

Back to work supplies – a UKUPC guidance document

Through our conversations with you, our members, we recognise that during this time of uncertainty it helps to have some guidance to refer to on topics which are new.

This guide has been developed collaboratively by the UK Universities Purchasing Consortia (UKUPC) and serves to act as a reference point for anyone responsible for or involved in the procurement or specification of return to work products and personal protective equipment relating to Covid19.

Should you require any further assistance please contact your regional expert, the details of whom are at the end of this document.

The first steps.....

We understand that the identification and finalisation of needs during this time is difficult. It would be wrong for any single person or department to define the requirements so the key attribute to success is collaboration and communication.

It is important to be proactive with communication, liaising with a wide range of stakeholders internally including estates, health and safety, occupational health, governance, procurement, insurance, students and end users (cleaning and security staff); and externally, trusted suppliers, membership organisations including your regional purchasing consortium, The Association for Directors of Estates [AUDE](#), The Higher Education Procurement Association [HEPA](#) and The Universities Safety and Health Association [USHA](#) all can help.

Referring regularly to current and accurate government advice is advised. Trusted sources such as the .Gov websites are most appropriate.

Engaging with suppliers

When considering requirements, it is important that the procurement team are involved early. The availability of certain products can be challenging, stories of supplies being on long lead times, poor quality, or expensive are all too familiar now.

The UK Purchasing Consortia (UKUPC) provide a variety of framework agreements which provide for return to work products nationally. All suppliers on these frameworks have been through a robust procedure in line with EU regulations to ensure compliance and security of supply.

Framework agreements available with suppliers who have indicated they can provide products are below. All links are to the [Higher Education Contracts database / APUC's Buyers Portal](#) where

information regarding using the framework and supplier contact details are available. New users can register [here](#).

N.B. – the consortium listed below is the lead consortium (responsible for managing the framework).

[PPE – Crescent Purchasing Consortium](#)

[Cleaning Services - LUPC *](#)

[Cleaning and Janitorial Supplies – NEUPC*](#)

[Cleaning and Janitorial Supplies - NWUPC *](#)

[Deep Cleaning - NEUPC*](#)

[Laboratory Equipment - LUPC](#)

[IRLA Lab consumables and Chemicals - SUPC](#)

[Office supplies - NWUPC](#)

[Furniture supply and installation \(barriers / screens\) – NEUPC](#)

[Lifts: Consultancy, Maintenance, Refurbishment and Associated Installation Services – NEUPC*](#)

[Electrical Materials - NWUPC](#)

[Fire Fighting Equipment - NEUPC](#)

[Signs and Signage - NEUPC](#)

[Audio visual \(heat detector systems\)-NEUPC \(new agreement imminent\)](#)

[NUWPEC Electronic components - NWUPC](#)

[SSSNA \(Servers, Storage, Solutions\) \(Thermal Imaging\) - SUPC](#)

[Promotional Merchandise - NWUPC](#)

[Water Quality Management Services EFM1024 AP – APUC \(UK Wide\) lots 1-5 are UK split by regional, lots 6 & 7 are national coverage](#)

[Furniture \(Supply, Delivery & Installation\) FFE1011AP – APUC \(Barriers, Screens & other solutions\)*](#)

[Cleaning Materials and Disposable paper products \(JAN1007AP\) – APUC*](#)

[Hair & Beauty Products \(FFE1013 AP\)*](#)

[Laboratory Plastic-ware, Glassware & Sundries \(LAB1013 AP\) Lots 1 PPE and Lot 7 Gloves - APUC*](#)

[Electrical Sundries \(EFM1020 AP\) – APUC*](#)

[General Stationery & Office Paper \(PPE, etc\)– APUC / Scottish Procurement*](#)

[Catering Disposables & Sundries \(Scotland Excel 0915\) \(Sanitiser\)- APUC*](#)

*** Regionalised Framework, please check ability to access making a call-off**

[CPC](#), [ESPO](#), [CCS](#) and the [NPS](#) all also have agreements available covering all categories.

Many suppliers on existing consortia let framework have been able to diversify and can now offer products to meet your requirements (a caveat being that you must still follow the suggested points on due diligence regarding specification and supply).

To aid your sourcing process a tool which quickly identifies suppliers for key requirements is below for your use. Please note this list is not exhaustive.



COVID-19 Priority
Products Framework

Each English consortium has a dedicated section on their website providing specific Covid related information.

In Scotland, APUC members can find guidance and specific information on PPE & other priority products available within the contracted supply chain on the dedicated [Coronavirus SharePoint page](#).

