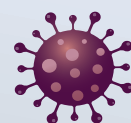
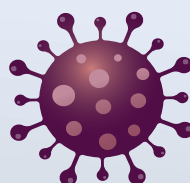
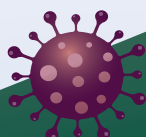


SUPC

Southern Universities
Purchasing Consortium



Procurement in the Face of a Pandemic

SUPC Impact Report 2019/20



- 100% of members who responded to last year's survey would recommend SUPC to others.
- Over 96% of those who responded to last year's survey were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support they receive through SUPC.
- The top three benefits SUPC members say they value through SUPC are: high-quality frameworks, commodity group meetings and procurement advice from the SUPC Team.
- SUPC returns the majority of marketing premiums back to our members each year – this means roughly 50% of members are able to fully cover the cost of their membership fees, depending on their frameworks spend.

SUPC works for universities and is owned by universities. The HE sector is responding to a turbulent year, with Covid-19 adding to already challenging circumstances. Procurement teams are striving to deliver even more with less. We understand universities and work with finance, procurement and other university staff to find the right procurement solutions to provide value for money for the institution, its students, and its wider community.

Our in-depth knowledge of universities, and specifically how to engage positively with academic areas, is our key strength. Our members know finance and procurement teams must work together with other departments to deliver on university and departmental strategic goals which enhance the student experience and research delivery – we are our members' preferred partner to make this happen. We understand how to connect strategy to operations to deliver cash and time savings in a way that provides compliance and reassurance for your institution. Our knowledge of HE and our wide reach through our sister business units - SUMS

Consulting and the Procurement Shared Service - sets us apart from others. Our members are part of a unique community that represents over a quarter of university spend across the sector.

We engage actively with organisations across the sector including other consortia and professional bodies. Our strategic partnership with the London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC) has allowed us to reduce duplication and create new opportunities for joint working across all category areas.

SUPC's response to the challenges of the past year has been to focus on helping members deliver efficiencies and meet the rapidly changing demands imposed by the virus. We recognised that in these unprecedented circumstances, pressure was being placed upon your resources and that you and our HE community needed more timely, agile, expert support - not less. SUPC has kept our full complement of staff available to members throughout the Covid-19 crisis and has increased - becoming more agile - our engagement with members.

In the background, we increased our data analysis resource to provide greater spend insight to inform your decision-making, with the aim of helping you deliver greater efficiencies. We believe in the responsible and transparent financial stewardship of your membership subscriptions and so we worked hard to return your earned marketing premium to you as quickly as possible.

We would like to thank the SUMS Board, and in particular Board Chair Martin Williams, Director of Finance at the University of Bath, for their ongoing leadership and support.

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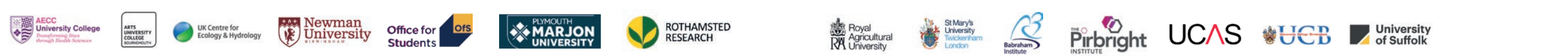
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About Us

Full Members



Associate Members



Affiliate Members

Academy of Contemporary Music	Buckinghamshire Education Skills & Training Partnership (BEST)	Dudley College of Technology	Harlow College	Northampton College	Suffolk New College
Activate Learning	Canterbury College	East Coast College	Hartpury College	Oaklands College	Sussex Downs
Amersham and Wycombe College	Central Sussex College	East Kent College	Havant & South Downs College	Peter Symonds College	Tresham Institute of F&HE
Aston University Engineering Academy	Chelmsford College	East Surrey College	Hertford Regional College	Peterborough Regional College	Truro College
Basingstoke College of Technology	Chichester College Group	Easton & Otley College	Highbury College	Plymouth College of Art & Design	Uxbridge College
Bedford College	City Academy Bristol	Epping Forest College	Leicester College	Portsmouth College	Waltham Forest College
Berkshire College of Agriculture	City College Norwich	Exeter College	London School of Theology	Seevic	Wednesfield High School
Birmingham City University	City College Plymouth	Farnborough College of Technology	Luton Sixth Form College	Solihull College	West Herts College
Academy Trust	City of Bath College	Gloucestershire College	Merchants Academy	Somerset College of Art & Technology	West Thames College
Birmingham Metropolitan College	City of Bristol College	Greater Brighton Metropolitan College	Mid Kent College	South Essex College	Wiltshire College
Bridgwater College	Cornwall College	Hadlow Group	Moorlands College	South Gloucestershire & Stroud College	Windsor Forest Colleges Group
Brockenhurst College		Halesowen College	Moulton College	Strode College	Worthing College
			New College Swindon	Strood Academy	Yeovil College

Our Members

*As of 31/07/2020

We provide solutions to university procurement challenges. SUPC provides access to frameworks covering a wide range of products and services to help universities run effectively and deliver a strong student experience. Our unique membership model rewards universities who direct spend through our agreements by delivering time and money savings, as well as returned marketing premium every year. SUPC is part of the wider SUMS Group. SUMS Group membership spans 151 universities, FE colleges and educational charities – and our membership represents 50% of the sector's student population and 52% of the staff population*. With this comes access to a wealth of insight, best practice and data – all of which SUMS shares for the benefit of our individual division members.

