



THE CONSORTIUM
ACADEMY TRUST

Shaping Positive Futures

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Linked Documents and Policies	Financial Levels of Authority Staff Code of Conduct Financial Regulations The Academy Trust Handbook Department for Education (DfE) guidance on buying procedures and procurement law Procurement Act 2023 and 2025 update.
Equality Impact Statement	Equality Impact Statement: The Trust uses Equality Impact Assessments to consider policies and processes focussing on fairness, access and inclusion and how different groups might be affected. This includes the requirement to make reasonable consideration and adjustments to account for the individual needs of employees. This is part of our duty under the Equality Act (2010).

The Consortium Academy Trust (TCAT) An Exempt Charity Limited by Guarantee Company Number 07665828

This document can only be considered valid when viewed on The Consortium Academy Trust website. If the copy is printed or downloaded and saved elsewhere the Policy date should be cross referenced to ensure the current document is referenced. The linked policies can be viewed at www.consortiumTrust.co.uk

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Policy Statement

1 Why the Policy Is Needed

The Consortium Academy Trust (The Trust) must achieve the best value for money from all services or goods it procures. Purchases should follow the general principles of:

- Value for Money: All purchases should demonstrate the best value for money in terms of quality, quantity, and price, ensuring the Trust's resources are used effectively.
- Probity: Ensure no corruption or private gain is involved in any contractual relationships. This includes avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring transparency.
- Accountability - the Chief Executive Officer (Accounting Officer) and the Trustees are accountable for Trust expenditure and the conduct of its affairs. The CEO will ensure that procurement processes are proportionate to the value, complexity and risks associated with each particular requirement
- Transparency: All procurement processes should be transparent, including the tendering process, evaluation criteria, and contract award.
- Fairness and Non-discrimination: The procurement process should be fair and non-discriminatory, ensuring all suppliers have an equal opportunity to compete.
- Compliance: The policy must adhere to relevant regulations, such as the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016, the Bribery Act, the Procurement Act 2023 and updated Procurement Regulations 2024, the Modern Slavery Act, and The Academy Trust Handbook.
- To ensure the proper and effective use of public funds at all times when procuring supplies, services or works, the Trust must demonstrate compliance with procurement legislation and the following key principles which underpin the Regulations:
 - Equal Treatment
 - Non-Discrimination
 - Transparency
 - Proportionality

The main purpose of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 is to encourage fair and open competition in order to achieve value for money. They set out the requirements and procedures which need to be followed when advertising, tendering, and awarding contracts when their value exceeds set thresholds.

- In addition, procurement practices are informed by the Trust's on-going commitment to environmental sustainability. This criterion within the procurement process may include an assessment of supplier environmental policies and certifications, the requirement for eco-friendly materials and packaging, local sourcing and consideration of the Circular Economy (re-use, recycle, refurbish.)

2 What the Policy is About

This policy details the full Trust procurement process. It explains purchase thresholds and approval authority levels for purchasing. Essential preparation prior to purchase and the various routes to buy are detailed. The frameworks and systems approved for procurement are explained together with the rationale for assessing procurement bids. The process for raising purchase orders is identified.

The Trust Procurement Policy seeks to achieve the best value outcomes for the Trust as a whole and aims to provide clarity on procurement activity. The Procurement Function acts as a service to support staff across the Trust and aims to respond to any questions and queries in a timely manner.

3 What the Policy Will Achieve

This policy aims to ensure that:

- The Trust's funds are used only in accordance with the law, its Articles of Association, its funding agreement and the Academy Trust Handbook
- Value for money (economy, efficiency and effectiveness) is achieved.
- Conflicts of interest are managed adequately and appropriately.
- The Trust has open and transparent procurement procedures.
- All staff involved in procurement are aware of the procedures they must follow.
- Procurement procedures are compliant with procurement legislation.

1 Purchase Thresholds

1.1 Low to high-value purchase thresholds

Purchase levels are divided into the following:

- Low-value purchase: up to £5,000 excluding VAT
- Medium-value purchase: £5,001 – £170,000 excluding VAT
- High-value purchase: over £170,000 excluding VAT

1.2 Public procurement threshold

If it is estimated that the cost of a contract is near to or above the threshold for public procurement spending, the Trust will ensure it runs a buying process compliant with the Procurement Act 2023. The current threshold for all goods and most services is **£214,904 inclusive of VAT**.

