

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Queen's University of Belfast - Economic and environmental benefit from print management

The University has been spending £700,000 a year on external print and design contracts. It now expects to save 24-46% of this - and reduce the administrative burden of procurement - following the appointment of a single print management supplier, CDS.

Although value for money was the main driver of change, environmental concerns were prominent throughout the process. Respondents to the stage 1 tender were required to fill in a questionnaire on their environmental impacts and management. This gave a better picture of the University's overall impacts, and opportunities for improvement. The stage 2 tender for shortlisted companies then had a detailed annex on the University's environmental requirements, which was an important element in evaluating responses.



Julie-Anne McGregor and Adrian Davis

The final contract with CDS requires the company to support reductions in print impacts. It provides information, and gives advice, on sustainable printing methods and materials, and opportunities to reduce wastage and other impacts through better layout, use of electronic proofing, and other means. CDS is also required to report performance on environmental issues such as levels of wastage in its monthly report to the University. The reporting and management structure has been set up in such a way that it meets the requirements of the environmental management standard, ISO 14001, which the Estates and Purchasing Departments hope to achieve in 2006. As well as these formal environmental components, the contract also creates environmental benefit 'naturally'. For example, the provision of centralised design templates means that less proofing of different versions is required, whilst simpler on-line ordering means that administrative paper trails are reduced.

These benefits convince Adrian Davis, the University's Environmental Manager, that "our move to a single print management contract - which is unusual amongst UK universities - shows that economic and environmental improvement can go hand in hand. However, this will only happen if environment is considered right at the start of any change processes. Fortunately, my colleague Julie-Anne McGregor, a senior buyer in the Purchasing Department, recognised this from the start."

Judges' Comments on Sustainable Procurement (continued)

Building environment into mainstream procurement processes in a way that be replicated through the sector has also been achieved admirably at Queen's University of Belfast - in this case for print and design. It is a very successful demonstration of how changes in mainstream business activities provide opportunities for environmental benefit, and how these opportunities can be achieved by giving the topic a high profile and having a committed champion. The result is better environmental information and advice to customers and, partly as a result, reduced printing and wastage. It also demonstrates the scope for universities to influence the environmental actions of their suppliers.