SUPC Members benefit from:

- Access to over 120 collaborative frameworks to meet the spectrum of procurement needs
- Access to procurement advice and support from our team of specialists
- Access to our member base of universities, representing the breadth of UK mission groups, for networking and knowledge sharing
- Free member events including an annual conference, agreement launches, new member inductions and other events to learn about the latest insights from SUPC membership and beyond
- Commodity and category group meetings to discuss discipline-specific issues in a collaborative and supportive environment with like-minded colleagues
- Opportunities to shape new and re-tendered frameworks
- Quarterly spend reports to help you manage your framework usage
- An annual benefits statement to help you

demonstrate value through your membership and deliver greater value for money based on your institution's spend profile

- Access to significantly discounted training courses and value-added services, such as responsible procurement tools
- Discounted access to consultancy support to help procurement and finance teams get the most from their activity
- Discounted access to professional development support to help senior leaders operate at peak performance within new or evolving roles
- Knowledge exchange through a series of free publications including an e-Digest and case studies
- Access to our accumulated experience and knowledge of higher education institutions and developments over 50 years.

‘Our internal Procurement Team view our SUPC contacts as highly supportive and responsive colleagues.’

*HEAD OF PROCUREMENT,
SUPC MEMBER INSTITUTION*

- **100% of members who responded to last year's survey would recommend SUPC to others.**
- **Over 96% of those who responded to last year's survey were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support they receive through SUPC.**

Why Become a Member?

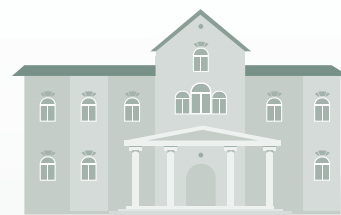
*Full-time equivalent populations according to HESA Data 2018/19





12 (1,030)

online and in person
events (attendees)



138
members



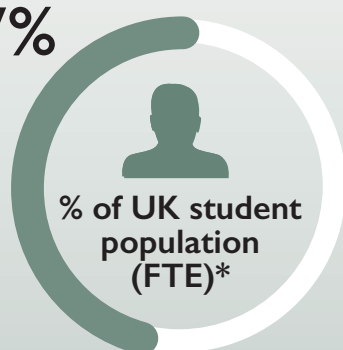
£54.5m
savings (cashable
and non cashable)



£386m
spend through
agreements



41.7%



% of UK student
population
(FTE)*



% of UK staff
population
(FTE)*

43.3%



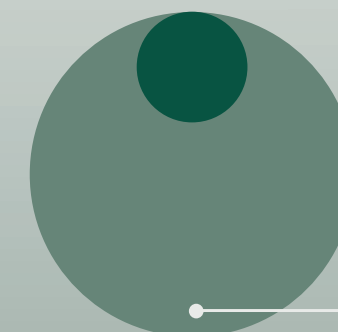
£622k
returned marketing
premium



288
SMEs on SUPC
agreements



122 agreements
accessible by
members



1:56 ROI

Our Impact

*Full-time equivalent populations according to HESA Data 2018/19



Bernarde Hyde

CEO

Bernarde has over 20 years' experience working in partnership with universities to help them make meaningful and impactful changes. Understanding the complexities and challenges of Higher Education is at the core of what Bernarde does – she thrives when identifying the areas where change will have the most impact. She specialises in business models and benefit realisation. Bernarde overlays expert consulting skills and commercial awareness gained from working in the retail sector with Debenhams plc and in manufacturing.



Rob Johnson

HEAD OF CATEGORY MANAGEMENT AND SERVICES

Rob is an experienced purchasing professional with over 30 years' insight gained in executive and consultancy roles throughout the manufacturing, service, finance and aviation arenas, and across the private, public, third and higher education sectors. Rob specialises in the development and deployment of procurement best practice, the creation of robust category strategies, the identification and delivery of cost reductions, and the creation of a value-adding procurement ethos.



Jayne Thorn

CATEGORY MANAGER (CORPORATE SERVICES)

Jayne brings 15 years' procurement experience to SUPC from various industries including food, IT and pharmaceuticals. Jayne's skills cover category reviews, the tendering process, and stakeholder engagement and management. Jayne combines analytical thinking with a focus on departmental and organisational goals. She is skilled at delivering savings and adding value for members.



Dani Sweeney

CATEGORY MANAGER (STEMed)

Dani brings over 20 years' procurement experience to her role at SUPC and manages the Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine (STEMed) Category. Before joining the team, Dani spent over 12 years in both the rail and water industries and has significant experience of procurement regulations. Dani brings expertise in contract planning and management, supplier and stakeholder engagement, and e-procurement systems to her role.



Gavin Phillips

CATEGORY MANAGER (ACADEMIC SERVICES)

Before joining SUPC, Gavin spent over 20 years working in Higher Education and has in-depth knowledge of the library supply chain. Most recently, he was the Acquisitions Services Manager for Library Services at Imperial College London and was part of the Contract Management Group for the Books Framework Agreement. His skills include member engagement, supplier management and delivering operational excellence.



Mark Lewis

CATEGORY MANAGER (ICT)

Mark is a skilled procurement professional with over 20 years' knowledge gained from working in a variety of businesses from SMEs to Blue Chip organisations. He specialises in long-term cost reduction, sustainable process improvement and category management. He has responsibility for the ICT category, including leading on several top-used national agreements, led by SUPC.



Taron Smith

ASSISTANT CATEGORY MANAGER

Taron brings to his role experience in the learning and development sector as well as financial services, working principally with banks, insurance firms and mortgage companies in a procurement and supplier management capacity. Taron's skills include stakeholder engagement, supplier management and compliance. Taron is your first point of contact at SUPC for all enquiries related to the Estates Category.



Chris O'Hagan

DATA ANALYST

Chris has eight years' experience working as an analyst in procurement, and brings a diverse set of skills to his role including, change management, data/financial reporting, insight analysis and project management. He is also responsible for developing SUPC's reporting approach to ensure the organisation presents insightful information to members, suppliers and other stakeholders in the most effective way.