2 Thresholds for authorisation Title

The thresholds for authorisation are set out in the Financial Levels of Authority document and are also summarised here:

Value	Delegated Authority	Comment
up to £5,000	Budget holder	If within approved budget level: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ A fully-completed purchase requisition is required
up to £10,000	Operations Manager /Director of Infrastructure	◦ At least 3 written quotations are required. (Only one quote required for building services up to £10k)
up to £20,000	Headteacher / Shared Services SLT Directors	
up to £35,000	Headteacher & Director of Finance (Shared Service budget only Director of Finance)	
up to £170,000	CEO	
above £170,000	Trust Board	

To align with the new regulations, all procurement activities should consider environmental and social impacts.

3 Routine Purchasing

Routine purchasing is the transactional process of acquiring goods or services. Purchasing within the Trust relates to goods or services of lower value, which are purchased regularly and where clear established buying routes which offer value for money and reliable delivery are available.

3.1 A quotation(s) must always be obtained before any order is placed unless the order is under £5,000.

Where expenditure is under £5000, a formal written quote is not required. The requirement for such purchases, however, is that whichever supplier is selected, best value will be obtained. In this instance, the purchase requisition will serve the same purpose as the written quote.

All purchases should consider sustainability criteria, such as energy efficiency, recyclability, and supplier sustainability credentials.

3.2 All requisitions from budget holders must be made using the agreed purchasing system of the Trust, in line with the **Trust Financial Levels of Authority** and the **Trust Finance Regulations**.

3.3 Once approved by the budget holder, the purchase requisition must be submitted to the shared services Finance Department for initial review. The Shared Services Finance Department will then place the order directly with the supplier. Where the expenditure is £5,000 or over, the formal quotation must also be submitted.

Any requisition which is not fully completed, and, for expenditure of £5,000 or over, does not include the quotation, will not be processed.

3.4 Quotes will be retained digitally on the Trust finance platform for audit purposes by the Trust Shared Services Finance Department.

3.5 The Trust may choose to follow the tendering process for expenditure below £170,000 if it is deemed that the process will provide the best selection of potential suppliers. The process may be via a framework or an open tender. In such cases, the tendering process is available as a guide.

4 Routes to Buy

As a publicly funded body the Trust needs defined Routes to Buy to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficient use of public resources, whilst also complying with legal and regulatory requirements.

Following DfE guidance on buying for schools the Trust will follow 1 of the 4 Routes to Buy, according to the value of the contract.

➤ **Route 1:** Use catalogues (low value generic goods)

- › **Route 2:** Use framework agreement (all values)
- › **Route 3:** get quotes from at least 3 suppliers (medium value over £5,000)
- › **Route 4:** run a tendering process compliant with Procurement Act 2023 and 2025 updated regulations (applies to medium values below threshold and high value above public procurement threshold)

Routes 3 and 4 will only be used if the Trust cannot meet their requirements through a framework agreement or the Trust wishes to pursue alternative arrangements.

4.1 Catalogues for purchasing low value goods (route 1)

To buy goods under the low value threshold detailed in 1.1, the Trust will use catalogues (where available) to compare similar products and choose the supplier that meets their requirements and offers best value for money.

If possible, the Trust will use the following DfE-approved catalogues:

[CCS purchasing platform](#) – technology products including laptops, smartphones, accessories and software, and office machines that print, scan, or copy (multi-functional devices)

[ESPO](#) – a range of goods including stationery, art and crafts, classroom resources, furniture, office essentials, presentation and display equipment

[YPO procurement product catalogue](#) – a range of products from UK suppliers, including pens and paper, storage, computers, audio visual equipment, and furniture

Approval for the purchase requisition must be sought from the budget holder and converted to a purchase order before confirming any orders with the chosen supplier.

4.2 Framework agreements (route 2)

Where possible, we will use a framework agreement to contract suppliers for purchases of all values.

Framework agreements are arrangements that a contracting authority, such as a public sector buying organisation, makes with suppliers. Framework agreements are the preferred route since:

- They have already been through a competitive tender process.
- They have favourable terms and conditions.
- The framework provider may offer advice and support.

