and that they will be used. Careful consideration should be given to customised products that may not be returnable/refundable.
- (b) All Unite Students colleagues should consider the whole life-cycle impact of an item/s before purchase, where reasonable opting to purchase eco-friendly alternatives

- (c) Unite Students preference is given to the purchase goods and/or materials that are made from recycled products and have minimal packaging. Waste should be minimised through the purchase of products and/or materials that are recyclable. With appropriate preference given to used or remanufactured goods but never at a compromise to safety, quality, or effectiveness.
- (d) Unite Students aims to purchase goods and products that comply with recognised environmental standards or British Standards for your sector.

Reduce waste

- (a) Unite Students request that Suppliers minimise or eliminate packaging where reasonable, and that packaging is reusable (by Unite Students or the supplier) or recyclable.
- (b) Suppliers should be zero to landfill as a minimum with a clear plan to increase recycling and reuse of packaging and products.
- (c) Suppliers are expected to adhere to the duty of care regulations for all waste produced as part of their operations and be able to provide Unite Students with disposal information where required.

Do all we can to achieve a Circular Economy:

- (a) Unite Students will give preference to Suppliers that offer collection services for the purpose of reuse and recycling
- (b) Unite Students aims to procure products with the largest circular economy potential
- (c) Colleagues of Unite Students should consider the durability and re-usability of products. Taking preference, where possible, to products which will have value at end of life or could be manufactured into new products with minimal energy use.

Reduce Energy & Carbon:

- (a) Wherever possible, Unite Students' preference is with Suppliers who offer low carbon alternatives that is evidenced robustly.
- (b) Suppliers should be able to provide documents relating to embodied carbon and the Greenhouse Gas Protocol for products and services in the form of a LCA or an

Environmental Product Declaration. Suppliers should issue this to Unite when requested, in a timely manner

- (c) Where a full LCA is not available, the supplier should be ready to share further data with Unite Students to allow a carbon footprint calculation. This may include locations of resource, production sites, manufacturing practice and transport
- (d) Suppliers must be willing to collaborate with Unite Students on reduction measures, to reduce the carbon footprint of our supply chain and/or how the Supplier will report on scope 3 emissions
- (e) Suppliers of products which require energy in their usage, must ensure energy efficiency measures can be adhered to by Unite Students i.e., through providing clear instructions for efficient use and maintenance.

Maximise Air Quality:

- (a) Suppliers should be aware of, and adhere to all relevant clean air legislation
- (b) Suppliers should have active measures to reduce or prevent emissions to air within the manufacture/sourcing of their products or services. When requested, Suppliers should be able to provide policies or information surrounding methods/plans to reduce or prevent emissions.
- (c) Preference will be given to Suppliers who are working towards transforming fleets (including logistics provided by third parties) to electric vehicles or have considered diesel alternatives such as hybrids or biobased fuels.
- (d) Unite Students aim to use products which do not contain harmful chemicals, in particular showing preference to products with the lowest amount of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and low or no formaldehyde in materials such as furniture and paint.
- (e) Suppliers should make Unite Students aware of any products supplied or services offered which contain or make use of chemicals which are harmful to human health and the environment through chemical safety data sheets.

Conserve Water:

- (a) Where relevant, preference will be made to products that minimise water use

- (b) Unite Students, where reasonable, will give preference to the procurement of products which conserve water compared to their alternatives. This should be considered throughout the production, manufacturing, and use of the product, where applicable.

Minimise ecological risks:

- (a) Unite Students aims to minimise or avoid the purchase of products created through unsustainable practice or extensive use of fossil fuels.
- (b) Suppliers should be seeking to phase out the use of unsustainable practices or fossil fuels for alternative measures.
- (c) Suppliers must be aware of their ecological risks and opportunities and be in active measures to minimising these risks with clear demonstration of how this is being achieved.
- (d) All Unite Students' colleagues and Suppliers are expected to protect and where possible enhance habitats and wildlife on or around Unite Students sites
- (e) Where this is not possible at Unite Students sites, other means of improvement should be sought

Principle 3 – Play an active role in the community

We believe in supporting the communities where we operate, and we look to our Supply Chain for similar values and principles:

- We ask our suppliers to minimise their impact on the local community through compliance with regulations as a minimum
- We ask our Suppliers to engage positively with the local community and consider providing time off for volunteering and financial assistance to the causes that they are supporting wherever possible.
- We ask our Suppliers to work to avoid disruption to local people; and
- We aim to develop our Supply Chain Diversity further in support of our communities.
- We offer small and medium enterprises, social enterprises, and local businesses the opportunity to participate in our supply chain by inviting organisations of any size or type to take part in tenders we launch.