Paul Sayles

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE MANAGER

A data visualisation and insight analyst, Paul has more than 10 years' experience working in the HE sector. Paul uses business intelligence and visualisation to enable decision-makers to take informed action with impact and accuracy. He is adept at undertaking statistical analysis to identify the reasons behind trends and patterns and communicating insights to a wide range of audiences. Paul leads SUMS' business intelligence resources.

Full list of all SUPC staff is available on our website www.supc.ac.uk.

Your Delivery Team

As the global pandemic began to unfold, institutions were faced with an unprecedented and uncertain operating environment. At SUPC we recognised that our members needed us now more than ever. Instead of making use of the government furlough scheme, we chose to refocus our team on the areas where they could add the most value to members dealing with tough decisions.

Immediate First Crisis

The Covid-19 crisis affected every aspect of the higher education sector; from staff and student wellbeing to estate management, supply chains and income generation. With the situation changing daily, it was incredibly difficult for institutions to keep track of developments and potential impacts. Our aim was to respond quickly as you reached out for help.

Example Activities:

- Practical Help We facilitated discussions for members to understand the implications of government-issued Procurement Policy Notes,



saving the need for each member to interpret them separately.

- Information About the Developing Picture We shared timely and accurate information about problems in the supply chains for PPE items and IT equipment. We also highlighted potential new suppliers. This information enabled members to adapt where possible or simply to remain informed.
- Speaking Up on Behalf of Members We acted as a single point of contact for members, suppliers and other stakeholders. Regular two-way communication meant we could quickly share updates and relay issues specific to the HE sector. We took part in the campaign to protest against unsustainable price increases in the e-textbook market, joining Jisc and institutions to call out suppliers and bring to life the impact on the higher education sector.
- More Opportunities to Connect, Not Fewer We moved our events and meetings online quickly in March 2020 so that members could meet remotely with the SUPC team and each other. We sourced sector experts in topics important to our members and facilitated sharing of best practice.
- Finding a Way Forward Once it became clear that the effects of the pandemic would be with us for a long time to come, higher education institutions needed to find new ways to operate. We provided timely, accurate information and support to inform our members' decision-making.
- IT Infrastructure This was put under pressure due to the twin requirements of increased

working from home and blended learning. Increased demand for items such as laptops and headsets led to delays in supply. SUPC played a pivotal role in highlighting up-to-date information to enable members to plan their activities accordingly.

- Returning to Campus Working alongside our UK University Purchasing Consortia (UKUPC) partners, we put together a back to work document that guided members through key considerations for procuring PPE equipment in preparation for a return. We also brought in speakers to share their experiences with our members, on topics such as repurposing buildings for socially distanced activities.
- Supplier Impact Where suppliers were impacted by the crisis, we helped members to deal with the implications. For example, when suppliers ceased trading, we supported mini-competition processes to replace them quickly and reduce service disruption. In the case of an e-book supplier, we were able to identify cost-effective options for re-homing of e-book content so that universities did not lose access to content they had paid for.

We also recognised the ongoing need our members had for peer-to-peer support and wider learning. We continued to offer this support through informal virtual coffee mornings and by moving our popular conference and events programme online. This year we hosted 12 events, which were attended by over 1000 members and wider sector representatives.

Planning for the Future

The wider societal and economic impacts of

‘The team did an excellent job of quickly adapting to the new norm and enabling online events.’

SUPC MEMBER

the pandemic will affect our members for many years to come. Our support remains aligned to your needs, as you plan for uncertainty and explore what your future could look like.

Institutions will need to respond with disruptive and innovative operating models which require a different use of budgets and spending. At SUPC we are well-placed to keep members informed about market developments that support these new approaches, for example innovative PPE products and sustainable solutions to the challenges of the high-cost e-textbooks market. The sector experience available through our sister division, SUMS Consulting, means we can help members with insight and best practice garnered from our efficiency work with universities across the UK.

We know that there will be increased scrutiny of budgets and an even greater need for efficiency and financial sustainability. Our ongoing contract management will support supplier performance and value for money.

Responding to Covid-19

Who we worked with

The NHS, other public sector bodies and our own member institutions.

The Situation

The need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has increased exponentially around the world during the global Covid-19 pandemic. With such high demand, the market faced a number of challenges, from supply and logistics considerations to quality and pricing variations. The procurement of these items was an area where SUPC team members could add considerable value.

What happened

In March our STEMed Category Manager, Dani Sweeney, was seconded to join the effort to procure PPE items for the NHS. The scale of the exercise was such that the project was managed by the Ministry of Defence on behalf of the Cabinet Office. During the initial stages of the crisis, Dani led one of the teams who carried out supplier investigations to ensure products were available and met the specified requirements on the 20,000+ potential suppliers who signed up on the government portal. When PPE procurement moved to a longer-term strategic phase, she took on a more specialist role supporting the development of a strategy for procuring protective gloves.



Alongside this involvement in procuring PPE for the NHS, SUPC was also working to support our members with their needs in relation to this equipment. Many of them required supplies of PPE to carry out their activities, particularly when returning to face-to-face working. Our Assistant Category Manager Taron Smith conducted an aggregated RFQ exercise with relevant framework suppliers, having asked our members to provide details of their institutions' requirements. This collective approach led to five suppliers confirming appropriate pricing

and lead times. Individual institutions could then conduct their own specific call-offs directly.

