

## Frequently asked questions

**Why does Exeter College request a quotation and not a tender?** The College has a statutory obligation under the Government's Best Value Review to seek competitive prices. Generally, it is the level of value and risk that determines if the College asks for a quotation or goes out to tender.

**What is the difference between an 'Invitation to Tender and a quotation?** The College will normally seek three or more written quotations for low value supplies or services. If the nature of the request is complex, has a higher value, or requires a certain specification that requires to be matched, then the College will 'Competitively Tender'.

**What is OJEU?** OJEU is the Official Journal of the European Union. When contracts for supplies and services exceed a specified threshold value, the college must advertise their details in this publication, calling for expressions of interest.

**What is the difference between an Invitation to Tender and a contract?** A tender means a formal invitation to trade and the documents associated with that invitation. A contract is a term used for when parties have reached agreement.

**What is an Invitation to Tender?** This is the process by which the College decides who is the best provider. The tender itself is the completed and priced document that lays out all the terms, conditions, specification and award criteria.

The time allowed for pricing and submitting a tender varies; it is normally around 4 to 6 weeks.

**Can I submit a tender response with my own alternative conditions attached?** No, a tender will only be accepted if it is submitted in accordance with the instructions to tender and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract as stated.

**How will I know what criteria is being used to evaluate a tender?** The criteria will usually be set out in the advertisement for "Expressions of Interest" and in the tender documents.

**My company is new and will be unable to provide three years' audited accounts or names of referees; can I still do business with the College?** Yes, the College does not discourage new businesses. A view will be taken on your company's suitability and any potential risk to the College. Thorough investigations will be made examining your financial status and past performance where possible. You could also be invited to an interview to further examine your suitability.

**If my company is interested in doing business with the College what information do I need to supply?** In the first instance please provide an introductory e-mail or letter to the Head of Finance, outlining the goods or services that you are able to provide. This information will then be forwarded to the department or faculty to assess your suitability for future work as and when quotation or Invitation to Tender documentation is issued.

**Does the College have a policy that favours local businesses?** No, the College does not show favour to any company or individual, although under its responsibility to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area local businesses are encouraged to compete for College contracts. For high value contracts, European procurement regulations require equality of treatment across the European Community.

**If I am unsuccessful, what can you tell me about the winning bid?** We will inform you who was successful and briefly outline the reasons for the award. This could include a number of reasons. For example, you are too costly, you have insufficient skills or lack knowledge, you may have failed to understand what is required or failed to complete the documentation correctly. Whatever the reason, if you ask for feedback, we will provide it.

## **How the college buys goods and services**

The College's requirements are met in a variety of ways ranging from small one off purchases to multi million pound service contracts. The procurement process must comply with European Union regulations, UK law and the College's own Financial Procedures and Regulations which lay down the procedures to be followed for obtaining quotations, tendering and awarding contracts.

**European Union regulations** European Union directives are part of UK law and apply to all public sector contracts over a certain financial threshold. The thresholds, which are reviewed every two years, are £173,934 for supplies and services contracts, and £4,348,350 for works contracts.

Where contracts or one-off purchases are above these thresholds the College is required to follow specific procedures, including the placing of a tender notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) and to follow prescribed tender procedures, which can be:

- Open Procedure - whereby anyone is invited to tender
- Restricted Procedure - where an initial pre-qualification questionnaire is completed by potential suppliers from which a shortlist is drawn and invited to tender
- Negotiated Procedure - which is permitted in certain circumstances and allows for contracts to be negotiated with a supplier
- Competitive Dialogue - where dialogue is entered into with potential suppliers with the aim of developing a suitable solution that meets the need of the College

## **Thresholds for the advertisement and award of contracts under the College's financial regulations**

**Under £5,000:** The budget holder shall have the discretion to decide whether or not to obtain quotations, but value-for-money must always be obtained

**Between £5,000 and £100,000:** The budget holder shall be required to obtain at least three quotations

**Between £100,000 and £173,934:** Tenders will be invited from a minimum of three suppliers.

**Over £173,934:** Tenders will be invited from a minimum of four suppliers. A notice will be placed in OJEU