As above, all suppliers listed on consortia let frameworks will have been through an EU compliant due diligence check. This check reviews, amongst other things, their financial stability, their working practices and the quality of their goods and/or services so you can be reassured. If you are unable to work with a supplier on one of our frameworks, it is recommended that you perform your own thorough checks, these should include as a minimum, a Creditsafe report, customer references and a check that they have a modern slavery and human trafficking statement. No payments in advance of delivery should ever be made.

Specifying what you need

The term PPE (personal protective equipment) is widely used however it may not be appropriate to do so.

The term PPE is generally used in the context of health and safety and should be referred to only when considering the requirements for those in your institution who need be protected from issues relating to hazardous work. General terms such as “face coverings” are more appropriate when referring to your requirements for general return to work products.

It is important that you purchase items at the quality you need. Purchasing medical grade facemasks or gloves for example, may not only put pressure on the huge demands currently required by the NHS, but you will pay a higher price for a product that you may not actually require and find there is less stock availability. Underspecifying carries the same risks, a product which does not adequately protect a user may leave an individual at risk of harm. Consider carefully who will be using the product and for what purpose. If you are unsure of the quality you need, it is important that you seek advice from the suppliers of the products

When specifying your requirements try to include as much information as possible. Where available refer to [ISO standards](#). Where you are needing to purchase items for high risk areas, this [Government guidance](#) may be useful.

The suppliers providing items such as face coverings, barriers for work environments and sanitising products are now excellent sources of information, they can help you understand what you need, you should discuss and take advice from them. Many have now also written their own guidance documents on the products available to help you and will be pleased to share those with you.

When considering the products you wish to purchase, think about your future requirements. None of us know how long this situation will persist and we recognise the challenges of consistently needing to adjust our ways of working to ensure we meet our obligations in line with changing Government guidance. Consider generic warning signs, for example “Keep your distance” – rather than “Keep 2m apart” or moveable items for example sanitising stations which can be relocated depending on their need.

Market risks

Due to the demand for protective equipment and the impact on the supply base we have seen a number of challenges.

Prices fluctuate – sometimes hourly. Depending on product availability, demand and quality we have seen huge variations in prices. It is important to research properly to understand what is reasonable, but it is likely repeat orders will be at differing prices and you may need to be flexible. Good research and benchmarking are vital to ensure you don't pay too much unnecessarily however if the price is strangely cheap, this should also ring alarm bells.

Stock availability changes very quickly, be prepared to respond to a quote from a supplier within the hour if you want to secure product. Quantities are hard to estimate, too much is almost as bad as too little. Consider where and when you will need the product, where it will be delivered to and stored and how the products will be distributed around your site appropriately and effectively.

There have been a large number of new suppliers enter the market. Whilst the majority are genuine, sadly some are fraudulent and will be unable to deliver the promised goods, provide you with the correct level of quality product nor guarantee that their supply chain does not include labour rights issues. As above, it is important to use, where possible a known and trusted provider. If a proposal looks too good to be true, it likely is and questions should be asked. Procurement teams in organisations can advise on appropriate due diligence questions and should be approached for advice.

Other

At this time things continue to change very quickly. Feeling safe versus being safe are different and we would urge you to communicate regularly with all those affected to ensure provision of supplies is both necessary and adequate.

We are aware that many institutions will have unscheduled service needs as they prepare for their return to campus following recent shutdowns, including legionella testing and other water treatment requirements. The Water Quality Management Services Framework (EFM1024 AP) is a UK wide agreement that provides these services and existing rates have been held for the duration of the Framework. Institutions looking outside of the framework should be mindful of opportunistic pricing and additional costs for PPE requirements.

Innovation continues; some universities are making their own hand sanitiser for example. Ensure you research well and understand opportunities available to you. The need for products will likely continue for some considerable time so giving thought to longer term investment for security of supply may be a sensible option.

Lastly, the list of items needed for persons to return to work, and study, seems to grow each day. Many organisations are considering alternative ways to ensure they can continue to operate safely. These include for example the introduction of new cycle schemes, thus creating a need for more cycle racking. More outdoor seating and covered areas. New layouts may mean that fire exits, and routes need to be considered, with new flexible signage. The introduction of cashless payments may mean more investment is required both financially and in time to renegotiate where additional costs are incurred.

The purchasing consortia between them manage over 100 compliant framework agreements providing goods and services in almost every area. Should you require advice or guidance on any aspect of procurement and supply, please do contact your regional contact who will be happy to help you.

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