The difference it made

The findings of Dani's team were used by the Cabinet Office to secure a supply for NHS frontline workers, both in the immediate crisis and for a longer-term strategy. Our aggregated RFQ saved time for our members and for the suppliers, who would otherwise have had multiple RFQs to respond to. Taron continues to monitor security of supply and pricing for our members.

‘The higher education sector’s response to the Covid crisis has been tremendous – from supplying frontline healthcare staff, to manufacturing PPE, and of course, creating the vaccine that will lead us out of lockdown. It was an honour to play my part, on behalf of SUPC, in the national effort and use my procurement skills for something so important – ultimately saving lives.’

DANI SWEENEY, SUPC CATEGORY MANAGER, STEMed

Case Study: Responding to Covid-19

An Opportunity to Deploy Our Staff and Expertise to Benefit the Greater Good



The impacts of Brexit on higher education procurement activity are likely to be considerable. While there remains a lot of uncertainty about the details of the changes, at SUPC we have worked to support our members with information, advice and guidance to help them prepare.

Supply Chain Risk and General Guidance

A disruption to the supply of products or

services, such as the changes associated with Brexit, can have a huge impact on an organisation; it is important that teams work collaboratively within and across their institutions to mitigate challenges.

Starting in early 2020, SUPC as part of the UK Universities Purchasing Consortia (UKUPC), reviewed each of our framework contracts. We asked suppliers who provide goods or services which are at risk of disruption due to Brexit

to consider labour, supply chain, regulatory and commercial risks. We asked them to:

- Identify those risks
- Confirm how they are planning to mitigate identified issues
- Advise what action university procurement teams should take.

We then provided a report to members detailing all results for all suppliers who responded. We also shared our question set

with our members' procurement teams so they could undertake this exercise with their local supply networks.

Beginning in Autumn 2020, UKUPC have undertaken more regular reviews which we shared with members.

‘The additional benefits of our SUPC membership go beyond savings and also include regular training, advice, Brexit planning, due diligence and an opportunity to learn from and align to our key research university partners.’

**JAKOB KAUSBERG, PROCUREMENT MANAGER,
UK CENTRE FOR ECOLOGY & HYDROLOGY**

Preparing for Brexit

To save our members time and make it easier for them to find relevant information, we have brought together sector guidance from a range of sources on our website. These have covered areas such as imports/exports, risk mitigation and next steps in preparing for the transition.

Events and Community Discussion

While no one has all of the answers, we have provided opportunities for members to come together regularly to share experiences, questions and solutions in both formal and informal settings. This has provided reassurance as well as answers.

We have also promoted and raised awareness of national sector events and used our voice to help expedite activity on behalf of our members.

Dealing with Disruptive Forces in 2021

Both Brexit and Covid-19 have been incredibly disruptive challenges for the higher education sector and society as a whole. While there's hope on the horizon, the impact of these twin concerns will mean universities will have to focus on efficiency and effectiveness like never before. To support the sector to identify priority areas, we've developed the Procurement Value Assessment (PVA).

The PVA is an essential tool for universities looking to deliver savings in non-pay expenditure. It combines SUPC's in-depth expertise in university procurement with SUMS Consulting's efficiency and effectiveness know-how. Those who need support, can contact us directly at supc@reading.ac.uk for support.

As a starting point, we use the HEPA Procurement Value Survey and Procurement

Performance Indicators to help benchmark procurement efficiency and effectiveness. This is combined with data gathered from a decade of delivering the sector-leading Procurement Maturity Assessment, as we undertake a focussed qualitative assessment of your university's procurement strategy and approach.

We are confident that, together, we can help universities and the sector harness opportunities to be more efficient. This will be essential as universities seek to make significant efficiency savings while maintaining a strong reputation within a crowded university landscape.

‘Information provided by SUPC to help us understand potential impacts of Brexit was so useful. It meant that I didn't have to re-invent the wheel by trying to put together my own interpretations.’

**CLAIRE CROTHERS, PROCUREMENT MANAGER,
UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH**



efficiency so that we can focus on direct help for members and activities such as proactive scanning for future opportunities.

Areas this year have included:

- Showing Support for Regional Economies and Communities *To help institutions demonstrate their support for local sustainability we now have 288 SMEs on agreements available through SUPC. We also assist with best practice in engaging with SMEs, for example clarifying the March 2020 Procurement Policy Notes on payments which had a bigger impact on smaller suppliers.*
- Supplier Contribution to the Global Sustainability Agenda *Many of our framework TMCs are improving their booking systems to provide information on carbon footprints and sustainable routes. Travellers will be able to make more informed choices.*
- Student Experience *Library budgets are central to teaching. In a digital world, students need new ways to access library resources. Our metadata special interest group has led to improvements in this area.*
- Supporting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) *In 2019/20 we started work on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy to provide members with assurance that SUPC upholds these important values. We are now working on EDI training and guidance for members to support greater inclusivity within tenders and supply chains. We are also hoping to support the development of the procurement profession as one that welcomes and supports a dynamic and diverse community.*

‘Completing successive PMA’s has given Newcastle an impetus and a defined target to ensure continuous improvement is achieved in our Procurement Services team. The assessment criteria are clear and the pathway to Superior performance is mapped out. The PMA+ is particularly well placed to drive further improvement and stretch across the sector.’

**NEIL ADDISON, PROCUREMENT MANAGER,
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY**

- Members spent £85m spend through SSSNA framework in 2019/20



Who We Worked With

University of Portsmouth, a TEF Gold-rated university supporting an undergraduate student population of over 25,000, and ranked among the top 30 institutions in the UK in the National Student Survey 2020.

