



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Annual Procurement Report 2023—24



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A woman with short hair and glasses is sitting at a desk, reading a large open book. She is wearing a dark and light striped cardigan. The desk also has a laptop, some papers, and a leather jacket. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. A large white text box is centered over the image.

Executive Summary and Purpose

Executive Summary and Purpose

The University of Edinburgh's Procurement Department is pleased to present the Annual Procurement Report for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024. This report underscores our commitment to supporting the University's academic mission, fostering excellence in research and teaching, whilst driving positive impact for our people and communities.

With the recent launch of our Procurement Strategy 2030, we have outlined a clear vision for the next five years, reaffirming our role as a trusted strategic partner aligned with the University's Strategy 2030.

This report acts as a key resource for assessing our progress towards our strategic priorities. It provides an overview of our achievements and highlights how our activities have supported research and teaching, as well as enabled the University's

operations, and contributed to financial and operational efficiency. Furthermore, it details our efforts to reduce environmental impact and deliver socio-economic impact.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to advancing the University's strategic, operational and commercial objectives and its ambition of delivering excellence as a world-leading research-intensive University. We aim to strengthen our position as a reliable and strategic partner by fostering collaboration,

maintaining a forward-thinking approach, and aligning with the University's evolving needs.

Together, as a department, we remain committed to delivering exceptional outcomes that support the University's mission and ensure its long-term success. Guided by our core principles of integrity, stewardship and service-focused, we will continue to uphold the highest standards of performance as a values-driven and principled team in the years ahead.



Vision

As a sector-leading procurement function, we enable the academic mission by delivering robust commercial and sustainable outcomes, while improving operational efficiency, allowing our staff and students to flourish and innovate.



Purpose

We support the University in achieving its ambitions by delivering strategic sourcing solutions that foster excellence in research and education, with a focus on our people and our civic and social responsibility.

With oversight of approximately £350 million in annual non-pay expenditure, we work collaboratively with Colleges and Professional Services Groups to provide professional support, making optimal and ethically sound purchasing decisions while ensuring regulatory compliance.

Our focus is on maximising value for the University – delivering measurable financial and operational benefits aligned with our net zero and nature-positive commitments, as well as generating social and economic impact.

The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 ('the Act') requires Scottish public sector contracting authorities with regulated procurement activity of £5 million or more per annum to have prepared a Procurement Strategy. Authorities, including Universities, are legally required to develop and to publish a Procurement Strategy are also required to publish an Annual Procurement Report, reflecting on the relevant reporting period against their Procurement Strategy.



Enabling Research and Teaching, as well our Operations

Enabling Research and Teaching, as well our Operations



Advancing our strategic priorities



Impact and value

Leverage potential for partnership and collaboration with our suppliers for the benefit of research and innovation.

Procurement plays a vital role to achieving the University's strategic academic objectives by delivering innovative and impactful sourcing solutions. We support the University's commitment to excellence in research and teaching by offering solutions that can help shape academic activities and building strategic supplier partnerships to enhance research outputs and teaching initiatives.

Over the past year, we have worked closely with colleagues across the University to advance academic goals and enrich the student experience, and support the essential operations that underpin both, including:

- Supporting innovation through tailored procurement solutions that address the diverse requirements of the academic community.
- Facilitating access to resources and strategic supply partnerships that

drive ground-breaking research and world-class teaching outcomes.

- Supporting capital and digital projects that enhance the learning, teaching and working environments for our staff and students.

To strengthen our contribution to the academic mission, Procurement has prioritised and focused building and maintaining strategic relationships with staff, students and suppliers in this reporting period. By fostering regular dialogue with stakeholders and understanding their priorities, we strive to identify opportunities to enhance their research capabilities and address challenges requiring procurement expertise.

Over the past year, we have actively sought feedback from both staff, students and suppliers to refine our services. This engagement has enabled us to continuously improve our agility and responsiveness of our procurement activities, ensuring they directly contribute to the University's research and teaching excellence.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- Over the reporting period, we have

awarded 174 regulated contracts, collectively valued at £195.9M (excl VAT). These awards included GPA¹ and PRA² procurements, as well as call-off contracts from collaborative agreements exceeding £50,000. Procurement also supported 14 non-regulated procurement activities, including formal mini-competitions and quotations, collectively valued at £901K (excl VAT).³

- Where deemed as the most advantageous route to market, we have partnered with consortia or other universities or consortia to access shared contracts, benefiting from quicker routes to market, economies of scale and/or improved commercial terms. £122.9M or 30% of procurement-influenced expenditure being routed through collaborative agreements.
- Approximately 74% of the university's non-pay expenditure, totalling £299.2M, was influenced by the Procurement Department through use of approved suppliers or sourcing support, an increase of 4% from last reporting period.

¹ Goods and services above £177,897; Works of £4,733,252 (excl VAT). ² Goods and services of £50,000; Works of £2,000,000 (excl VAT). ³ Includes negotiated procedure without prior publication, or 'Non-Competitive Actions'

Enabling Research and Teaching, as well our Operations

Case study

Impact and value

Spectral Cell Sorter, Becton Dickinson UK

Through strong relationships with end-users, Procurement identified that two areas within the University were independently purchasing the same piece of equipment—a Becton Dickinson S8 FACS Discovery. Upon reviewing both requirements and comparing supplier quotes, it became clear there was a significant pricing discrepancy. By consolidating the purchases, Procurement successfully unlocked additional value that could be achieved.

