



**-RIGHT DIRECTION**

# **SUPC Impact Report 2021/22**

**Navigating procurement through challenging times**







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## About SUPC

Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium (SUPC) is the largest of the English specialist procurement consortia for universities. We represent over 42% and 43% of the UK-wide student and staff FTE population, respectively. Our members also include universities who have opted out of public procurement regulations. We are not-for-profit, a registered charity that is focused on the needs of the Higher Education sector, and a member of UK Universities Purchasing Consortia (UKUPC). We help universities, colleges and educational charities buy sustainably, responsibly and smarter. Despite challenging market conditions we have helped SUPC members improve their return on investment to a ratio of 67:1 this year.

It is an understatement to say that the higher education sector is facing challenging times and we need procurement to deliver more than ever.





Overall, we must address risk in supply chains; improve the bottom line to help meet the challenges of high inflation and constrained resources; and help universities address their sustainability commitments.

Our members choose to work with SUPC to access our expertise, frameworks and added-value support services to help them deliver for their institutions. The commercial value we provide, including our

return of member-generated framework rebates, makes us unique in the sector. As the HE centre for procurement excellence, this year SUPC has focused on seeking innovative solutions with a more commercial focus, expanding and upskilling our team of experts. Our investment in the team continues with the appointment of a new Head of SUPC, a new Head of Procurement and the implementation of our new operating model.

- **Benefits delivered 2021-22**
  - > ROI 67:1 (benefit to cost of membership)
  - > 48% increase (£1.4M) in framework rebate returned to members this year
  - > 27% increase (£467.2M) in total spend committed against SUPC-led frameworks
  - > £70.9m in savings, including £29.7m in cashable savings





Business insight and data analysis is a critical part of our service. Over the last few years we have been investing significantly in the SUMS Group Business Intelligence team, to ensure our decisions are informed by data. We want our members to benefit by making best use of the wealth of data that we have access to.

As part of the Southern Universities Management Services SUMS Group (SUMS) we bring our expertise in Higher Education best practice across all professional services to benefit our members. SUPC is a dynamic and values focused organisation dedicated to supporting the UK's Higher Education sector. SUMS has three divisions – SUMS Consulting, SUPC and the Procurement Shared Service (PSS).





# Our members



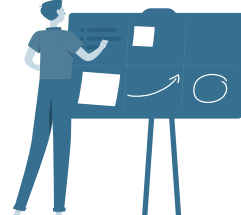
## Associate members



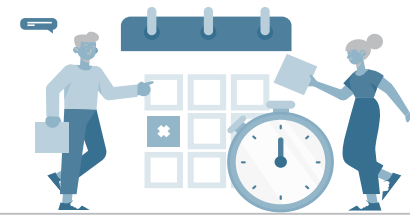
# Our impact




2021/22




**127**  
Total assignments



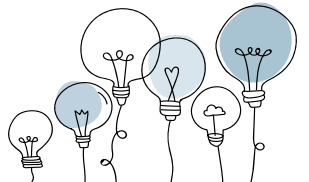
**1,762**  
Consultancy days



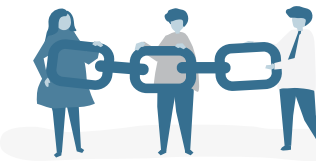
**21**  
Non-member institutions engaged



**12,300**  
Consultancy hours




**26**  
Briefing papers/  
thought pieces




**11**  
Procurement assignments



**162**  
Number of members



**53.8%**  
% of UK student population (FTE)\*



**57.6%**  
% of UK staff population (FTE)\*



**19**  
Number of events



**£70.9m**  
Savings (cashable and non-cashable)



**£467m**  
Spend through agreements



**1:67**  
ROI



**£1.4m**  
Returned marketing premium



**139**  
# of agreements accessible by members

\*HESA data 2021/22

# Your core delivery team for 2022-23

SUPC's team of experts thrives on supporting the HE community with complex procurement challenges. With a focus on responsible procurement and with experience from the public, private and third sectors, the team is here to ensure your procurement is successful.