The Situation

The procurement team at Portsmouth already managed a high volume of work to support their institution's activities. The addition of a global pandemic and the need to prepare for Brexit increased their workload still further.

What Happened

During the year, Claire Crothers, Procurement Manager, and her team made use of the full range of SUPC membership benefits, including:

- Access to timely, accurate and trustworthy information on the complex issues caused by Covid-19 and Brexit, such as Procurement Policy Note interpretation, supply chain issues and compliant routes to market
- Accessible, relevant webinars and conferences – in-person and online
- Learning from peers and expert speakers to improve their own activities
- An increase in return on investment (ROI) from 1:72 in 2018/19 to 1:88 in 2019/20, despite the challenges of Covid-19.
- An expected return of over £19,000 in supplier marketing premiums for the 2019/20 year, more than covering the cost of SUPC members.



- Opportunities to get involved in activities, such as the IT software licence retendering group and participation in the post-Brexit Public Contracts Regulations reform consultation.

Outside of membership, Portsmouth undertook a Procurement Maturity Assessment (PMA+) in 2019. The PMA+ looked at the performance of the procurement team in the broader context of the institution's strategy and performance and provided a road map for making improvements. Through the process, they were able to identify areas to improve the procurement operations and strategy to deliver long-term benefits and having a third-party report with recommendations gave additional weight to influencing senior decision-makers and then delivering change.

The Difference it Made

The team has been able to make optimum use of their time by taking the input from SUPC and applying it to their institution's context. This has allowed them to increase their ROI through SUPC membership over previous years. They have been able to have better quality conversations with colleagues and to proactively influence senior level decision-making.

Hearing from peers at other universities has helped the team to identify successful ways forward for Portsmouth. Contributing to the collective voice of HE sector procurement has been beneficial to themselves and others.

There has been a direct impact on opportunities to increase understanding of procurement internally. This has come from providing strategic overviews at senior levels and from involving subject-expert colleagues, such as the IT team, in tendering groups. SUPC has worked with the procurement team to clearly demonstrate the efficiency and value that the University gets from its non-pay spend – a strategic imperative during these challenging times for the sector.

Being able to position themselves as a more proactive, strategic function has raised the profile of procurement at the University. This has in turn enabled more effective spend and ROI.

‘Thanks to the leg-work carried out by SUPC, I have been able to pull out the information I need to provide timely input to the senior team at Portsmouth. This has really helped to proactively influence decision-making and raise procurement’s profile at the top table. Our PMA+ was also critical in developing the procurement team’s capability and impact. I am relatively new to the HE sector and have found SUPC colleagues to be welcoming and their support invaluable.’

CLAIRE CROTHERS, PROCUREMENT MANAGER,
UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Delivering Value: Savings and Beyond

Information and Support for Proactive
Decision-Making in Difficult Times

Reassurance and Learning from Others

Bringing members together to communicate and share experiences has never been more important. Whether in person or online, SUPC has continued to provide opportunities to connect.

- Informal coffee mornings have provided the chance for members to check in with each other during a difficult, uncertain year. This has proved invaluable for wellbeing, practical advice and support.
- Meeting online as commodity and special interest groups meant that members continued to learn from each other, hear about best practice and gather ideas for their own future plans.
- Information webinars on topics ranging from repurposing buildings for social distancing to the future of business travel and understanding software licensing models. The subjects for these sessions were developed by listening to members' needs. These webinars were opened up across all HE procurement consortia.

Listening to the collective discussions of our members also helped SUPC to identify common themes and issues that were wider than at individual institution level. For example, when a problem with an IT supplier pricing was identified, we were able to work with that supplier to find a way forward that was fair to all.

Get Involved

A wide range of institutions and individuals have taken part in our commodity, working



and special interest groups. Drawing on the expertise and input of members is vital to ensure solutions are fit for purpose.

Collective input is vital in shaping the next iteration of the frameworks, such as the Servers, Storage & Solutions National Agreement (SSSNA). The spend level through this framework remained high in 2019/20, demonstrating the ongoing importance of infrastructure in digital learning. The re-

‘The membership gives access to a consortium that I see as an important catalyst for collaborative working, be that directly with the SUPC team, via commodity groups or from the networking with other universities.’

**HOWARD GOFFIN, HEAD OF PROCUREMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH**

Building a Community of Excellence

tendering working group enabled those involved to discuss future tech developments to address.

During this year, SUPC has facilitated opportunities for a wide range of internal colleagues to be involved in procurement activity. Members have been represented on IT tendering groups, STEMEd working groups and library special interest groups by their own internal IT teams, researchers and librarians - not just procurement teams. This has in turn enabled better understanding and internal conversations.

Wider Collaboration

At SUPC we work hard to reach out to a wide range of new and existing partners for our members' benefit. These relationships give members access to more expertise, perspectives and arrangements.

Example collaborations include:

- The National ICT group, involving all HE procurement consortia, Jisc and ucisa, is chaired by SUPC. Together we work collaboratively on data analysis, systems and processes for the sector. Issues can be collectively raised with the market and information quickly shared with members.
- SUPC teamed up with BUFDG and Jisc to support members' needs in relation to the zero-rating of VAT on e-publications. Subsequent refunds for members have totalled £4.5m.
- We have begun conversations with other interested partners in the world of accessibility for digital platforms, in order to develop forward-thinking specifications for potential suppliers.

‘The value for our institution is the access to robust frameworks, information, and a network of knowledgeable and relevant colleagues in other institutions.’