While the purchases were funded through grant allocations, price reduction alone was not the primary objective. To prevent underspend on the funding, Procurement negotiated enhanced commercial outcomes, securing added value at a total of £124,203 for the University:

- Free Equipment (BT10s): Additional items included as part of the purchase.
- Upgrades: Enhancements to existing equipment already in use within the University.
- Credit Note: A £48,915 credit note applied to the transaction.

This approach not only optimised commercial outcomes, but delivered impactful results that extended beyond cost savings for the research activities as well as the College.

A comprehensive list of all regulated procurements awarded during this reporting period is available [here](#), as required under Section 18(2) of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014.

All procurement activities have been conducted in accordance with the University's Procurement Strategy, aligned with Section 17 and Section 18(2) of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014.



Savings, efficiencies and cost effectiveness

Maximise commercial opportunities to drive financial savings and operational efficiencies through effective collaboration and implementation.

Within Procurement, we are dedicated to maximising commercial opportunities that deliver financial savings, operational efficiencies and strategic value. Through effective collaboration and innovative approaches, we proactively strive to balance cost, quality and sustainability, ensuring procurement activities support both immediate needs and long-term institutional goals. Our proactive approach also centres on collaborative contracting and strategic aggregation, leveraging collective purchasing power to achieve best-value outcomes across the University.

By aligning procurement into specific categories, it allows us to conduct in-depth market analysis and optimise decisions that benefit the entire institution. To enhance commercial awareness and decision-making, we have prioritised skilled recruitment and focused on continuous professional development, strengthening our expertise in category management to improve financial outcomes for the University.

During this reporting period, our efforts have included:

- Increased scrutiny at the contracting strategy stage by consulting key stakeholders and conducting supply market research to identify optimal

procurement routes, yielding best value outcomes;

- Ensuring purchases align with appropriate agreements and suppliers to secure the best costs; and
- Leveraging the improved functionality of the University's new finance system to conduct line-by-line spend analysis, uncovering deeper insights into spending patterns to drive data-informed decisions.

Through this, we have focused on identifying opportunities for efficiency, allowing us to:

- Eliminate duplication by identifying and addressing areas where contracts or processes overlap;
- Determine opportunities for aggregating requirements to achieve economies of scale; and,
- Monitor compliance with procurement regulations, ensuring that all processes meet legal and institutional standards.

By combining strategic sourcing, advanced analytics and a commitment to delivering value, we are focused on becoming a true enabler of financial and operational efficiency, supporting the university's more effective use of resources and the ability to reinvest savings into research, teaching and student initiatives, supporting a more sustainable and financially resilient institution.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- We have delivered £10.1M in cash savings across all regulated and

non-regulated activities, marking an increase of £3.5M from the previous reporting period. We have also delivered an estimated £18.2M in non-cash savings.

- We have focused on aggregating demand for goods and services across the University through detailed spend analysis, resulting in cost reductions and efficiency gains for commodities such as: software licences, audio-visual equipment, laboratory consumables and maintenance contracts.
- We have undertaken benchmarking to ensure that our staff are sourcing the right products from the right suppliers, or challenging the need to buy, focusing on commodities such as: laboratory and veterinary consumables, electrical and plumbing consumables, IT peripherals, licences, courier services and building supplies.

Cash savings are defined as direct price-based savings including savings from contracts that replace existing supply agreements, or if a new requirement, against other tenders or quotations obtained.

Non-cash savings are defined as savings against benchmarked market pricing.

Procurement is currently developing a savings methodology to effectively track and measure savings against budget for both restricted and unrestricted funds.

Case study

Savings delivered

Laundry Services, Aberdeen Laundry Services

Accommodation, Catering, and Events (ACE) provides essential services to over 10,500 students in catered and self-catered accommodation. Additionally, ACE delivers hotel accommodations to approximately 100,000 guests annually and supports over 13,000 conferences, catering, and events. Linen and laundry services are critical to ACE's operations, but without in-house capabilities to manage these services on an industrial scale, outsourcing to a commercial laundry provider is necessary.

In May 2024, the University undertook a comprehensive review of its laundry service requirements. Leveraging an existing public sector framework tailored for the Higher Education sector, the University awarded the contract to Aberdeen Laundry Services (ALS).

Collaboration with ALS focused on achieving a leaner, "just-in-time" business model. Key actions included: Separating operations into distinct categories with tailored cost models to better reflect their unique requirements; Monitoring occupancy levels and linen turnover to align services with actual needs, reducing excess stock and unnecessary costs; Extending the contract length to secure additional reductions to framework prices.

This approach is projected to generate annual savings of £1,131,265 in the first year, based on occupancy rates and service demand data from the previous year. Actual savings will be reviewed and adjusted annually to reflect real-world performance.

By adopting a flexible and demand-driven service model, ACE has enhanced operational efficiency and sustainability, reinforcing the University's commitment to delivering high-quality services while optimising resource use and cost.

