

**Higher Education Authority**

**Corporate Procurement Plan**

**2023-2026**

Endorsed by SMT: 8 November 2022

Approved by Board: 13 December 2022

## **Introduction**

The HEA is committed to ensuring that procurement activities are discharged in line with procurement rules and procedures. These are outlined in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Public Spending Code, the National Public Procurement Policy Framework and procurement guidelines and documents published by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) and in EU and National legislation.

## **Procurement Objectives**

- Achieve value for money
- Ensure procurement transactions and decisions are fair, transparent, and equitable
- Support operational requirements of the HEA
- Facilitate environmental and social considerations
- Ensure compliance with procurement directives, legislation, circulars, and other requirements
- Ensure adherence to the HEA's procurement policies and procedures
- Support the ongoing development of the HEA's procurement processes

## **Procurement Function**

Procurement is a key organisational function, and the HEA recognises the importance of staff involved in the procurement process having a good understanding of public sector accountability and best practice in the methods and processes involved, including the use of framework agreements. It is the HEA's practice to avail of OGP or other central frameworks where possible. Duly approved purchase orders are required in advance of ordering any goods or services on behalf of the HEA. The HEA has implemented the following improvements since the last plan:

- Increased oversight, monitoring and reporting of procurement
- Updated procurement policy and procedures
- Greater training and awareness of staff on procurement arrangements
- Active tendering resulting in increased number of supplier contracts in place
- Reviewed and updated procurement approval limits with board approval
- Availed of the assistance of third-party procurement advice as necessary

No non-compliant procurement over €25,000 was reported in the HEA for 2020 or 2021.

The responsibility for procurement is devolved across the HEA with each Section responsible for procuring its own products and services. Oversight and monitoring of

the procurement process is performed by the Finance team as well as providing advice and guidance to staff. Additional support is provided by an external procurement advisor. Regular procurement updates are provided to the Audit and Risk Committee.

The HEA has developed a Procurement Policy and Procurement Procedures which are available to staff on the intranet site. These procedures ensure a consistent and clear approach to all procurement activities. Details of the HEA’s procurement processes are advised to all new staff as part of their induction training.

Central procurement frameworks are used where possible and tenders for contracts above €25,000 are advertised on eTenders where there is no procurement framework.

### Expenditure Overview and Analysis

Based on an analysis of the HEA’s 2021 expenditure supplier payments amounted to €3.96m. This excludes pay and pension costs for employees and pensioners and other non-procured expenditure.

The top 10 suppliers accounted for 57% of procured expenditure, details as follows:

Supplier	Amount €	Purpose
Savills Commercial (Ireland) Ltd	972,528	Rent and Service Charges
Mazars	248,348	External reviews and advice
Hartley People Ltd	213,384	Temporary staff
Irish Universities Association (IUA)	180,000	Administration of the Irish Marie S Curie Office (160k), Sponsorship of national higher education consent awareness-raising campaign (20k)
OECD	145,000	Review of Technological University Organisation Structures
Micromail	121,607	IT Software licenses
Alice PR and Events Ltd	106,866	Communications and Public Relations
Advance HE	99,944	Athena Swan Charter
International Graduate Insight Group	87,849	Irish Survey of Student Engagement Services
Ernst and Young	82,505	Business Process Review
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,258,031</b>	

The HEA processed 988 invoices in 2021. Of these 83% (816) were for under €5,000.

By 2026 the HEA is expected to increase procurement to c.€8.7m from 2021 levels. This is primarily due to the increase in the HEA’s responsibilities outlined in the HEA Act 2022

which will result in an increase in the overall size and scope of the HEA activities.

## High Level Goals

### Goal 1

The HEA will ensure that there is a coherent and consistent approach to procurement across the organisation.

Goal 1 will be progressed through the following actions:

- Procurement activities will be sufficiently resourced with appropriately experienced staff
- Training will be provided to staff engaged in procurement activities
- Avail of central frameworks where possible
- Tendering for supplies/services over €25k if suitable central frameworks not in place
- Relevant changes to procurement regulations, policies or procedures will be communicated to staff

### Goal 2

The HEA will ensure that it follows best procurement practice through its processes and procedures when purchasing goods and services.

Goal 2 will be progressed through the following actions:

- Procurement Policy and Procedures will be reviewed and updated as necessary
- Contract expiry dates will be kept under review to ensure timely extensions or retendering
- Advice and direction will be sought from the OGP as necessary
- External procurement expertise will be used as required to ensure HEA's compliance with its obligations

### Goal 3

The HEA will ensure that there are appropriate levels of oversight in place to ensure that its procurement obligations are adhered to.

Goal 3 will be progressed through the following actions:

- Proactive monitoring of procurement compliance by Finance team
- Regular Procurement updates provided to the Audit and Risk committee
- Any non-compliant procurement over €25,000 disclosed in HEA's annual financial statements
- Annual internal audit undertaken on the system of internal control which includes a review of procurement
- Board approval is required for all procurement contracts over €150,000

## Key Dependencies

- Appropriately experienced resources in Finance team
- Ongoing commitment from staff involved in procurement process
- Ongoing engagement with the OGP

### Implementation Plan

**Goal 1** Ensure that there is a coherent and consistent approach to procurement across the organisation.

Action	Delivery
Procurement activities will be sufficiently resourced with appropriately experienced staff	A dedicated procurement resource will be recruited by Q3 2023.
Training will be provided to staff engaged in procurement activities	Training needs assessed on an ongoing basis and regular training provided to staff
Avail of central frameworks where possible	Ongoing review of OGP and other central frameworks
Tendering for supplies/services over €25k if suitable central frameworks not in place	Ongoing review of supplies and services to ensure tendering instigated and contracts awarded
Relevant changes to procurement regulations, policies or procedures will be communicated to staff	Staff will be provided with updates on changes to procurement guidelines as they arise

**Goal 2** Ensure that the HEA follows best procurement practice through its processes and procedures when purchasing goods and services.

Action	Delivery
Procurement Policy and Procedures will be reviewed and updated as necessary	Ongoing. Last review of the Procurement Policy was in December 2021. The procurement procedures were updated in September 2021.
Contract expiry dates will be kept under review to ensure timely extensions or retendering	Contract expiry dates reviewed on a quarterly basis
Advice and direction will be sought from the OGP as necessary	OGP Client Service support contacted as required for advice and assistance
External procurement expertise will be used as required to ensure the HEA's	An external procurement advisor has been appointed. This service will be drawn down when necessary. This

compliance with its obligations	contract is in place until Nov'23 and will be retendered in Q3 2023.
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**Goal 3** Ensure that there are appropriate levels of oversight in place to ensure that the HEA's procurement obligations are adhered to.

Action	Delivery
Proactive monitoring of procurement compliance by the Finance team	All high-level expenditure reviewed on an ongoing basis
Regular Procurement updates provided to the Audit and Risk committee	Procurement Updates are a recurring agenda item for Audit and Risk Committee meetings
Any non-compliant procurement over €25,000 disclosed in the HEA's annual financial statements	A report on non-compliant procurement will be included in the statement of internal controls, which forms part of the annual financial statements. No non-compliance reported in 2020 or 2021 financial statements
Annual internal audit undertaken on the system of internal control which includes a review of procurement	The HEA's internal auditors carry out a review of internal controls annually including procurement. The C&AG review procurement as part of their external audit.
Board approval is required for all procurement contracts over €150,000	All procurement contracts over €150,000 are brought to HEA board for approval