SUPC MEMBER

- A member of the SUPC team was seconded to the NHS programme for PPE procurement, part of the effort to efficiently and compliantly deliver the equipment needed by frontline workers.
- The national UK Universities Purchasing Consortia (UKUPC) Communications Group is chaired by SUPC and has developed a central website and regular e-publications. These provide advice and guidance for members on a range of procurement topics including Brexit, tender working groups and working with SMEs.

Events for members

- SUPC New Member Induction Event
- Travel and Temp/Perm Recruitment Services Launch Event
- Two Council Events and Networking
- SUPC Labs Agreement Launch
- LUPC & SUPC Conference - Covid-19 Webinars
- LUPC & SUPC Conference - On the Day Webinars
- Developing Personal Resourcefulness in HE, During Covid-19 and Beyond
- LUPC & SUPC - Back to Work Webinar
- LUPC & SUPC - Efficiencies Webinar
- Cartel Dangers in Higher Education Procurement: What You Need to Know
- PCR Consultation with the Cabinet Office

Who We Worked With

Librarians and metadata experts from across our member institutions, responsible for approximately £55 million in annual sector spend.

The Situation

More and more resources for students' learning are now provided online. The global pandemic has accelerated this digital provision of books and journals. The metadata held within university library catalogues is vital to ensuring students can find and use critical resources. It makes the books, journals and other resources searchable and easy to locate, which is a fundamental requirement for meeting students' expectations.

What Happened

Metadata is a complex, niche area of librarianship. It enables sophisticated connections to and between online works so that they can be easily discovered and used. We realised that we could add value by supporting our members to discuss this evolving area together.

Our Academic Services Category Manager Gavin Phillips, who came to SUPC from a role as a university librarian himself, set up a metadata special interest group so SUPC and LUPC members could learn from each other. The network we have created is made up of around



70 librarians and data professionals. We have continued to host these conversations remotely during the pandemic. The next stage for this group is to look at ways we can enable collaborative projects between member institutions.

The Difference it Made

Metadata improvements underpin value for money for institutions. If a resource cannot be found, it will not be used and the cost to acquiring it will have been lost. The group therefore gives our members the opportunity to ensure ongoing value beyond SUPC's framework in this area.

This special interest group has enabled member institutions to learn about this changing area and share their experiences. They are able to improve their own online library catalogues and provide a better experience for their students and staff. In this safe space with their peers, they feel able to ask questions and seek reassurance when required. Given the growing importance of digital library provision – especially in light of Covid-19 – this best-practice sharing network is already helping to shape the future of learning in UK higher education.

‘Books are there to be read. If a student or other member of the university community can’t find a book, they cannot use it. Members have told me how valuable our metadata special interest group is for developing their practices to ensure a high-quality library experience and value for money for their students.’

GAVIN PHILLIPS,
SUPC CATEGORY MANAGER,
ACADEMIC SERVICES

Building a Community of Excellence

A chance to Share, Learn and Add Value
to the Learning Experience

At SUPC we aim to join the sector dots by identifying cross-sector needs and helping you to find solutions that work for your institution. We employ the tools and expertise available to us to provide efficient insight for you to use in your decision-making.

Insight

We continue to add to our team's strengths in HE procurement by bringing in individuals with experience of working within institutions. In a changing world this has given us the perspective of procurement needs beyond frameworks and agreements.

We recognise the vital importance of evidence-based decision-making to our members' success. We have therefore invested in data insight and analysis for you to use. We are working with members in the coming year to develop our reporting and insight tools.

Throughout the year, we maintained support for our members with insight into complex and evolving markets. For example, we provided regular updates in relation to:

- PPE supply and development of innovative products
- Pricing changes for e-textbooks
- The rapidly changing travel markets.

This information shaped your response to the scenarios you faced.

Advice and Guidance

Our team's expertise provides a balance of category management and consultancy in response to members' needs.

