

Procurement Guidance

Use of Online Marketplace Sites (eBay and Similar Platforms)

Purpose

This guidance sets out the University of Huddersfield's position on the use of online marketplace platforms - such as eBay, Alibaba, DHGate, Ali Express, Shein, Temu, Etsy, Rakuten and all other similar 3rd party reseller platforms and also other marketplace platforms such as Facebook Marketplace, Gumtree, Vinted, and similar sites - for the procurement of goods and services. It explains why these platforms must not be used for University purchasing and outlines the approved alternatives.

Scope

This guidance applies to:

- All employees, contractors, and students involved in purchasing goods or services on behalf of the University
- All procurement activities, regardless of value
- All University budgets, including project-specific and grant-funded expenditure

Policy Statement

Online marketplace sites such as eBay and similar platforms **must not be used** for any University procurement activity. These sites do not meet the University's requirements for supplier assurance, financial controls, auditability, or compliance with procurement regulations, and the products supplied raise significant concerns regarding Health & Safety and Insurance.

All purchases must be made through approved suppliers or through procurement routes authorised by the Procurement Team.

Rationale for Prohibition

➤ Lack of Supplier Verification

Marketplace platforms often allow private individuals or unverified sellers to list items. This creates significant risk for the University in respect of:

- No assurance of supplier legitimacy

- No guarantee of compliance with UK legal or ethical standards such as the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- No ability to assess supplier financial stability

➤ **Quality and Safety Concerns**

The University is exposed to operational, legal and reputational risks as Goods sold on marketplace sites may be:

- Used, refurbished, or counterfeit
- Non-compliant with UK safety standards
- Missing warranties, certifications, or documentation

➤ **Limited Consumer Protection**

Purchases are often incompatible with expected procurement standards as Marketplace platforms typically offer:

- No formal contract
- Limited or no return rights
- No enforceable service-level agreements
- Inconsistent dispute resolution processes

➤ **Audit and Compliance Risks**

Transactions through marketplace sites are often not compliant with the University's financial regulations, grant conditions, and internal audit requirements as purchases often lack:

- Valid VAT invoices
- Traceable transaction records
- Sufficient documentation for audit trails

➤ **Cybersecurity and Fraud Risks**

As Marketplace platforms are known targets, the University may face increased risk from:

- Fraudulent listings
- Phishing attempts
- Payment scams

- Unsecured communication channels

Recommended Procurement Route

The University has a contract in place with Amazon for Business through the NEUPC¹ Framework ITS2007 NE – E-Marketplace for TailEnd Spend. This contract should satisfy the need for items required through marketplaces, which are prohibited by the University. Should you need to order through this contract and do not yet have an account, please contact the Finance Business Partnering Team (schoolfinancesupport@hud.ac.uk) or Procurement (procurement@hud.ac.uk) for further advice.

Exceptions

Exceptions to this guidance will only be granted when there is a requirement for an out-of-print item (usually expected to be a book) that is only available through a specified second-hand marketplace. The Head of Procurement or a Senior Category Manager must authorise any such request which should be supported by a Head of Department or Senior Budget Holder (e.g. Dean or Director of service).

Responsibilities

- **Staff and Students** must comply with this guidance and seek advice when unsure.
- **Budget holders** must ensure purchases are made through approved channels.
- **Procurement Team** is responsible for maintaining approved supplier lists and providing support.
- **Finance Business Partnering Team** will reject expense claims or invoices that do not comply with this policy.

Non-Compliance

Non-compliant purchases may result in:

- Rejection of reimbursement
- Budgetary consequences for departments
- Escalation to line management
- Disciplinary action in cases of repeated or deliberate breaches

¹ North Eastern Universities Purchasing Consortium

Review

This guidance will be reviewed annually or sooner if procurement regulations or University requirements change.