

TITLE:

## Sustainable Procurement at Durham

DATE:

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SUMMARY

Durham University's Procurement Service has embedded sustainability across all its purchases. All contracts and suppliers were reviewed and opportunities identified through new tenders. All corporate and social responsibility issues were considered, including social issues - Durham was the first collegiate university in the world to become Fairtrade - and environmental ones - reducing deliveries, increasing use of recycled products and cutting carbon emissions. This has been achieved by changing the way procurement is carried out university-wide.

INSTITUTION PROFILE

15,358 students  
3,600 staff  
Collegiate university  
16 colleges, 2 campuses

EAUC COMMENT

This case study provides an excellent example of how important a sustainable procurement policy can be to an organisation, both environmentally and financially.

## THE PROBLEM

In 2005 the Procurement Service at Durham University realised it could contribute to sustainability in the way it carried out its procurement. The service needed to create and implement a sustainable procurement policy across the university and wanted to become one of the most sustainable procurement services in the HE sector. This was driven by the passion from the service's staff, along with a realisation that the university needed to procure in a more sustainable way.

## THE APPROACH

The university demonstrated the importance of sustainable procurement by creating sustainable procurement and corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies. These were supported by regular training for all staff, through presentations, working groups and discussion forums. The training is written and delivered by the procurement team.

The procurement service is bold and encourages people to try new things in the way contracts are managed. For example, where an 'environmental' stationery product is available, all 'non-environmental' alternatives are banned. Penalties for missing targets have been included for the contractor in the new waste management contract.

Evaluation criteria were adapted so that CSR and environmental issues are taken into account and weighted in a way which is appropriate for each contract, often meaning they have more emphasis than before.

The procurement service's efforts were recognised by management and cemented by the inclusion of actions for the team in the university's Environmental Manifesto.

## OUR GOALS

- To be a national lead on sustainable procurement in order to share their experience with others – the team has already been invited to present to other organisations on the work we carried out.
- To reduce the negative impact procurement can have on the environment by switching to more environmentally friendly products, e.g. recycled paper; use of networked photocopiers instead of printers; Fairtrade tea and coffee over non-Fairtrade.
- To make financial savings based on better and more ethical procurement.

## OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

### Obstacle

- Senior buy-in
- Getting departments and colleges to see the need
- Turning the initiative from paying lip-service to making it happen
- Ensuring the project is known about outside of Durham University

### Solution

- Project championed by the Deputy Director of Procurement, one of the founder members of the Environmental and Sustainability Advisory Group (ESAG) that reports directly to the Vice Chancellor. This has included the setting up of policies, procedures and manifestos within which procurement are very heavily involved.
- Workshops carried out to discuss “green” procurement. The procurement service carry out all procurement for the Colleges and Central Services Divisions as well as two of the three academic faculties and are therefore able to influence purchases.
- Getting high level buy-in, and embedding new values into all procurement activities, has ensured that this is now a core activity and holds a great deal of kudos.
- Workshops and presentations have taken place outside of Durham on the work being carried out, e.g. at the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC), Campus Sustainability Programme (CasPr), North East Universities Purchasing Consortium (NEUPC). However, there are still areas that have not been utilised.

## PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

- Performance is managed through a balanced score-card which highlights areas of success or improvement required within the procurement service.
- Measure contracts to see how environmental alternative products are used and how the usage increases.
- Measured performance against the Flexible Framework, which is a recognised measurement tool for sustainable procurement.
- Constantly working with suppliers to improve contracts, and targets set for these (e.g. have agreed with Barclaycard to stop using paper statements, and go paper-free by 2009, and a series of workshops have been arranged to ensure that staff are able to use the on-line alternative).

## LESSONS LEARNT

- This initiative would not have had as much momentum were it not for the passion of the procurement service, and the buy-in at a senior level.
- Environmental benefits of purchases can be captured in the same way you can with financial savings. This means you can report on the difference being made and quantify the potential impact of each tender.
- Communication with end-users is vital to sell to them the benefits of an initiative.
- Communication with suppliers is key to ensure that they understand the philosophy of the university and how they can work with us to achieve that aim.
- Regular training for staff involved in procurement helps keep them focused and helps to share new information.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please contact Laura Watson, Deputy Director of Procurement, Tel: 0191 3344525, Email: [laura.watson@durham.ac.uk](mailto:laura.watson@durham.ac.uk)

Durham University's environmental policies -  
<http://www.dur.ac.uk/environment/policies/>  
<http://www.dur.ac.uk/environment/>



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