The University of Edinburgh actively promotes competition and encourages supplier participation in its procurement processes to achieve better value for money. One key approach to achieving this is by providing advance notice of tendering opportunities anticipated over the next two financial years.

Future regulated procurement needs have been identified through:

- Current contracts recorded in our contract register that will expire and need to be extended or re-let; and
- New requirements identified via future work plans provided by Colleges and Professional Services Groups, along with anticipated plans for programmes and special projects.

A non-exhaustive list of all anticipated regulated procurements is available [here](#), in accordance with Section 18(2)(f) of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014.



Contract performance

Optimise the performance of our suppliers to realise the benefits of our contracts, whilst effectively managing and mitigating supply-related risks.

Procurement has continued to refine best practices across the entire contract lifecycle, strengthening our framework for contract and supplier management while enhancing supporting processes and tools. A significant development during this reporting period was the re-establishment of the Contract and Supplier Management Team. This function has redefined its service delivery model to prioritise supply partnerships, cost efficiency and proactive risk management, enabling Procurement to deliver greater value and foster productive, value-driven supplier relationships.

The Contract and Supplier Management team has started to play a pivotal role in

the University's procurement activities by:

- Conducting supply market research and analysis to inform optimal sourcing strategies that align with academic and operational needs;
- Performing detailed risk assessments at the outset of contracts, ensuring the appropriate management approach is tailored to the complexity and risk profile of each agreement; and
- Proactively engaging with suppliers to ensure a shared focus on delivering quality, managing costs and mitigating risks effectively.

Regular formal meetings with suppliers have created opportunities to review performance, identify areas for improvement, and plan future initiatives that drive savings, efficiencies and added value. This collaborative approach ensures alignment between supplier performance and the University's strategic priorities.

As contracts for ongoing services approach renewal, Procurement has

enhanced its processes by collaborating more closely with internal stakeholders. By reassessing requirements and incorporating lessons learned from past contracts, the team ensures future agreements are fit for purpose, deliver value and support the University's long-term objectives.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- We have successfully recruited and onboarded new team members, building a skilled and focused team, equipped to support robust contract management activities.
- We have completed a comprehensive review of current procedures, systems and team capabilities to identify opportunities for enhancement, laying the groundwork for implementing more effective practices and tools in the years to come.
- We have focused on improving the performance and oversight of a number of critical contracts, such as the travel management contract.

Case study

Savings delivered through contract management

Life Science Research Consumables

The 2024 annual price review for the Life Science Research Consumables Dynamic Purchasing System successfully delivered £189,033 in savings by mitigating 48% of anticipated cost increases. This achievement was driven by strategic supplier negotiations and a collaborative approach that strengthened relationships and secured volume-based discounts on high-demand consumables. Key to this success was the team's focus on understanding cost drivers. By requiring suppliers to provide detailed justifications for price adjustments, Procurement was able to negotiate more favourable terms while meeting the specific needs of end users.

A standardised review process enabled greater internal efficiencies by allowing detailed analysis of supplier purchase data at the line-item level. This empowered the team to actively challenge suppliers on pricing, thereby optimising savings while aligning the contract with sustainability and community benefit commitments.

As a result, the average price increase was limited to 3.37%, well below the 6.7% Consumer Price Index (CPI) target. This outcome highlights the effectiveness of proactive cost management and supplier engagement in driving value and cost management.

Planned activities

Moving forward, the focus will be on delivering the outcomes as outlined in our Procurement Strategy 2030.

Our upcoming priorities for the next year include:

Impact and value	Savings, efficiencies and cost effectiveness	Contract performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Continue to develop our category management approach to deepen our understanding of the supplier landscape and industry trends to leverage relationships for industry collaboration ➔ Increase training on 'non-standard' procurement procedures including dialogue and negotiation ➔ Develop annual feedback process with University staff and suppliers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Leverage commodity knowledge to deepen supplier understanding with the aim of secure competitive pricing, optimising both cost and operational efficiency for identified commodities* ➔ Conduct expenditure analysis to identify consolidation opportunities across departments* ➔ Implement communication and change management approach to raise awareness and understanding of our supply arrangements, including best value products and services* ➔ Continue to improve procedures and system guidance to enhance operational efficiency through simplified, more effective processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Complete the review supply chain management framework, enhancing where required ➔ Develop and refine methodology to track and validate contract management savings. ➔ Review of current contracts to assess where further cost savings can be achieved (e.g. renewals, extension points)*

* Delivered through the non-pay savings programme.



Minimising our Impact on the Environment

Minimising our Impact on the Environment



Advancing our strategic priorities



Supplier emissions

Embed sector-leading sustainable procurement practices with our suppliers, evidencing year-on-year reduction in supply chain emissions to support achieving a 1.5 degree pathway

The University's the significant environmental impact of our purchasing decisions. Currently, over 50% of the University's annual greenhouse gas emissions stem from supply chains, highlighting the essential role procurement must play in reducing our environmental footprint. By actively engaging with suppliers to encourage sustainable practices and solutions, we continue to drive meaningful progress toward minimising this impact.