Depending on the framework chosen, the Trust will either pick the best value supplier from a list or run a mini-competition between listed suppliers, where each supplier will be asked to submit their bid, with the Trust selecting the most advantageous submission. In either case, the Trust will follow the DfE guidance on procurement to ensure good practice. The reasons for the choice of framework, and for the choice of supplier, will be clearly recorded for transparency.

The decision as to whether to use a framework agreement or a full tender process will be advised by the Procurement Officer and agreed with either the Director of Finance or appropriate Head of Service area.

4.3 Obtaining quotes for medium-value purchases (route 3)

The Trust will use this process if requirements cannot be met through a framework or pre-approved catalogues.

Quotes will be secured from at least 3 suppliers. These will be assessed following the process set out in section 6.

- All suppliers will be provided with the same information which will include:
- The specification
- Date by which the quote is required
- When the decision will be made
- How the supplier can ask questions about the buying request or the Trust process
- If needed, a link to the Trust's terms and conditions.

4.4 Tendering for both medium value purchases and high-value purchases over the public procurement threshold (route 4)

Detailed in Section 5 Tendering Process

The Trust will follow this process if our needs cannot be met through a framework agreement, where the purchase may be difficult to source, or where there is a need to source the widest range of suppliers. Before proceeding, the Trust will ensure that the process is compliant with the Procurement Act 2023.

To ensure that the process secures most advantageous tender the Trust will follow DfE guidance and seek specialist support as necessary as per the nature of the procurement.

All members of staff involved in this process are recommended to complete appropriate training on the Procurement Act 2023 using this Cabinet Office devised learning and development package.

5.0 Tendering process

All purchases and contracts with a value of greater than £214,904 including VAT must be put out to formal tender. In addition, the Trust may decide to adopt a tender process for procurement below this stated value if it is perceived that this will secure a larger range of potential bids. The following procedures must be followed in such circumstances:

5.1 Tender Specification

A specification will be prepared with the advice and support of the Procurement Officer, authorised by the Trust Strategic Leadership Team and published using the Trust Procurement portal in line with the terms of the 2023 Procurement Act. It is anticipated that, for any major building works or high value services, the services of professional agents may be engaged to deal with the handling of specifications and suitability to tender. Suppliers must provide information on their sustainability practices and how they align with the Trust's sustainability goals.

The specification will include:

- An introduction to the project
- Product/works/service description
- The scope and objectives of the project
- Technical specifications
- Quantity and Quality required
- Delivery schedule
- Terms and conditions of the tender
- The form and date of response to the Trust, or in the case of building works, to the architect or quantity surveyor.

5.2 Contract value

The value of a contract will be determined by calculating the estimated whole-life value of the goods, works or services, including:

- The price of the goods, works or services
- VAT
- Delivery charges
- Ongoing maintenance costs
- Running costs
- Cost of removing and disposing of an item or service when it's no longer required
- Extension periods
- Detail of acceptable expenses which may be incurred in the delivery of the contract

For fixed term contracts with an option to extend the term, the value of the contract will be the price of the fixed term plus the potential extension period.

The Trust will not divide a single contract into smaller contracts to bypass the purchase thresholds (see section 2).

5.3 Publishing the Tender

To initiate the procurement the Trust will publish a tender notice. This notice will be publicly accessible and provide details of the following:

- The specification
- Evaluation criteria
- Submission deadlines, including timeframe for the clarification period.

The tender notice will be published by the Procurement Officer at least 25 days before the submission deadline to ensure adequate time for suppliers to prepare their bids.

Tenders will be published and all responses will be received via the Trust's Procurement portal.

There will be a clarification period, which will close a week before the closing date for tender submissions, to allow potential suppliers to seek clarification on the procurement requirements and seek further information. Suppliers must submit their questions via the Trust Procurement portal. Questions and responses will be documented and shared on the Trust portal with all interested suppliers to ensure transparency and equal access to information.

Bids must be submitted by the deadline specified in the tender notice. Any late submissions will not be considered.

Tenders will be assessed following the process set out in section 6, taking into account appropriate legal advice if necessary and additional requirements for purchases over the public procurement threshold.

5.4 Use of Trust Procurement platform

All Trust tenders will be published using the Trust procurement platform. Where appropriate, the suppliers invited to tender should be drawn from an approved list or from those agreed with the Trust-appointed architect, or other appropriate qualified independent professional.

The invitations to tender will include:

- The specification
- The contract value
- Contract Terms

5.5 Contractor / Supplier queries

All queries will only be accepted through the Trust Procurement portal with responses from the Trust visible to all potential bidders for transparency.

