

## **Sustainable Procurement Strategy**

This document outlines the strategic approach for implementing sustainability within the University's Procurement processes. It sets the overarching sustainable procurement objectives and the actions the University will take to deliver them in alignment with the principles of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). This also links to the University's Environmental Policy and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Strategy 2035<sup>1</sup>.

### **1. What is sustainable procurement?**

*“Sustainable procurement is a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, while minimising damage to the environment”* (Sustainable Procurement Task Force)

This definition is applied through a holistic approach that balances three interconnected pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic responsibility. Our environment commitment aims to minimise negative impacts across the entire lifecycle of goods and services, this involves evaluating embodied carbon and recycling content where applicable and encourage purchasing equipment with the best energy rating available, while promoting bulk ordering to reduce logistics and packaging waste.

Secondly, we uphold rigorous social standards by managing and monitoring supply chains to ensure fair contract prices and terms, such as Considerate Constructor in Construction project for example. Extending beyond combating corruption to enforcing ethical, human rights, and employment standards, in full compliance with the employment and health and safety laws and regulations.

Finally, our economic objective is to secure full-life value for money, whilst also leveraging our purchasing power to promote local economic growth. We are committed, where possible, to providing opportunities for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to benefit from our supply chains. This integrated approach ensures that every procurement decision contributes to a more sustainable and resilient supply chain.

### **2. Sustainability at University of Wolverhampton**

Sustainability is a core value; it is an organisational objective to embed environmental and social consciousness throughout our corporate and academic business operations. As such, sustainable procurement is pursued by the University as part of achieving efficiency, effectiveness and value for money and sits within its strategic aims. Sustainable procurement is pivotal to assisting the University in delivering its 5 key pillars: (<https://www.wlv.ac.uk/strategy-2035>):

1. Student success
2. People and culture
3. Operational excellence
4. Research and knowledge exchange
5. Societal influence and impact

All public sector procurement in the UK is required to achieve value for money and is governed by the Procurement Regulations 2024 (previously Public Contracts Regulations (2015)) to ensure fairness and openness. To achieve value for money University of Wolverhampton considers environmental, social and economic (ESE) impacts/risks within our Procurement processes throughout the entire procurement cycle i.e. from identifying the requirement, tendering the opportunity through to contract management, student/graduate benefits and, where appropriate, end of life review.

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<sup>1</sup> [ESG Strategy 2035](#)

### 3. Sustainable Procurement Objectives

The Procurement Strategy (which can be found on the Procurement webpages) highlights the importance of sustainable procurement:

*“The University will:*

- *Ensure that its procurements comply with the University’s Environmental Social & Governance (ESG) Strategy 2035 and promote awareness of this within tender activities and ongoing contract management.*
- *Consider long term sustainable cost implications i.e. financial, environmental, social and environmental during the Procurement process and assessment of value for money.*
- *Utilise ethical goods wherever there are demonstrable benefits to using them in accordance with legislation and the Procurement process.*
- *Develop a range of work-based opportunities both within the University and with its suppliers to enhance the employability of the University’s Students and Graduates.*
- *Ensure that Equality & Diversity is considered at all stages of the procurement process.*
- *Seek to advance the sustainability agenda and maximise the University’s contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).*
- *Aim to supersede environmental regulations and minimise the University’s carbon footprint where practical.*
- *Encourage existing and future suppliers to provide options to enhance the sustainability outcomes for consideration.*
- *Ensure that ample opportunities are provided to award contracts to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) where the Procurement Regulations/thresholds permit. “*

The overarching Environmental Policy is also linked to all aspects of University Sustainability and cross references back to Procurement activities.

### 4. Risk Awareness

ESG risks are assessed during the Category Strategy formation through the positive and negative impacts assessment. Procurement representatives discuss any risks with the stakeholder and ensure these are included in the tender documentation for suppliers to address.

Common key risks include:

- Inadequate contract management policies and procedures causing adverse environmental impact
- Catering implications i.e. food that may not be Fair Trade, red tractor etc.
- Inappropriate paper specification i.e. FSC accredited paper
- Lack of suitability consideration with construction projects
- Inappropriate disposal of waste in accordance with policies i.e. reduced land fill, hazardous and clinical waste complying with national strategies and legislation
- High carbon emissions released as a consequence of the University’s activity
- Contractor supply chain management and policies such as compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- Health and safety risks to staff and students e.g. water pollution, handling hazardous materials without training
- SMEs could be in a disadvantageous position if sustainability questions are too onerous.

### 5. Communication and Engagement

To successfully implement the Sustainable Procurement Strategy, and for its objectives to be achievable, strong communication and engagement is required.

Alongside working with stakeholders to address sustainability throughout the procurement process, Procurement provide Awareness Sessions ensuring information is readily available to all staff.

There is a link on the Procurement web pages to 'Procuring the Future' which addresses sustainability and Social Value. In addition, sustainable procurement activities are included in the regular Procurement News, where relevant, which is circulated to all Staff.

Externally, incumbent and prospective suppliers are made aware of our Strategies, with progress addressed during Contract Review Meetings, where we seek to identify new innovations which promote sustainability that can be incorporated by the University.

Sustainable procurement is also a key feature of our Meet the Buyer events when they take place.

## **6. Monitoring and Reporting**

Progression with Sustainable Procurement is measured via:

- Regular Contract Review meetings
- Reviews at Ethical Investment and Procurement Group
- 'Procurement News' which identifies the number of contracts awarded with sustainable benefits
- Feedback from Contractors and internal customers
- Scope 3 data submissions (managed by University's Sustainability Managers)
- Monitoring and assessing supplier performance via Key Performance Indicators (where appropriate)

In addition, Procurement assesses the various 'touch points' throughout the Procurement process this ensures focus on key interactions and potential areas for improvement, maintaining Procurement professionalism in all aspects of the process.