To support these efforts, we remain committed to embedding environmental sustainability at every stage of the procurement activity. From initial planning and strategy development to contract management activity, efforts have focused on ensuring procurement activities align with the University's environmental ambitions. All contracting strategies for regulated procurements are now aligned with the University's Climate Strategy, explicitly addressing

carbon emissions goals and exploring alternative purchasing models in collaboration with stakeholders.

We also have an increased emphasis on suppliers demonstrating strong environmental practices in tender submissions, as well as developing specifications and evaluation criteria designed to minimize environmental impact while fostering partnerships with like-minded suppliers. These actions directly support Strategy 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, reinforcing the University's commitment to sustainable practices.

Over the past year, we expanded our focus on sustainability, carbon management and ethical procurement practices through an improved professional development schedule. Improved communication efforts and engagement initiatives have increased awareness across the University, ensuring sustainability remains a core consideration in purchasing decisions for all staff.

Our collaboration with the Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability has grown stronger over the course of the year, and is essential to achieve our ambitions. Together, we advance sector-leading best practices and collaborate with staff, students

and suppliers to collectively contribute to a responsible and resilient future.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- We have introduced a sustainability process flowchart, complete with templates and guidance, to assess and embed sustainability impact into tenders where relevant.
- We have increased our focus and scrutiny on ensuring contracting strategies address sustainability-related opportunities and risks, as appropriate to the scope of the tender.
- We have incorporated standardised wording in tender documentation to include carbon emissions reporting requirements.
- We have been requesting carbon emissions data in tender responses, establishing these as key performance indicators (KPIs) or deliverables for relevant contracts.
- We have improved our early engagement with the Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability for relevant tenders, as well as drawing on expertise from the wider sector network when required.

Case study

Supplier emissions

Provision of Fresh Butcher Meat, Campbell Prime Meat

The recently awarded Fresh Butcher Meat contract exemplifies the University's commitment to sustainability and responsible sourcing. Our approach integrated environmental, social and economic sustainability considerations throughout the procurement process, aligning with the University's broader goals of reducing its environmental footprint while supporting local supply chains and ethical practices.

Its procurement emphasised sustainability through responsible sourcing and a comprehensive carbon-footprint assessment for each product. Suppliers were required to provide detailed information on the environmental impact of each product offered, which enabled the University to make informed, eco-conscious purchasing decisions throughout the contract's lifetime. It also placed a strong emphasis on sourcing organic and ethically produced meat.

Furthermore, the contract incorporates specific sustainability goals, including reducing single-use plastics and lowering carbon emissions related to transportation. The University also gains access to organic and specialty meat options certified by quality standards such as Red Tractor. These certifications ensure that products meet rigorous environmental and animal welfare criteria, further enhancing the University's sustainable procurement efforts.

This approach to procurement demonstrates a balanced focus on environmental, social and economic sustainability. By embedding sustainability principles into the procurement and supply chain processes, the University ensures that all aspects of the contract are aligned with our commitment to responsible and sustainable operations.

Case study

Supplier emissions

Chemical and Substance Waste Management, Veolia

The procurement for chemical and substance waste management placed a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability. This approach was developed to minimise the environmental and social impacts of waste disposal while supporting the University's broader sustainability goals, including achieving net zero emissions by 2040.

Suppliers were asked to provide detailed statements outlining their environmental targets, actions to minimise environmental and social impacts, and specific commitments related to the contract. This ensured that sustainability was a core consideration from the outset and aligned with the University's environmental objectives.

The successful contractor, Veolia, demonstrated their commitment to sustainability by outlining how they would support the University's mission to achieve net zero emissions by 2040. Veolia's sustainability commitments include reducing operational and process emissions, capturing and offsetting remaining greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and working in partnership to reduce emissions beyond their direct control. They also emphasised their focus on improving carbon reporting and developing low and zero-carbon solutions for their customers.

One of the key performance indicators for this contract is that all waste collected for disposal by Veolia will be diverted from landfill from day one. This critical goal ensures that the University's waste management practices are aligned with its sustainability commitments and reducing the environmental impact of waste disposal.



Circular economy

Integrate circular economy principles with our colleagues, communities, and suppliers to enable a more sustainable production and consumption approach.

The University of Edinburgh recognises that a shift toward a circular economy is crucial for achieving a sustainable future. This approach focuses on minimising waste, extending the lifecycle of materials, and reducing reliance on finite resources. It aligns with the University's Strategy 2030 and broader environmental objectives, aiming to reduce environmental impact while driving innovation and efficiency.

To embed circular economy principles across all procurement activities, every contracting strategy requires an assessment of options to explore potential circular solutions. By incorporating these considerations into our templates and guidance, we ensure that circular economy priorities are

consistently communicated and applied throughout the procurement lifecycle.

Collaboration plays a vital role in advancing circular economy practices. The Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) are now engaged early in high-risk or high-impact tenders to assess and promote circular solutions where appropriate. Additionally, our involvement in the development of sector collaborative agreements ensures consortia frameworks are aligned with best and innovative circular economy practices as well.