Our new appointment to the role of Head of SUPC, Leigh Kopec, and our ongoing recruitment of a deputy are just the start of the SUMS Group's greater investment in its procurement and commercial team. SUPC is also introducing a new business model, with further recruitment and upskilling underway.



**Bernarde Hyde**  
SUMS GROUP CEO



**Joel Arber**  
SUMS GROUP  
MANAGING  
DIRECTOR



**Leigh Kopec**  
HEAD OF  
SUPC



**Rob Johnson**  
HEAD OF  
PROCUREMENT  
SERVICES



**Paul Sayles**  
SUMS GROUP BUSINESS  
INTELLIGENCE MANAGER



**Jess Tuthill**  
SENIOR INSIGHT  
ANALYST



**Mark Lewis**  
CATEGORY MANAGER,  
ICT



**Gavin Phillips**  
CATEGORY MANAGER,  
ACADEMIC SERVICES



**Taron Smith**  
CATEGORY MANAGER,  
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,  
ENGINEERING AND  
MEDICINE (STEMED)



**Oliver Bradbury-Steward**  
ASSISTANT  
CATEGORY MANAGER



## Cost management during challenging times

The role of SUPC has always been to help universities and colleges buy smarter and deliver maximum value-for-money to their students, staff and wider communities. It has been even more critical for us to support our members during challenging economic times with inflationary pressures unseen for a generation.

Costs are rising and framework suppliers across a broad range of categories have been requesting price increases. Drivers for these requests include increases in energy, fuel, shipping and raw material costs, currency fluctuations and restricted supply availability.

At SUPC, we understand that inflationary pressures mean price rises can be appropriate to ensure

continuity of supply. We have taken a pragmatic and collaborative approach by working closely with our suppliers, having robust conversations and actively challenging price increases as appropriate to drive the best value for our members.

Our members can feel confident that we have applied our experience of frameworks and supplier management to:

- > Ask suppliers to justify increase requests with appropriate and supporting rationale
- > Require evidence to show how their cost pressures translate to new pricing
- > Negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes and ensure our members continue to get the best value possible from our frameworks.



### Laboratory & Other Gases, Associated Equipment and Services Framework

We contained an initial request for a 51% price increase to 18%, which over a 12-month period represents a cost avoidance/saving of more than £3 million. Our in-depth understanding of the challenging market conditions and our strong relationship with BOC (a major framework supplier), along with their commitment to the HE sector, enabled us to negotiate a reduced increase on the price of Cryospeed Liquid Nitrogen.

### IRLA Chemicals and Consumables Agreements

As part of the agreed annual price review process, SUPC carried out rigorous impact analysis that resulted in us challenging suppliers to demonstrate to us where their cost impacts had been and to what extent, such as where there had been raw material increases compounded by increased energy costs.

**Your work, support and advice is exceptionally valuable in what is a very complex supply market. This is an area that would likely be neglected at a local level if your central work and support wasn't in place.**



**MARTIN SATCHWELL,**  
Head of Procurement,  
De Montfort University

### New digital products in libraries

New digital products were introduced at speed in 2020 and we worked closely with suppliers to challenge and establish appropriate pricing and standard terms and conditions as the market settled. Our category managers understand that in a fluctuating economy an in-depth understanding of the position of both members and suppliers is essential for us to negotiate a mutually beneficial outcome.



### Representation of member interests

- > SUPC acts as a focal point for engagement between the HE sector, broader industry and Government bodies to represent the views of our members. Recent examples include representing the sector's views at a Department of Education discussion, which explored approaches for making e-book licences more affordable for

**The team at SUPC are an excellent source of advice and guidance, they are the first port of call for my team. Whenever we speak to the team we get a friendly, knowledgeable response, they are like an extra member of our in-house team.**



**ROBIN HIGGINS**  
Assistant Director of Finance (Procurement)  
Canterbury Christ Church University

higher education libraries, with a particular view to ensuring students are not disadvantaged by pricing or availability of resources.

- > We also initiated discussions with the Business Travel Association lobbying the Minister of Transport to re-address post-Covid recovery across the travel industry.

