

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE 32**

**Service Provider Selection and Oversight for Research Studies**

<b>Version:</b>	4.0
<b>Approval Date:</b>	17/12/2025
<b>Effective Date:</b>	31/12/2025
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<b>Revision Chronology:</b>	<b>Effective date:</b>	<b>Reason for change:</b>
Version 4.0	31 December 2025	Biennial Review. Update to title and terminology based on ICH GCP E6R3: Suppliers/vendors referred to as service providers. Update to branding & template. Text streamlined.
Version 3.0	08 November 2023	Biennial review: Change to new format. Updates to links and minor amends to text including purchasing of new software or renewing existing software.
Version 2.0	18 March 2021	Biennial review: Change to new format. Minor amends to text.
Version 1.0	22 January 2019	



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## 1 Purpose and Scope

To outline procedures for selecting service providers when purchasing goods or services for research projects, or for selecting, approving and monitoring sub-contractors. A service provider may also be referred to as a supplier or vendor.

It is applicable to all University of Warwick staff involved in the procurement of goods and/or services to be used in sponsored research projects in line with university financial procedures.

## 2 Abbreviations

CI	Chief Investigator
FP	Financial Procedure
IDG	Information Digital Group
QA	Quality Assurance
R&IS	Research & Impact Services
SoECAT	Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TMF	Trial Master File
TSC	Trial Steering Committee
UoW	University of Warwick
WCTU	Warwick Clinical trials Unit

## 3 Definitions

Service Provider	A person or organisation providing something needed to fulfil trial-related activities.
Tendering	Process by which an organisation needing goods/services invites other parties to submit a proposal or bid to provide them
Procurement	Process by which an organisation acquires the products or services it needs from another organisation

## 4 Background

UoW is responsible for ensuring consistency and quality of goods/services provided by service providers. Procedures are in place to ensure that goods/services are purchased in accordance with University Financial Regulations and [Anti-Financial Crime Policies](#).

Purchases must represent sound business practice and value for money, whilst adhering to regulations applicable to the goods/services to be purchased.

Examples of the types of goods/services which may be purchased for a research project include:

- Equipment
- Courier services
- Software
- Drug supply, packaging, labelling and distribution services,
- Off-site archiving
- Sub-contractor services

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## 5 Responsibilities

CI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify services and /or goods required to deliver the study</li> <li>Give the final decision on whether the service provider is appropriate</li> </ul>
Research Lead/Trial Manager/Senior Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaise with service providers to define requirements and obtain quotes</li> <li>Ensure adherence to University Financial Regulations</li> <li>Ongoing review of service provider activities</li> <li>Retain documentation of contracts/agreements and communications</li> </ul>
Procurement Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce contracts in accordance with University Financial Regulations (when involved in the process of selecting and approving external service providers)</li> <li>Ensure responsibilities are clearly defined.</li> </ul>
R&IS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide advice on Funder requirements to assist Procurement Services where they are dealing with contracts</li> <li>Produce contracts for all other research-related contracts (if no involvement from Procurement Services)</li> <li>Ensure responsibilities are clearly defined.</li> </ul>
Sponsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the CI in the identification of a suitable service provider providing information where available</li> <li>Oversight of goods/services procured</li> <li>Verify suitability of vendors selected by the CI prior to their use</li> </ul>

## 6 When

At the costings stage, identify the need for products or services and obtain quotations to ensure adequate funding in the grant application. Service provider selection may occur after the grant is awarded. As this process is lengthy, include sufficient time in the project plan for selection and contract setup. Selection may occur if needs or resources change. The sponsor must verify and document provider suitability before use. The study team should continuously review the provider’s activities throughout their involvement.

## 7 How

UoW staff involved in purchasing goods and/or services must familiarise themselves with and comply with the requirements of the [University Financial Procedure 15](#).