To build awareness across the University, circular economy principles have now also integrated into Carbon Literacy training, which is accessible to all staff. Our Responsible Procurement webinars held this year emphasised circular economy principles, fostering dialogue and increasing awareness of sustainable procurement practices.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- In response to the early adoption of environmental sustainability initiatives in research, a Sustainable Research Working Group has been formed. This group will evaluate opportunities for re-homing devices, aligning with circular economy principles to reduce waste and promote resource reuse.
- A stronger emphasis has been placed on identifying circular economy opportunities, particularly within the Labs and ICT categories. Notable initiatives include the use of ex-demonstration or upgraded large research equipment and the procurement of refurbished printers in the ICT sector.
- Our standardised question bank has been expanded to include Circular Economy as a key thematic area. Detailed evaluation notes have been added for each question.
- We have introduced sustainability process flowchart, which highlights circular economy principles early in decision making.

Case study

Circular economy

Microscope Upgrade, Evident Europe

The University undertook a sustainable approach to upgrading its existing microscope by purchasing ex-demo equipment, instead of investing in a brand-new system. This decision not only provided significant cost savings but also contributed to the University's sustainability goals.

By choosing to upgrade the current microscope with ex-demo equipment, the University extended the life of its existing system, reducing the need for manufacturing a new unit. This decision helped conserve resources and minimise the environmental impact associated with the production and transportation of a new microscope.

The purchase of ex-demo equipment provided the University with a like-for-like replacement at a fraction of the cost of a new system. With new microscopes of this specification costing between £250,000 and £300,000, the University saved a substantial amount, making this a more cost-effective solution.

This approach to upgrading the microscope highlights how sustainability and financial outcomes can go hand in hand. By opting for ex-demo equipment, the University was able to enhance its scientific capabilities while minimising environmental impact and saving significant funds.



Wider environmental impact

Improve our understanding of the impact of our supply chain on biodiversity, water scarcity, and chemical pollution, bringing ambitions in line with our approach to climate change.

Looking ahead, we will broaden our focus on environmental impact to include biodiversity and nature, chemical pollution and water scarcity. This widening will align our ambitions with the University's refreshed climate strategy, ensuring our supply chain practices are impactful and positioned to address these emerging critical global challenges.

A key priority will be developing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of our supply chain on these broader focus points. While this work has yet to begin, it is a critical aspect we are committed to exploring and addressing in the coming years.

Planned activities

Moving forward, the focus will be on delivering the outcomes as outlined in our Procurement Strategy 2030.

Our upcoming priorities for the next year include:

Supplier emissions	Circular economy	Wider environmental impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Continue to develop the University supply chain emission pathway with a delivery plan in place. ➔ Carbon literacy sessions in place for Procurement staff over the course of the year ➔ Finalise “sustainability in procurement journey” flowchart with associated templates, & train procurement colleagues in its use ➔ Improve data requirements from suppliers in order to make more informed purchasing decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Collaborate with the sector to update the risk & opportunity matrix to include circular economy opportunities and waste risks ➔ Enhance circular economy considerations into all templates for all routes of procurement ➔ Release of online introductory level “Circular Economy training for Buyers” ➔ Launch a new circular economy project focusing on specific commodities being purchased, and trialling options for alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Start research activities to increase understanding on biodiversity, chemical pollution and water scarcity within the supply chain, supporting the development of a baseline methodology



Delivering Positive Impact for our Communities

Delivering Positive Impact for our Communities



Advancing our strategic priorities



Social impact

Capitalise on opportunities to deliver social impact through our contracts to drive socio-economic benefits for our communities.

Aligned with the University's Community Plan, we leverage procurement as a powerful tool to drive positive economic and social change. Each procurement decision is a chance to generate meaningful benefits for our communities. We are committed to prioritising social impact by embedding practices that promote community and economic development, support fair working conditions, and create opportunities for small and local businesses. These efforts help foster a supply chain that champions quality jobs, skills development and community wellbeing.

Through every procurement, we have continued to carefully consider how each contract can contribute to the University's broader social impact goals. By incorporating community benefit clauses, we aim to enhance contract sustainability through targeted recruitment and training, supporting small business and social

enterprise growth, and actively engaging with local communities.

In line with the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, we applied specific criteria to contracts valued at £4 million and above, ensuring major procurements include measures to drive community benefits (unless deemed not relevant). Additionally, where feasible and proportional, we apply these clauses to procurements below this threshold, provided they do not compromise value for money.

Our approach to identifying and integrating community benefits is tailored for each procurement. We have continued consult with stakeholders to embed relevant requirements into procurement specifications, and we actively encourage tenderers to not only meet these standards but also propose additional ways to enhance social value.

Together, with our suppliers, our procurement activities have continued to strengthen and positively transform the communities we serve over this reporting period.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- Our procurement activities have delivered significant community

benefits, including commitments in the following areas:

- Labour, employment and skills development, including apprenticeships, employment support, work experience placements, and skills workshops.
- Charitable contributions, including support for the University of Edinburgh grant scheme and donations to local charities.
- Community engagement, including initiatives such as school outreach programmes and volunteering activities.
- University student engagement activities including career talks and workshops, site visits, careers fairs, and mentoring opportunities.
- We have strengthened our approach and focus on social impact through our contract management activities, ensuring community benefits that were committed to as part of tender submissions have been delivered and reported
- We have embedded KPIs within contractual agreements with key suppliers, where relevant.

A full summary of all community benefits committed to in this reporting period can be found [here](#), as required under Section 18(2) of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014.