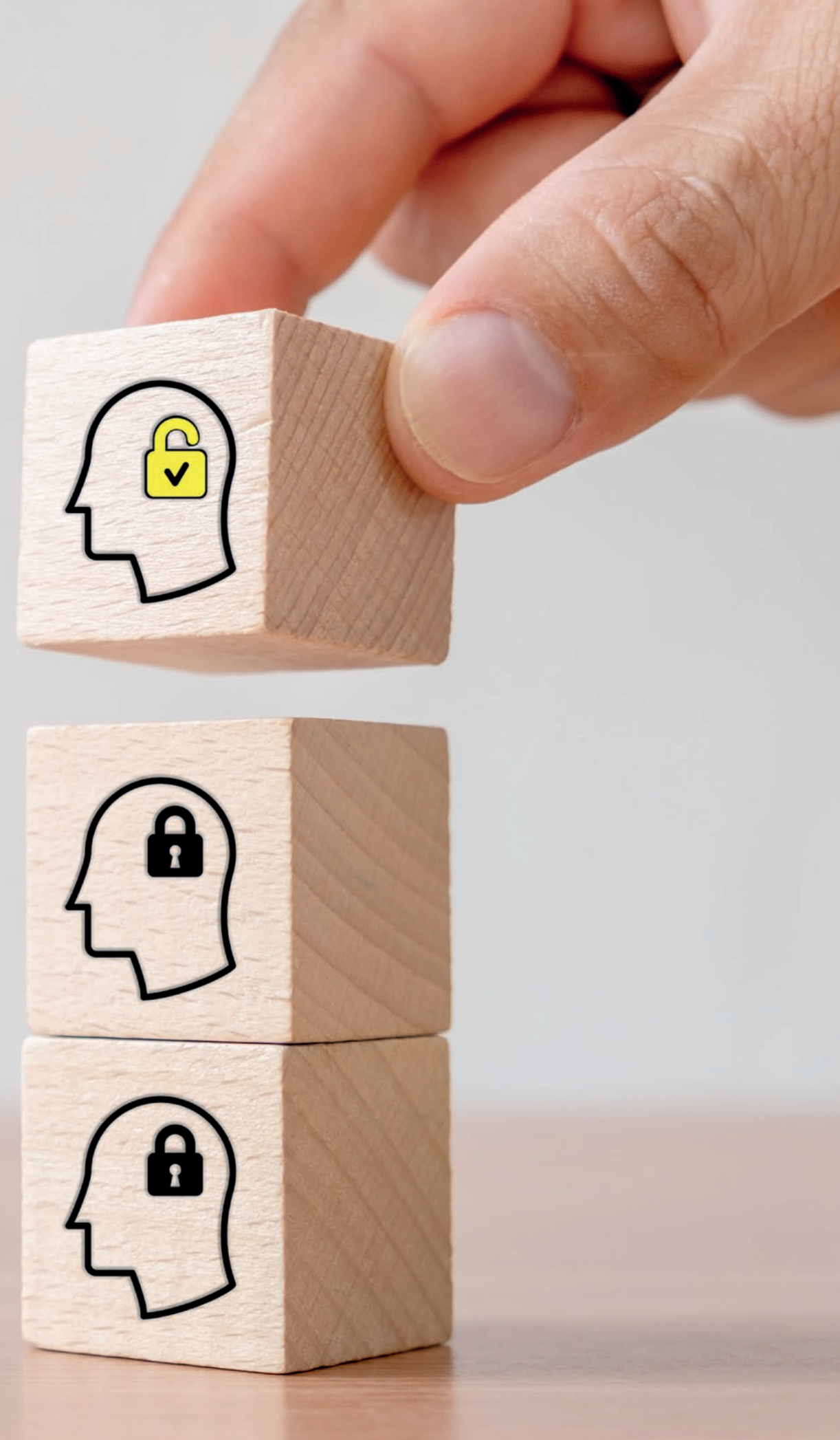
‘The SUPC membership is much more than a subscription to a service, it is access to a range of procurement professionals with a breadth of knowledge, relevant to the HE Sector.’

**HOWARD GOFFIN, HEAD OF PROCUREMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH**

Example activities:

- The global pandemic enforced a pause to travelling. Many institutions have taken advantage of this situation to re-think their travel policies and processes.

Providing Advice and Expert Insight





We provided the latest information on the ever-changing travel landscape and potential future scenarios. This helped institutions to identify what to consider during their review. Our insight into the role TMCs can play in providing data for environmental sustainability has also proved helpful.

- We created and distributed a central repository of consortia frameworks in the estates category. This requirement had been identified by the SUPC Estates Group. We also included frameworks from the wider market to create a single point of reference for our members.
- We supported members to understand changes to Microsoft's licensing model so that you could select the right option for your staff and students. We facilitated conversations with other members who had already taken actions and with suppliers who offered free support. As a result, our members could be confident that they had the correct licences and were not paying higher fees than necessary.

Wider Access

It's not just SUPC's advice and expertise that our members benefit from. Our partnerships and relationships with others mean that you can access a greater range of information and perspectives.

- We work closely with other HE consortia through UK Universities Purchasing Consortia (UKUPC). UKUPC is a partnership between eight UK consortia who created a formal entity to support collaborative procurement within higher and further education. All eight consortia work together to share knowledge and best

practice, to support each other and our wider procurement community.

- We collaborated to put together a back-to-work document that guided members through key considerations for procuring PPE equipment in preparation for a return to campus. This pooled a wide range of experience in a single source of guidance.
- Since SUPC is part of the wider SUMS group, our members can take advantage of the expert briefing papers written by SUMS consultants. These cover a range of topics, including the impact of Covid-19 on university finance, digital education and the changing university culture, all of which can help inform procurement activities. Events such as the SUMS Conference have also been opened up to SUPC Members to give you perspectives beyond procurement.

Our resources and working groups can be made available beyond the procurement teams at member institutions so knowledge and insight can be shared more widely internally.

‘SUPC provides an excellent service [that] I am very happy with.’

SUPC MEMBER



Who We Worked With

Member institutions, representing over £200m in buying power across the UK HE sector, along with other sector consortia, travel management companies and the Business Travel Association.

The Situation

British universities have been increasingly reliant on overseas travel in the last 30 years as internationalisation has boomed in

both research collaboration and student recruitment. The global Covid-19 pandemic has stopped this trend in its tracks, with international travel all but shut down. During the initial stages of the pandemic, there was a direct impact on individuals who were on a trip and caught up in the race to get home. As the crisis continued, travel disruption, HE funding models and the needs of international students caused further issues for our members.

What Happened

The first thing the Travel Management Companies (TMCs) did was to locate passengers who were currently travelling and make arrangements for bringing them back to the UK. They also worked with universities and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to repatriate travellers who were stranded by border closures and airline cancellations. In the face of ongoing uncertainty about whether booked travel would go ahead or be subject to last-minute cancellations, the TMCs provided expert advice on the best course of action for university travellers.

SUPC worked with Clive Wratten, the CEO of the Business Travel Association (BTA), to raise with the government the unique position of the HE sector in relation to the need for cash refunds, not travel vouchers. This relationship with the BTA also helped us to share up-to-date information with our members about the current travel environment.