### 7.1 Identify the need for the product or service

The following must be considered:

- Availability and allocation of funds in the grant (including the potential for extra costs e.g., if recruitment target is not reached and existing stock has expired)
- Specific procurement requirements made by the funding body (e.g., number of quotes required, threshold for tendering) to ensure contractual obligations are met
- Application of the UoW Financial Regulations, particularly with respect to internal and external approved suppliers, and thresholds for tendering
- Timeframes

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- Scope of work/goods required
- Involvement of other University Departments, e.g., R&IS, Procurement Services

Sufficient funding must be identified for the **total spend** before starting this process. Also consider if the funding needs to be considered within the SoECAT..

N.B. If you are purchasing new software or renewing existing software - e.g., Twilio or a new 3rd party App where any personal identifiable data will be processed, follow the software procurement process:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/its/service-support/software/purchasing>

Contact: <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/idg>

Or visit the [self-service portal](#)

IDG will triage this to determine if further security or financial checks need to be undertaken before the procurement process is completed. They will work with the potential provider to determine if they have appropriate organisational, technical and security measures to undertake the activity in line with data protection regulations. This process should be started as early as possible.

## 7.2 Identify potential providers

FP15 requires that where an internal provider exists, they must be used unless express approval is provided by [finregs@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:finregs@warwick.ac.uk). Where a university-approved service provider already exists, they should be used. Where an internal provider or approved service provider does not exist, the quotation and tender thresholds in FP15 should be followed.

For all potential service providers, identify which providers will most likely meet the operational need, taking the following into consideration:

- Pre-approved/preferred service providers
- Ability to meet specifications
- Previous experience with the provider
- Ability to offer a competitive quote
- Website searches
- Recommendations/references from others

The sponsor should have access to relevant information (e.g. service provider SOPs) for selection purposes.

## 7.3 Evaluate potential providers

Where tenders and quotations are required by FP15, tendering and service provider evaluation would be undertaken. Contact the [Procurement and Insurance Office](#) for tailored guidance.

[https://warwick.ac.uk/services/finance/procurement\\_and\\_insurance/docsandforms/quotes](https://warwick.ac.uk/services/finance/procurement_and_insurance/docsandforms/quotes)

Where a managed tender process is not required the suitability of potential providers should be assessed by using the Vendor Assessment questionnaire ([T59](#)) and any one or a combination of the following methods, as appropriate:

- Review marketing materials and information from websites
- Request that the provider responds to a quality/vendor questionnaire
- Review the provider's policies, procedures and other internal documentation
- Conduct a site visit/audit

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- Evidence of external quality standards e.g. ISO certification

The sponsor should also be aware of and provide approval of the service provider selected by reviewing and signing off the questionnaire.

#### 7.4 Obtain required contracts

Where Procurement Services has been involved in the process, the contracts will be managed by Procurement Services. R&IS will advise on any appropriate funder requirements to be incorporated into contracts. All other research-related contracts will be dealt with by R&IS. If changes to requirements are needed, a variation to contract may be necessary.

#### 7.5 Conflicts of interest

Where any goods/services are to be purchased from a company in which a university employee (involved in making the purchasing decision) has any financial interest, the interest must be declared to the Head of Department and must be disclosed to the University Finance Director. The individual involved will not be permitted to take part in the procurement procedure. See [FP1](#) for information on conflicts of interest.

#### 7.6 Oversight of vendors

It is important to have oversight of service providers to ensure they are providing their contracted service within the appropriate timeframes and to the appropriate regulatory standards. To maintain oversight, regular meetings and documentation of key decisions is recommended. Consideration should be given to how vendors will be monitored, and visits to conduct independent audits may be considered. Communications, site visits or audits should be documented, and the report filed in the TMF or equivalent.

Service providers should implement appropriate quality management and report to the sponsor incidents which may have an impact on the safety of participants or/and results. If significant repeated non-compliance is identified, the sponsor should consider terminating the service provider’s involvement. The sponsor should notify the regulatory authority and ethics committee as appropriate and take actions to minimise the impact on participants and the reliability of the results.

An end-of-project review should take place to assess the service provider(s) and determine if they are suitable to work with in the future. Feedback to interested parties (e.g., TSC, Governance Committee) should be provided.

## 8 Templates

T59	Service Provider Questionnaire
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