### Greater commercialisation

We recognise that our members are at different points in their commercialisation journey, due to the varied size, spend profiles and strategic imperatives and competencies within their organisations.

We also know that most are looking to develop a more commercial mindset and approach to procurement.

During the last year we have supported this drive for greater commercialisation through:

- > Supporting closer cost management on members' spend by sharing our experience on how to negotiate effectively and proactively contract manage suppliers

- > Advising members on how to let from frameworks in ways that optimise value-for-money from their spend
- > Contributing to members' transformation and recovery programmes and helping procurement teams to clearly demonstrate the scope and value-add of procurement
- > Looking for ways to add new suppliers onto frameworks to drive innovation and opportunities for members through greater competition and choice.

### Compliant routes to market

We have ensured our frameworks remain fit for purpose in challenging times. We have actively worked with suppliers to:

- > Mitigate supply chain risks and position SUPC members as customers of choice
- > Explore how institutions can get added-value from frameworks.
- > Ensure products and arrangements are suitable and fair to members and to suppliers.



Our agreements are flexible enough to be compliant in complex and individual situations. We are seeing changes in how frameworks are used and what they need to be compliant for, such as the Software Licence Resellers Agreement now being used for cyber security solutions.

**“The agreements have consistently delivered value for money, ease of compliance, tender specifications which reflect sector requirements, and a healthy ongoing relationship management schedule. The burden of taking on these different streams would be too much for my team.**



**ANDREW KNIGHT**

Acquisitions and Content Services Manager,  
Imperial College London



SUPC's involvement in framework development reassures procurement teams, as well as legal teams that agreements are compliant, enabling our members to optimise spend with reduced risk.

As the markets change, we have supported members and clients to work out what is best for them, for example:

- > The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama wanted a new finance system. We knew that in recent years there has been change in the market for what is now available for smaller institutions. Our team worked with them to explore their options, to look at framework and open market alternatives.
- > There is an ongoing move to adopt cloud solutions within IT. We have advised members how to assess factors to determine if this is appropriate for them. For example, whether an owned carbon neutral data centre is suitable or not for their institution.





### Coming soon

SUPC is constantly seeking to future-proof our members' procurement needs through the development of new or improved frameworks to address gaps or emerging needs. Frameworks currently in development include:

- > New Servers, Storage and Solutions National Agreement (SSSNA) – we have

#### ● Facts and figures

- > Over £1.4 M in returned framework rebates
- > £0.5 Billion total spend against SUPC Frameworks
- > Greater than £3M cost avoidance over a 12-month period, due to negotiated reduction of price increase on Cryospeed Liquid Nitrogen from 51% to 18%
- > £39 of each £100 spent by UK HE against UKUPC let frameworks is spent against SUPC frameworks

improved competition by adding new suppliers to the framework; we have taken the opportunity to increase the marketing premium; we have leveraged our membership of Electronics Watch to adopt a more strategic, consortia-level approach to reporting of workers' rights and increase confidence in suppliers. The new framework will also provide additional flexibility to allow our members to take advantage of the benefits of cloud computing.

- > Periodicals agreement – current pricing is unsustainable for subscription agents. As members tell us how important this role is to them, we are looking at how we put a solution in place that remains viable for members and agents.
- > UKUPC cross-consortia STEM strategy – a work in progress, looking for gaps and opportunities in framework provision across the consortia.





# Knowledge exchange

During the year, we have continued to provide expert, credible advice and information to our members. We have robust conversations with members and with suppliers, understanding their requirements and supporting them to find beneficial and compliant routes to match their institutional strategic outcomes.

## Expert advice and knowledge exchange

We provide expert advice and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practice across our membership. Throughout this year members have continued to benefit from:

- > **Opportunity for one-to-one conversations** with their dedicated Member Relationship Manager about spend optimisation and the impact on them of supplier decisions, price and product availability.
- > **Advice and information about increased commerciality**, flexibility and the impact on institutions if considering opting out of public procurement regulations.
- > The **UKUPC market insight report**, which SUPC developed collaboratively with the other Higher Education consortia across the UK: the information delivered a high-level guide to market activity, risks and opportunities in the wake of significant disruption following Brexit, Covid, currency fluctuations, supply chain issues and the impact of the war in Ukraine.
- > The **biennial LUPC-SUPC conference** with a keynote presentation on delivering innovation, commerciality and successful change, plus a range of other topical speakers to learn from and the opportunity to meet framework suppliers in person.