Principle 4 – Ensure Health & Safety is upheld

We require our Suppliers to operate safely, and our Procurement and Health and Safety teams will work closely with Suppliers to ensure they meet legal requirements for health and safety standards. At a minimum Suppliers must be accredited under the Safe contractor scheme, and provide appropriate training, facilities, and protective equipment to employees so that they can undertake their role safely.

Where Suppliers work on Unite Students premises, or on behalf of Unite Students, they must confirm that they understand and will adhere to their health & safety obligations for the duration of the services and/or contract.

Suppliers are required to pass on the requirements of our Health & Safety standards to their supply chain, and ensure they are achieved, managed and reported effectively.

Principle 5 – Diversity and inclusion is evident in the workplace

We expect our supply chain to demonstrate the actions they undertake to ensure Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and belonging in the workplace, specifically:

- Educating their employees on the advantages of having a diverse workforce.
- Can demonstrate action plans on the activity taken to ensure an inclusive and diverse working environment during any given year.
- Showing zero tolerance of unlawful discrimination of any kind and implementing approaches to ensure hidden discrimination does not take place in hiring, compensation, access to training, promotion, and termination of employment or retirement.
- Actively working towards positive social impact, including supporting marginalised communities within recruitment activities.

3.0 Key Outcomes

By upholding its Sustainability Strategy (figure 1) within the procurement of goods and services throughout our supply chain, we can achieve our goals.

Adherence to this policy, both internally and by our Suppliers, will ensure Unite Students' activities and those of our supply chain have the least possible environmental and social enabling our commitment of being a responsible business.

Progress will be measured annually through "Procurement Annual Source Planning", with specific and relevant Sustainable Procurement objectives set and agreed with the wider

business at Category (spend area) level, reviewed and measured a) annually as part of this process and b) at regular pre-determined intervals at a Supplier level as part of ongoing Contract Management.

4.0 Non-compliance

Non-compliance with any conditions set out within this policy between a Supplier and Unite Students will be subject to enquiry.

Dependent on the severity of the breach, Unite Students may offer Suppliers the opportunity to rectify any issues or false information.

5.0 Sanctions

Any supplier that breaches this policy may have their services with us cancelled with immediate effect and be removed from our purchasing systems.

Any employee who breaches this policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

3.0 Appendix A – Document Control Information

Document Management			
Document Ref / Title		Sustainable Procurement Policy	
Version #	V1.0	Status	Live
Classification		Public (everyone has access)	
Reason for development		Ensuring a sustainable supply chain is in place	
Summary of changes		New Policy	
Applicable parties		All employees, Suppliers, and sub-Suppliers (Unites supply chain)	
Author(s) (name / title)		Francesca Garnham, Procurement Contracts Manager Chloe Lloyd, Environment Manager Eleanor Biddiscombe, Procurement Director	
Owner (name / title)		Procurement Director	
Function		Procurement & Specification	
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<input type="checkbox"/> Data Protection	<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> NCC / ECC	<input type="checkbox"/> City Teams
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales	<input type="checkbox"/> IT Service Desk	<input type="checkbox"/> IT	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance - AR	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance - Treasury	<input type="checkbox"/> InfoSec	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR
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<input type="checkbox"/> Digital	<input type="checkbox"/> Office Support	<input type="checkbox"/> PMO	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition / Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Version History (copy and paste from top section to here as a record)			
Version	Date approved	Author	Summary of changes
V1.0		Francesca Garnham, Chloe Lloyd, Eleanor Biddiscombe	New Policy