

# Catering strategy transformation – University of Durham

## Description

As part of a corporate strategy to move to a greener, more sustainable approach to sourcing, and to support SME, local and black and minority ethnic businesses wherever possible, the University decided to embark on a major review of its catering provision. This involved a detailed review over a two year period in which five new contracts were implemented, three of which were for new commodity areas. The contract areas covered were bakery, delicatessen, vegetarian products, wine and catering disposables.

## Benefits

The key benefits of these new contracts include:

- Food miles have been reduced and nutritional standards made more transparent, with restrictions on certain preservatives
- UK assured produce (e.g. Red Tractor certified) has been used in more cases
- Local medium sized enterprises have been able to access parts of the contract (e.g. for bakery and vegetarian products), as well as several small enterprises and ethnic minority businesses
- The needs of the diverse student community have been better met (e.g. Halal products have been included, as have vegan)
- UK based bottling has reduced the carbon impact of wine, and English wines have also been included, as well as Fairtrade wines
- Recycled materials have been increased including recycled napkins, bio-degradable cutlery, and compostable plates and bowls and food packaging.

The use of a limited number of contractors to handle all orders via an e-platform has also saved time and ensured compliance with Carbon Trust standards.

## Critical success factors

The project built on a trusted partnership between the Catering Department and the Procurement Service, which had worked successfully together since 2009 and achieved a Green Gown Award in 2011. There was senior level support for the project and a wish to see contracts evolve and improve. The student and staff experience was central to the project and both have improved as a result of these new contracts.

## Strategic value added by procurement

Procurement brought market management skills, and a recognition that there will always be innovations, changes in requirements, market developments and new processes to contend with. The important factor is to review these changes in order to identify opportunities to

improve and add value to the contract. Not only has the University achieved significant savings, it has also introduced better quality products which are fresher, seasonal and, where possible, locally produced.

### Commendation

*“The Procurement Service played a significant role in the new catering strategy. They delivered new and innovative contracts, which increased value for money for the University, improved environmental performance and improved the student and staff experience.”*

Paulina Lubacz, University Treasurer and Acting Registrar

Source: [‘Procurement as a strategic asset in higher education’](#) report produced for the Efficiency Exchange by John Lakin, July 2013.