No tenderers will be allowed to amend the tender after the time fixed for receipt.

6. Assessment, Evaluation and Moderation of bids

Before beginning a buying process that requires bids to be assessed (routes 1, 3, and 4), the Trust will determine appropriate award criteria, which will be clear in the tender documentation, to decide which bid best meets the specification and which is the most advantageous tender.

The exact criteria will vary depending on the chosen procurement route.

The assessment of bids will take place using the Trust Procurement platform. Each criterion will be assigned:

- A range of scores – such as 1 to 5, with 5 the highest score
- Weighting – a figure to multiply the score depending on the importance of the criterion

The following points will be considered as part of the assessment process:

- The overall price and the individual items or services which make up that price;
- Whether there are any 'hidden' costs; that is additional costs which the Trust will have to incur to obtain a satisfactory product/service;
- Whether there is scope for negotiation, while being fair to all tenderers;
- The qualifications and experience of the supplier and, where appropriate their staff, including membership of professional associations;
- Compliance with the technical requirements, including safeguarding requirements, laid down by the Trust;
- The supplier's own quality assurance procedures:
- The financial status of the supplier;
- References from other establishments;
- Understanding of and compliance with Health & Safety, CDM regulations and Child Protection issues relating to working on an educational site.
- To what extent, where appropriate, the supplier can evidence sustainable credentials.

6.1 Procurement of building works

In the case of building works, where the tendering process is being carried out by the architect or quantity surveyor, they will be responsible for checking the documents before making a recommendation to the Trust.

6.2 Assessment and moderation of bids

The assessment of bids will be undertaken independently by a team of no less than 3 evaluators using the secure Trust procurement platform. The weighted scoring will be calculated by the procurement platform and a moderation process will then take place, chaired by an independent member of the senior team, where any significant differences in scores are explored. This process will determine a final agreed score.

The Trust will:

- Not view any bids before the deadline
- Avoid any potential conflicts of interest.
- Treat all bids/quotes fairly and equally.
- Record how decisions are made.
- Keep confidential, secure, auditable records.
- Award the contract to the highest scoring bidder.

6.3 Notification of Award

The Trust will notify both successful and unsuccessful bidders in accordance with the notification requirements specified in the tender document.

Any “stand-still” period will be notified clearly.

A standstill period in procurement is a designated timeframe during which the awarding authority, (in this case, the Trust,) must wait before finalising a contract with the successful bidder. This period allows unsuccessful bidders to review the decision and, if necessary, raise any concerns or challenges regarding the procurement process. The standstill period is intended to ensure transparency and fairness in the procurement process.

6.4 Contract finalisation

The Trust will work closely with the winning bidder to ensure a smooth transition from the bidding process to contract execution.

There will be no commitments, and no work shall begin until both parties have signed the contract.

6.4.1 Full records must be kept of each tender evaluation and a report should be prepared by the Director of Finance (or other named individual) for the Finance, People & Resources Committee and Trust Board highlighting any issues and recommending a decision.

In all cases, the selection will be made based on most advantageous tender.

7 Conflicts of interest

Any potential conflicts of interest should be identified before starting the procurement process. This ensures that all decisions and actions taken during the procurement process are free from personal bias and do not unfairly favour any individual or company connected with the Trust. Trust staff working within the procurement process are bound by the Trust Code of Conduct.

8 Managing contracts

Contract renewals and extensions will be monitored by the Trust Procurement Officer who will liaise with the appropriate Head of Service / Department prior to the renewal date. The decision on whether to renew or start a new procurement process will be made by the budget holder with support from the Trust Procurement Officer with additional support from Shared Services where appropriate.

Contract Performance Management will be undertaken by the nominated lead for the contract with input from the Procurement Officer and, where appropriate, Shared Services additional support.

Contract Performance Management will be a structured and continuous process to ensure that all contractual obligations are met and that the Trust receives the expected value, quality and timely delivery from its contracts. Any issues or discrepancies will be promptly addressed through open communication with the suppliers. Additionally, performance metrics and feedback from relevant stakeholders will be used to assess the effectiveness of the contracts and make necessary adjustments.

9 Policy Implementation and Review

The Director of Finance is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the board every 2 years. It will also be reviewed whenever public procurement thresholds or legislation changes.