Case study

Community benefits delivered

Main Contractor for Edinburgh College of Art Refurbishment, Robertson Construction Group

Robertson Construction's work at the Edinburgh College of Art exemplifies a commitment to social responsibility and sustainability. Through diverse initiatives, they have fostered meaningful connections with students and the wider community, creating a legacy of positive impact.

Key deliverables include:

- **Reuse Hub:** Contributing surplus construction materials to the ECA ReUse Hub, this initiative promotes sustainability and supports student creativity through resource reuse.
- **Breakfast Club:** A monthly grab-and-go event that encourages dialogue between students and the construction team while addressing food accessibility.
- **Community Gardens:** Surplus materials were repurposed into garden structures, enriching local green spaces and strengthening community ties.
- **Student Competition:** Students were invited to showcase design and sustainability innovations, with materials and prizes provided to encourage creativity.
- **Internship Opportunities:** Paid placements in architecture and landscape design provided hands-on experience for students entering these fields.
- **Career Development Support:** Events and tailored advice sessions, with additional support for students with caring responsibilities, ensured inclusive access to career-building opportunities.
- **Community Pantry:** Partnering with Cyrenians, Robertson Construction supported the creation of a pantry offering affordable food options, reinforcing their commitment to well-being.

Robertson Construction's community-focused initiatives at the Edinburgh College of Art aim to leave a lasting impact by delivering socially responsible and sustainable practices through this contract.

Case study

Community benefits delivered

Edinburgh Futures Institute, Balfour Beatty

The completion of the Edinburgh Futures Institute in 2024 highlights the transformative power of infrastructure projects in generating local and regional benefits. Balfour Beatty's approach ensured measurable impacts on the economy, workforce and community.

Key deliverables include:

- **Local Economic Development:** £22.9 million was invested in local SMEs, driving regional growth and supporting small businesses.
- **Local Employment:** 77% of the workforce was sourced locally, minimising environmental impacts and fostering regional talent.
- **Early Career Support:** The project supported 105 apprenticeships and trainee positions, equipping young people with vital industry skills.

These outcomes reflect the University's and Balfour Beatty's shared commitment to creating a positive and enduring legacy through construction projects.

The full social impact report can be found [here](#).

Case study

Community benefits delivered

Supply and Delivery of Trees for Forest and Peatland Partnership Programme, Cheviot Trees

Supporting the University's Forest and Peatland Partnership Programme, Cheviot Trees have played a supportive role in advancing the University's mission to achieve carbon net zero by 2040.

This programme integrates carbon sequestration with biodiversity enhancement and community engagement while offering valuable opportunities for research, teaching, and learning. Key components of the procurement included:

- Supplying and delivering trees, vole guards, tree guards, and fertilizers;
- Ground preparation, planting, and maintenance contracts;
- Installation and upkeep of fencing and
- Allowances for potential road or walkway crossings.

As part of the supply arrangements, Cheviot Trees donated five educational tree packs to local schools, each containing 20 saplings and biodegradable protection, along with the book Tilly Plants a Tree, fostering environmental awareness among young learners.

This project demonstrates the University's positive approach to sustainability in its widest sense, combining ecological restoration with social impact.

Case study

Community benefits delivered

Main Contractor for Churchill House Refurbishment, G Sharkey

The refurbishment of Churchill House supports the University's Residential Strategy 2023–2030, addressing the need for quality student accommodation amidst Edinburgh's housing challenges. The project involves upgrading 219 student bedrooms, communal areas and corridors, ensuring the residence remains a long-term asset.

Community benefits delivered as part of this project include:

- Site visits for student groups to explore real-world construction practices.
- Work experience placements for University students.
- Employment opportunities for the long-term unemployed, with one individual hired as a labourer.
- Donations of building materials for reuse by students.
- Supplier information days to promote local supply chains.
- Participation in charity events and support for our Students' Association.

This initiative demonstrates the University and Contactor's commitment to fostering community connections and economic opportunities through its capital programme.



Economic growth

Shape our contracts to support sustainable and inclusive growth, leading to improved participation of small and local businesses.

In Procurement, we remain committed to shaping contracts that drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Our efforts align with the University's broader objectives of delivering tangible benefits to the local and national economy. By actively fostering relationships with small and local suppliers, we support the growth of these businesses, stimulate innovation and promote sustainability across our supply chain.

During this reporting period, we enhanced our approach to our contracting strategies by integrating 'lotting' assessments. This approach determines whether contracts can

be structured to better support SMEs or supported businesses in successfully bidding for goods and services, thus fostering participation in our procurement processes.

We also recognise the vital role of social enterprises and supported businesses. We have continued to engage with suppliers that provide meaningful employment opportunities for disabled or disadvantaged individuals. This approach ensures these businesses can serve as a critical steppingstone into mainstream employment, reinforcing our commitment to social responsibility.

We also remain aware of the critical importance of prompt supplier payments, particularly for SMEs, third-sector organisations and supported businesses, where late payments can have significant negative impacts. Collaborating closely with our Finance colleagues, we have improved processes for invoice flow, receipting and matching. These enhancements have resulted

in a higher proportion of supplier invoices being paid within agreed terms, reinforcing our commitment to responsible financial practices.