- > **A guide to how EDI is integrated into procurement and specifically into aspects of our framework agreements** for our members to use quickly and easily in response to any FOI (freedom of information) requests they receive about their supply chains.

As well as top-level advice and support we have also provided more tailored opportunities such as:

- > Expert webinars, for example explaining the what, how and why of the Books, E-books, E-textbooks, and Associated Services framework when it launched in January 2022
- > Themed presentations at member institutions, such as those to explain the Laboratory Gases agreement in the context of the volatility of the market
- > Informal Q&A sessions with metadata product suppliers to understand the benefits of new licences.

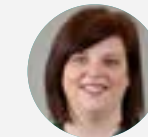
### ● The Rosalind Franklin Institute

The Rosalind Franklin Institute approached SUPC for advice about procuring accounting software. Our IT Category Manager talked them through potential options, considering suppliers in relation to:

- > Capability and suitability of software to meet the Institution's specific requirements
- > Pricing
- > Implementation support

Drawing on commercial and public procurement expertise, as well as an understanding of suppliers in the market and how they operate, our Category Manager was confident to recommend a best-fit option. After careful consideration, the team at the Institute chose to engage the recommended supplier. They were particularly pleased with the innovative, transparent and cost-effective implementation model and service level.

**I just wanted to thank you for your recommendation. We looked at many system options in the end and have decided to move forward with [the supplier]. The team have been incredible so far.**



**LAUREN JORDAN,**  
Finance Manager,  
The Rosalind Franklin Institute







### Institutional resilience

At a time when recruitment is challenging for many procurement teams, our expertise has supported the development of institutional skills and the building of resilience in a number of ways such as:

- > Collaboratively developing a competencies framework for sector procurement professionals to improve efficiency and effectiveness through performance management, skills gap analysis and upskilling
- > Updating our **Procurement Maturity Assessment (PMA+)** to reflect the new regulatory environment. It now incorporates a value-for-money tool and the full range of CSR topics. The PMA+ continues to provide a credible baseline for team and skills development through a practical framework, based on a consultative and collaborative assessment.

- > Ongoing mentoring for procurement teams, such as at Aberystwyth University where it has led to increased institutional resilience and strategic procurement skills, alongside practical tools, training and templates.
- > Informing members' contingency plans in response to challenges such as low supply and rising costs of laboratory gases, by holding supportive conversations with SUPC category managers.

Members have relied on SUPC to provide regular update communications and opportunities such as commodity groups to find out more about current situations in specific categories or with specific suppliers.



“  
**Our Finance Director found the UKUPC Market Insight Document to be really useful and a fantastic value-add service. He used it to provide credible evidence and context for his quarterly report to the Board.**



”

### Strategic partnerships

SUPC has put in place strategic partnerships to provide additional benefits to our members. This collaborative approach has given our members access to expertise that is in high-demand. New partnerships include:

- > **EAUC, the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education**, giving members access to consulting

services and good practice for the environment across universities and colleges

- > **BIC Libraries** and green supply chain, the UK book industry's supply chain organisation. This provides an opportunity to learn from and influence issues within the wider book industry on behalf of our members.

We worked alongside the likes of Jisc and SCONUL to find alignment and strategic direction within the sector and influence our activities. We worked with NAG to progress common issues about library supply, as their membership contains many of our own members and suppliers.

As SUPC members, institutions have also continued to leverage the benefits of being part of the SUMS Group, accessing the expertise and knowledge of our sister divisions: SUMS Consulting and the Procurement Shared Service (PSS).







## Knowledge exchange

As a collaborative knowledge broker, SUPC's role has often been to facilitate the flow of procurement-specific information and connection between individual members and suppliers. We put members with similar challenges in touch to learn from each other. This year these conversations included areas such as experience of refurbishing campus infrastructure with a similar age and build profile.

