Sustainable Procurement at the University of Edinburgh

A guide for our electronics suppliers

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Social Responsibility and Sustainability

Sustainable Procurement at the University of Edinburgh

A guide for our electronics suppliers

Introduction

This document aims to review sustainability and social responsibility risks in the electronics equipment sector. It introduces our procurement priorities and policies for this sector and suggests possible strategies for improving the sustainability of your business. Here we build on our general guidance about sustainable procurement at the University, for suppliers from all sectors.

Contents

Social responsibility and sustainability risks in the electronics sector

Social responsibility and sustainability risks in the electronics sector include

- Risks to environmental sustainability and biodiversity
- Risks to fairness, safety and human rights in labour, operations and governance

Electronics can have long and complex supply chains, involving multiple sustainability and social responsibility risks from raw materials extraction, manufacture, transport, use and disposal. Here we briefly highlight some of the biggest risk in the sector. Some risks may be directly relevant to your business, while others could apply to your supply chains or the use of your products.

Risks from raw materials extraction:

- Risks to biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions from conversion of natural habitats (e.g. deforestation)
- Pollution from extraction and refining
- Violation of local land rights in the conversion of land for natural resource production and extraction
- Use of so-called conflict minerals (notably tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold) sold or traded by armed groups and used to fund conflict
- Human rights abuses, including forced labour and child labour
- Unsafe working conditions, such as in mining
- Unfair labour practices, including salaries that fall below living wage, excessive / involuntary overtime, use of insecure contracts and discrimination based on gender or other characteristics

Risks from manufacture:

- Use of finite raw materials such as rare earth minerals
- Pollution from industrial processes
- Energy and water used in manufacturing
- Human rights abuses, including forced labour and child labour
- Unsafe working conditions, including exposure to chemicals or machinery
- Unfair labour practices, including salaries that fall below living wage, excessive / involuntary overtime, use of insecure contracts and discrimination based on gender or other characteristics

Risks from transport, use and disposal:

- Greenhouse gas emissions from transport
- Greenhouse gas emissions from product use
- Waste generated from non-recyclable packaging
- Pollution from incorrect disposal of waste electrical and electronic equipment (which may contain hazardous materials)

Our targets in procurement of electronics

In all procurements, where appropriate, we:

- Seek to embed our community benefits requirements in line with our [Community Benefits in Procurement Policy](#)
- Promote [Fair Work](#) through procurement (as an accredited [Living Wage](#) organisation, we strongly encourage our suppliers to pay UK-based workers at least the Living Wage, currently £9/hr, in our contracts)
- Engage with suppliers on strategic issues to promote innovation, social inclusion, and better environmental performance, for instance through work on the [Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal](#), leading a programme of [Data Driven Innovation](#) (DDI). Please write to ddi@ed.ac.uk for more info about the DDI programme.

Through our use of the Scottish Government's Sustainable Public Procurement Prioritisation Tool (SPPPT), we have identified [key targets for improving the social responsibility and sustainability of our electronics procurements](#). We want to **work with you** towards these targets:

Targeting environmental sustainability and biodiversity risks:

- Procuring longer lifespan and low energy products
- Reducing the number of devices in use by centralising resources
- Promoting reuse and recycling of equipment
    - For example, we have developed [Waste Strategy](#), which commits us to reusing IT equipment wherever possible
    - Sharing electronic equipment within the University via our [WARPit](#)portal and [PC Reuse Project](#)
    - Including supplier "take-back" schemes for redundant equipment in contracts
- Reducing the amount of non-recyclable packaging on the products we buy, and seeking packaging made from recycled materials

Targeting risks to fairness, safety and human rights in labour, operations and governance:

- Following the University's lead, encouraging our suppliers to pay the living wage and eliminate the use of inappropriate zero hours contracts
- Researching human rights and labour rights risks in our electronics supply chains and acting to reduce them
    - For example, through our participation in the EU funded [Make ICT Fair](#) project, which aims to improve the lives of workers and those impacted along different stages of the ICT supply chain through research, campaigning, capacity building and advocacy
    - We were a founding member of [Electronics Watch](#), a European monitoring organisation that uses worker-driven monitoring to detect problems in electronics factories
- Following our [Conflict Minerals Policy](#), working to eradicate conflict minerals from our supply chains
    - For example, we have made the [Fairphone](#), which does not contain conflict minerals, available as an option for University staff who are entitled to a mobile phone for work
    - We are working with partners to develop contract terms for the public sector relating to conflict minerals

Taking action to improve the sustainability and social responsibility of your business

Using these targets as a start, there are many ways to pro-actively work towards improving your own sustainability and social responsibility.

Talk to us about ways we could work together to improve the sustainability of products bought by the University.

Research the impacts of your products and supply chains:

- Contact us to participate in a Sustain supply chain sustainability assessment, which will provide tailored and confidential recommendations for your business
- Contact us about hosting a sustainability-themed internship or Living Labs project, to provide students with practical experience and research sustainability questions relevant to your business

Set standards for your own procurements, for example by using Electronics Watch's Contract Conditions and Code of Labour Standards with your suppliers.

Innovate, for example by finding creative ways to increase resource efficiency and circular economy. Here are some organisations that may be able to help**:**

- The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation's projects to support low carbon innovation
- Resource Efficient Scotland's funding, loans and free consultations to help businesses save energy, save water and reduce waste

Make a pledge or become certified, for example to:

- WRAP's Electrical and Electronic Equipment Sustainability Action Plan (ESAP 2025)
- Sustainable Electronics Recycling International's (SERI) R2 Standard for the electronics recycling and refurbishment industry
- The Responsible Minerals Initiative's Responsible Minerals Assurance Process
- The Ethical Trading Initiative's (ETI) Base Code
- Resource Efficient Scotland's Resource Efficiency Pledge
- The Scottish Business Pledge

Look at the resources and training offered by these organisations:

- Electronics Watch's webinars and resources
- WRAP's guidance and tools for sustainable electronics
- The Responsible Minerals Initiative

This publication can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Email: SRS.Department@ed.ac.uk

Phone: 0131 650 4065

© The University of Edinburgh 2018.

The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336.