By embedding these commitments in our procurement activities, we continue to advance sustainable impactful economic outcomes.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- Of the number of regulated procurements awarded during the period, 64% of the organisations were SMEs.
- We had a total University expenditure of £149.8M or 37% with SMEs in 2023-24.
- Our total spend was £416K with 7 supported businesses in 2023-24.
- We hosted our first supplier engagement event at our BioQuarter campus, linking staff with our suppliers to discuss future opportunities at the University.

Under Section 18(2)(e) of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, the University is required to 'outline the steps taken to involve supported businesses in regulated procurement.'

While no contracts were directly awarded to supported businesses during the reporting period, the University proactively engaged with the sector, achieving a total spend of £416,000 across seven supported businesses in 2023-24.

Looking ahead, the University's aim is to ensure that we work with suppliers to facilitate opportunities for supported businesses and third sector organisations where possible.



Responsible supply chains

Ensure we have a sustained focus on the wellbeing of those that work in our supply chains.

This year, we have maintained our focus on social responsibility in procurement, building on our strong commitment to ethical practices that promote fair working conditions and the wellbeing of workers across our supply chains. By leveraging our influence, we have continued to uphold the highest standards of labour ethics, ensuring that our procurement decisions reflect integrity and contribute to positive social impact.

Given the University's global reach, we have continued to drive positive change through our supply chains. By requiring all suppliers registered on our finance system to confirm their compliance with our Supply Chain Code of Conduct, we have reinforced the importance of social, ethical, economic and environmental responsibility, ensuring our procurement practices foster sustainable and equitable outcomes.

We have maintained our focus on promoting Fair Work Practices as a key priority. In regulated procurements,

we have embedded Fair Work Practices in our tender documentation where appropriate, aligning our approach with statutory guidance to promote high quality and fair work, as well as workforce diversity.

Aligned with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, we have maintained our zero-tolerance policy toward slavery and human trafficking, as articulated in our Modern Slavery Statement. We have continued to uphold robust policies and systems designed to prevent human rights violations within our operations and supply chains, focusing on monitoring and improving conditions with key suppliers and their partners.

As an affiliate of Electronics Watch, we have remained actively involved in improving global labour standards. Through this partnership, we have continued to support the work toward better working conditions within our ICT supply chains, using worker-driven monitoring to create meaningful change.

We have also remained committed to responsible contracting, ensuring rigorous compliance with all other relevant legislation. Each contract has undergone detailed evaluations to verify that bidders meet critical requirements, including Health and Safety standards, GDPR compliance, and adherence to

late payment policies, tailored to the specific needs of each procurement.

By embedding these ethical practices into our procurement processes, we have continued to set a high standard for responsible and socially impactful procurement, reinforcing our commitment to ethical practices and improving the wellbeing within our supply chains.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- A new Responsible Procurement online information hub was launched for staff (Procurement Hub) and our external suppliers (UoE Website)
- An additional 13 suppliers have been evaluated through our specialist assessment tool for contracted suppliers (Ecovadis)
- We have continued being an active membership in key collaborative groups, including the Higher Education Procurement Authority (HEPA) Responsible Procurement Group (RPG) as well as the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC). We have also been heavily involved in the RPG's Human Rights Subgroup.

Planned activities

Moving forward, the focus will be on delivering the outcomes as outlined in our Procurement Strategy 2030.

Our upcoming priorities for the next year include:

Social impact

- ➔ Develop community benefit guidelines for procurement staff, including a detailed 'menu' of options
- ➔ Expand our use of contract management activities with improved management information to ensure commitments have been delivered.

Economic growth

- ➔ Identify and implement improvements to improve supplier payments
- ➔ Review and finalise processes for all available payment routes, with clear guidance for staff, to ensure effective navigation of payment processes.

Responsible supply chains

- ➔ Enhance our practices and reporting of Fair Work at tendering stage through to contract management
- ➔ Continued implementation the Supplier Code of Conduct with enhanced promotion among suppliers
- ➔ Improve uptake of contract management database for standard assessment
- ➔ Enhance awareness of ethical issues by improving the awareness of online training and information, integrating it with broader procurement awareness initiatives.



Driving Progress Across Our Enablers

Driving Progress Across Our Enablers

Our enablers encompass the critical factors, resources, capabilities and processes that support the delivery of our objectives. Continuous improvement to these areas is vital as they provide the foundation for our service quality and effectiveness. By continuously improving and developing these five pillars, we enhance our ability to achieve our strategic objectives.

Engagement and collaboration

Strong relationships with staff, students, suppliers and key external partners are essential to aligning our procurement activities with the ambitions of our Colleges and Professional Services Groups. Over the past year, we have prioritised fostering mutual understanding and collaboration, driving continuous improvement to improve our services and increase our value to all the business areas we support.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- We have prioritised proactive engagement with Colleges and Professional Services Groups, fostering and improving open, two-way communication by actively connecting and engaging directly with our stakeholders.
- We conducted twice-weekly hybrid support sessions and monthly in-person forums at key campus locations. These sessions provided tailored assistance, improving user confidence and system adoption as well as our understanding of operations in the business area.
- We launched a series of university-wide sessions attracted hundreds of staff, offering a comprehensive walk-through of the procurement journey.
- We embedded the change management framework to ensure that we engaged and consulting with staff to ensure process developments were supported and successfully adopted by staff.