We also involve members in shaping agreements by giving them opportunities to take part in tender working parties.

### ● | Facts and figures

- > 91% of members surveyed feel that SUPC delivers value
- > 1,604 attendees at SUPC events



# Data-informed insight and decision-making

Evidence-based decisions are at the heart of strategic procurement activity. At SUPC we invest in business insight and data analysis to provide better information and insight for members about their own choices and from the wider market.

In the current climate our members know that their spend is going to increase. Their data helps them to understand the context and impact of what those increases mean in real terms. They want to use insight from their data to identify opportunities, such as pinpointing best possible options and exploring opportunities to increase their marketing premium.

## Improved, easier to use data and insight

Our improvements in this area this year have included the adoption of a data dashboard tool, Tableau. This has been

a game-changer for many of our members and for the SUPC team in terms of data visualisation, helping turn data into insight in an engaging format.

This tool enables us to manipulate the data in different ways, producing the reports in formats that are more useful for members' internal stakeholder conversations. These reports mean they can demonstrate the value of procurement solutions to financial pressures in compelling and credible ways.

This tool has also allowed us to improve our annual member benefit statements. We have:

- > Improved how we display the information visually, presented the information in one easier to reference place
- > Added in trends and extra years of data so that members can compare what is happening year on year.

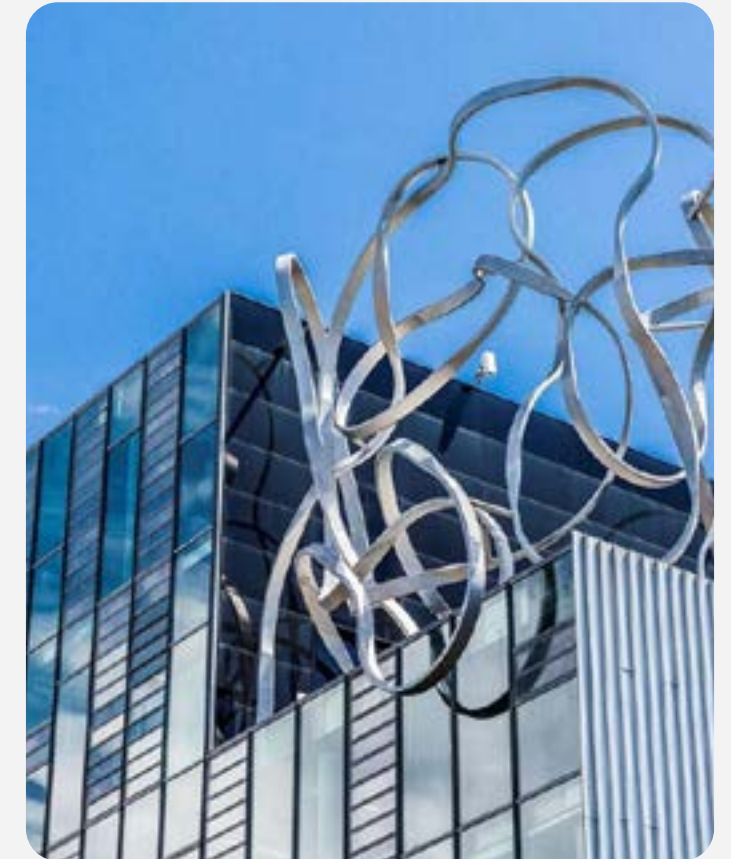




- **Goldsmiths, University of London**

As part of their recovery from pandemic revenue challenges, the team at Goldsmiths wanted an external, fresh set of eyes to look at potential opportunities to influence their financial position through non-pay activities.

SUPC carried out a spend and opportunity review, looking at addressable procurement spend and non-traditional procurement areas such as bursaries and international recruitment costs. Our report recommended investment and actions to develop the institution's procurement people, processes and systems in order to drive a potential >5% annual cost reduction.



The deeper insight has led to more insightful questions from members and as a result we are having more strategic conversations with them. Use of Tableau is freeing up our time to focus on adding strategic value such as helping members to identify frameworks they are missing for their spend profile or recommending a

direct award approach that may be more suitable for smaller teams.