The issue of bringing international students to the UK also created problems as time went on. SUPC worked with the TMCs and UUK International to develop a collaborative, innovative solution which addressed legislative and risk concerns, enabling universities to charter flights in order to bring their students to campus.

‘SUPC’s expertise brought a range of benefits to our members, helping the sector to understand and navigate a number of very complex issues through the pandemic.’

JAMIE ARROWSMITH, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, POLICY AT UNIVERSITIES UK INTERNATIONAL

The Difference it Made

In a fast-changing travel landscape, our relationships with the TMCs, the BTA and UUK International helped us to keep up-to-date with the latest picture and share that information with our members. This not only kept them informed, but also meant that the TMCs were not facing multiple queries with the same questions.

Travel Requirements in an Unfamiliar World

The higher education world is a complex environment with many sector-specific needs. The resulting procurement-related challenges need to be viewed through the lens of this complexity, something that is fully understood by the SUPC team.

Part of Your World

We save our members time by building and maintaining relationships with suppliers, procurement consortia and sector bodies and other stakeholders in the supply chain. Bringing appropriate parties and perspectives together to discuss topics avoids having to reinvent the wheel.

We help procurement teams to make their processes relatable to end users and buyers within their institutions. The data and insight we have helps them to make the case for compliance. For example, during the Australian bush fires of 2020, TMCs quickly located travellers and brought them home safely without extra effort for them. Procurement teams could clearly show how booking travel through the official route was beneficial to the individual traveller in a difficult situation.

Our PMA+ reviews are designed to help you assess your performance in a way that is aligned with the specific challenges of the sector. The process has evolved in recognition of the changing role of procurement teams and the contribution you make to your institutions' evolving strategies.

Acting on Your Behalf

SUPC provides a single point of contact in relation to HE sector procurement. Our

Acting as Your Critical Friend



'I am particularly pleased with how SUPC's sustainability and social values take centre-stage and is aligned to our own values.'

JAKOB KAUUSBERG, PROCUREMENT MANAGER,
UK CENTRE FOR ECOLOGY & HYDROLOGY

members trust us to speak and act on their behalf because we demonstrate time and again that we understand what you need.

We connect with:

- **Members** You come to us for up-to-date, trusted information, such as the timely and accurate information about problems in the supply chains for PPE items and IT equipment that we shared during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Suppliers** They can talk to us once instead of holding multiple meetings with separate institutions. This is hugely beneficial at a time when they are also negotiating the impact on their businesses of issues such as Brexit and climate change.

- **Policy-Makers** We were able to leverage our relationships with TMCs and the Business Travel Association to ensure the Home Office heard about our members' challenges in relation to travel refunds. The unique impact of HE funding models was collectively represented. Bodies like Universities UK are also able to look at collaborative work undertaken within HE to present to Government.

In addition, we use information members give us to influence others. We have recently supported the grass roots campaign for change to pricing structures in the e-books market, using insight from stories our members have shared.

Stakeholder Perspectives

A key strength of higher education suppliers is their understanding of the unique conditions in which our member institutions operate. Our positive, ongoing relationships with them ensure that their perspective and expertise can be easily brought in for the benefit of members.

- **Student Experience** Changes in the travel market have impacted on student group travel, with the loss of a significant supplier in the market. We knew how this would affect our members and supported them to find suitable alternative suppliers to provide quality experiences for their students.
- **STEMed Suppliers** Many of these suppliers have switched to supplying the NHS during the pandemic. As well as a strategic decision that contributes to their

long-term viability, connecting with them also speaks to universities' civic responsibility agenda. SUPC has been able to keep suppliers and members informed of activities and developments.

We continue to add to our team's strengths in HE procurement by bringing in individuals with experience of working within institutions. In a changing world this has given us new perspectives.



Who We Worked With

One of the largest universities in the UK with international campuses and a global reputation for excellence.

The Situation

An over-reliance on time-consuming manual processes and an outdated operating model were impacting on the procurement team's ability to use their full expertise. Working remotely due to the global pandemic made manual processes even more problematic. Changes to the make-up of the team provided an opportunity to review how they could add greater value to their institution.

What Happened

The University approached SUMS Consulting, a sister division of SUPC and part of the SUMS group for support in making process efficiencies. Consultant Graeme Sloan carried out a review of current activities, tools and systems. He discovered that the traditional procurement operating model in use meant that team members were firefighting and unable to proactively add value. As well as taking up a lot of time, the manual processes often led to missed steps and/or duplicate information and effort.

Graeme provided the Head of Finance with a series of recommendations to digitise



processes into existing systems, to improve the organisational design for procurement and to update tendering and contract-management systems. These suggestions were provided in the format of quick wins and a longer-term roadmap to assist with implementation.

The Difference it Made

Automating the manual processes will significantly reduce the number of hours taken, with an estimated annual saving of approximately 400 person hours. This will benefit the back-office functions of

procurement and finance, as well as the end users whose form-filling activities will be more efficiently and compliantly managed. There will also be an associated financial cost-saving.

The improvements to the organisational design and working practices will support a move to a more strategic procurement function, contributing to the University's wider goals. This will also provide more enriching roles for individual team members, where they are able to fully use their procurement expertise.

‘Time and again our members tell us how invaluable it is to have an objective review carried out by someone who really understands the world of HE procurement. In this case our consultant made recommendations that clearly demonstrated the strategic benefit to the University of making changes. He also provided a tactical road-map to assist the team in taking the work forward themselves.’

BERNARDE HYDE, CEO, SUMS GROUP

Objective Insight – Target Operating Model Review

A Lean, Mean, Efficiency Machine