Our upcoming priorities for the next year include:

- Map key stakeholder groups with develop tailored engagement plans for consistent, effective collaboration across the University.
- Enhance awareness of procurement policies and processes through targeted briefings to strengthen alignment on shared priorities.

Communication

As emphasised in our Procurement Strategy, clear and effective communication is integral to achieving our objectives. It fosters trust, collaboration and alignment across the University, laying the groundwork for the overall success of our procurement activities.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- We have enhanced our Procurement Hub to serve as the primary resource for procurement information, improving accessibility and awareness of procedural guidance.
- We launched a dedicated newsletter to communicate key messages and updates to our requestor community.

Our upcoming priorities for the next year include:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive internal communication plan to ensure messages reach the right audience at the right time.

- Review and update all communication channels to improve accuracy, clarity, and accessibility.
- Create feedback mechanisms to continuously refine communication methods.

Capability

Continuous improvement in our team's capabilities has remained a key focus throughout this reporting period. By investing in training, skills development and career growth opportunities, we strengthen our ability to deliver high-quality procurement services.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- We have continued to develop a robust professional development schedule, including internal and external courses, to ensure our team stays ahead of industry best practices and emerging trends.
- We have placed greater emphasis on market intelligence and insights to ensure optimal sourcing routes are chosen.
- Our agile resource allocation has ensured continuity in procurement operations, even during peak demands or staff transitions.

Our upcoming priorities for the next year include:

- Continue to strengthen team capabilities and leadership through professional development and targeted training.

- Equip non-Procurement staff with tools, guidance and support to enhance their non-regulated sourcing activities.
- Further develop specific supply market expertise within Procurement to further improve decision-making and stakeholder engagement.

Systems and processes

Streamlining workflows and enhancing user experiences remain at the heart of our priorities. Our efforts this year reflect our commitment to continuous improvement of our purchase-to-pay process and our service delivery.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- We improved process efficiency for our business areas by introducing a self-approval threshold and GRN administrator roles to reduce administrative bottlenecks.
- Enhancements in invoice flow, including receipting and matching processes, have driven significant improvements in purchase-to-pay performance and supplier satisfaction.

- We have continued to optimised research stores, including system updates and refined processes that have improved stock accuracy, availability and user satisfaction.

Our upcoming priorities for the next year include:

- Continued improvement of procure-to-pay processes through targeted improvement initiatives, including VAT process enhancements, improved invoice flow, appropriate payment routes and research collaborator payments.
- Develop and implement updated standard operating procedures to improve user experience and process efficiency
- Establish operational performance indicators to measure and enhance effectiveness.

Data

Data is fundamental to enable us to improve performance, identify cost-saving opportunities and strengthen decision-making.

Key achievements for 2023/24 include:

- We have developed new reporting tools that provide staff with greater visibility and insight into their own purchases and University-wide procurement transactions.
- We have made improvements to our detailed spend data to support strategic sourcing initiatives and supply improvement efforts.
- Our efforts to refine supplier records, pricing data, and stock information have resulted in better service delivery and improved purchase-to-pay performance.

Our upcoming priorities for the next year include:

- Refine processes to improve data accuracy, enabling the University to derive greater value from our finance system.

The background image is a monochromatic blue-toned photograph. In the upper half, a woman with dark, curly hair is shown in profile, looking down intently. In the lower half, the hands of another person are visible, holding a pen and writing on a document. The overall scene suggests a professional or academic setting.

Annex

Annex

Enabling Research and Teaching, as well our Operations

Number of regulated procurements completed

Number of procurements	Aug 2023 – Jul 24	Aug 2022 – Jul 2023
Gpa regulated procurements	32	40
Pra regulated procurements	54	49
Further competitions and direct awards from collaborative agreements (>£50k)	88	62
Total	174	151

Value of regulated procurements completed

Value of procurements	Aug 2023 – Jul 24	Aug 2022 – Jul 2023
Gpa regulated procurements	£36,571,712	£21,708,338
Pra regulated procurements	£6,377,085	£5,110,379
Further competitions and direct awards from collaborative agreements (>£50k)	£152,952,939	£49,818,874
Total	£195,901,736	£76,637,592

Summary of negotiated procedures without prior publication

Number of procurements	Aug 2023 – Jul 24	Aug 2022 – Jul 2023
Negotiated procedures without prior publication	64	64
Competition is absent for technical reasons	60	44
Incompatibility or disproportionate technical difficulties in operation and maintenance	4	12
Extreme urgency	0	5
Creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance	0	2
Protection of exclusive rights	0	1

Summary of non-regulated procurements completed (<£50K)

Number of procurements	Aug 2023 – Jul 24	Aug 2022 – Jul 2023
Number of non-regulated procurement projects	14	38
Value of non-regulated procurement projects	£901,274	£1,137,342

Summary of regulated and non-regulated procurement savings

Procurement saving type	Category A/B (Collaborative)	Category C (University)
Cash savings	£3,201,078	£6,941,365
Non-cash savings	£9,167,447	£9,051,379

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