We have also provided underlying data alongside visual interpretations, recognising that procurement teams require different formats for different purposes within their institutions.



Other ways our members have benefitted from better data insight to inform their decision-making:

- > Improved annual **Scope 3 reports** that now feature tailored, more meaningful data so that members can identify where to start conversations with their suppliers
- > Thanks to our consortium-wide membership of **Electronics Watch**, SUPC members receive information that helps them to understand who they are buying from and to make decisions that protect the rights of workers in electronics supply chains.

“  
The different spend reports produced by SUPC, which are shared with member Heads of Procurement, are very informative and useful in terms of decision making, getting value for money in purchasing resources and securing services.  
”



SUPC  
MEMBER





### Collective data benefits

The SUPC team is also using data reporting and insight at a collective level, for the benefit of all members.

This year we have used improved data analysis and insight to:

- > Challenge price increases where the underlying data does not support the requests from suppliers
- > Identify spend patterns across categories, suppliers and institutions
- > Add relevant responsible procurement reporting requirements into agreements
- > Share with partners so that we have a greater collective understanding of the picture across the sector.

Through our Data Working Group, member representatives have been working with us to co-design our data provision and ensure that it meets their needs and adds value.

### Coming up

We plan to:

- > Explore opportunities for how we share data in other formats to enhance its value and practical use for members.
- > Look in more detail at how we support members with their Scope 3 plans and how they can use their data to inform conversations with suppliers about their emissions
- > Continue to use data to inform our feasibility study for a new engineering framework.

**SUPC utilises data, and the insights drawn from this data, to support our members in understanding the nature and breadth of their non-pay spend. This allows institutions to make timely and accurate decisions and identify opportunities for our members to use the frameworks more effectively.**



**PAUL SAYLES**  
Business Intelligence Manager  
SUMS Group



# Why become an SUPC member today?

## The benefits of membership

SUPC works hard to deliver exceptional value for its members. These are the benefits that SUPC members say they value most from their membership:

- > **SUPC acts to safeguard competitive prices and value for money through frameworks** because our suppliers can sell large volumes of their products and services to universities and colleges
- > **Saving you valuable time** because we have already vetted suppliers through the tender process
- > **Offering access to over 130 professionally managed contracts** covering the products and services you need to buy
- > **Giving you choice** with access to a large supplier base of both large industry leaders and specialist SMEs
- > Sharing best practice with a network

of peers: members have access to a wide range of value-added benefits such as free events\*, participation in knowledge networks and access to advice and guidance from our team.

- > **Tailored support, analysis and insight for your institution** from our business intelligence experts\*
- > **Guaranteed compliance** from our suppliers

- > Keeping you up to date with the **latest information on frameworks, events and sector changes**
- > **Arrangements with other organisations, like Consortium Procurement and Pagabo**, who provide their own frameworks covering areas in addition to those available from SUPC.





> **Saving you time and money with access to a range of enhanced services at discounted rates** to support your procurement team including:

- + Credit-checking services available through Creditsafe
- + Procurement training through the Higher Education Procurement Association (HEPA)
- + Mental Health First Aid Training

- + Supplier sustainability management through NETpositive Software
- + Coaching and professional development support for procurement and finance leaders.

> And finally, **by using our agreements, members generated over £1.4m in marketing premiums last year**, and this is returned directly back to members. Over the past year,

a significant number of SUPC members covered the cost of their annual SUPC membership through returned marketing premium.

\* These services are only available to our Full and Associate Members.

[Contact us](#) to find out more about how the SUMS Group can help your university.







SUPC is an operating unit of Southern Universities Management Services, a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 02732244 Charity Number 1042175 Registered office as below.

Financial Statements Copies of Southern Universities Management Services audited Directors' Report and Financial Statements are available from [supc@reading.ac.uk](mailto:supc@reading.ac.uk) or on our website at [www.supc.ac.uk](http://www.supc.ac.uk).

You can find our Modern Slavery Statement on our homepage.

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