



BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In the SUBU central strategic plan of October 2011, one of the 5 strategic themes is:

“SUBU will be ethical and environmental in its activities”

SUBU recognises that its activities have an environmental impact at local, regional, national and global levels. It assigns great importance to its role within the wider world and is committed to the adoption of ethical and environmental best practices within the union to lead by example to staff and students at Bournemouth University.

As a not for profit organisation and a registered charity, SUBU is conscious of the need for effective budget management. On a regular basis it purchases products or services and will do so as ethically or environmentally friendly as possible within agreed and practical budget constraints.

This policy provides information on the criteria to be considered when purchasing clothing for SUBU staff, officers and students in SUBU roles. It provides recommendations on the purchasing process and how these criteria may be met. The policy may also be offered as guidance to RAG and Clubs & Societies who wish to purchase clothing for their members.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE

For any procurement of clothing by SUBU, the most ethical and environmental option, with the best quality within the available budget should always be purchased.

To enable this decision to be made the process below should be followed:

- A minimum of two quotes from suppliers (preferably three) must be obtained;

- SUBU will insist on supplier transparency – companies must be prepared to disclose the factories used in their clothing production so that these can be checked for their working practices against recognised ethical standards;
- The chosen clothing supplier/factory must be proven to have at least one ethical accreditation e.g. Fairtrade (see the list below);
- The chosen product must be good quality and represent value for money;
- The cost of the product must be within the available budget;
- The final purchasing decision should be supported by evidence;
- The Sustainability Co-ordinator and CEO are available for advice with regards to this policy and its application.

The following sections provide detail on the criteria to be considered to enable the decision making process.

1. ETHICS

In the world of clothing manufacture there are various organisations monitoring and accrediting ethical production. No single standard provides a perfect solution to tackling issues throughout the entire supply chain but the following are the most widely recognised.

SUBU will only purchase clothing from suppliers who can provide proof of at least one of the following accreditations/standards/affiliation:

1.1. *WRAP (Worldwide responsible accredited production)*

WRAP is an independent, global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the certification of ethical, humane, and lawful manufacturing around the world. It was established in January 2000 and is the world's largest labour and environmental certification programme for labour-intensive consumer products' manufacturing and processing. The WRAP certification programme focuses on the clothing, footwear and sewn products sectors and is based on 12 principles covering the areas of local law and workplace regulations, generally accepted international workplace standards, and the environment. Facilities that demonstrate proper

adoption, deployment and monitoring of all 12 principles receive certification for 6 months to 2 years.

1.2. *FWF (Fair Wear Foundation)*

FWF is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that works to improve conditions for workers in garment factories. FWF is active in 15 countries in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe and restricts its focus to those phases of production where sewing is the main manufacturing process.

Most clothing brands don't own their factories, but they do have a lot of influence over how factories treat workers. FWF works with brands who take their responsibilities seriously, and want to learn how to use their influence to make life better for the people who make their clothing. Companies use FWF guidance to identify areas where the changes they make can have the greatest impact. FWF members monitor conditions in their supply chains, adapt their management practices to support better working conditions and resolve problems when they are found.

1.3. *FLA (Fair Labor Association)*

FLA is an international organisation dedicated to protecting workers' rights around the world based in Washington DC, with offices in China, Switzerland and Turkey. FLA places the onus on companies to voluntarily meet internationally recognised labour standards wherever their products are made.

FLA creates lasting solutions to abusive labour practices by offering tools and resources to companies, delivering training to factory workers and management, conducting due diligence through independent assessments, and advocating for greater accountability and transparency from companies, manufacturers, factories and others involved in global supply chains. The FLA believes that all goods should be produced fairly and ethically, and brings together three key constituencies – universities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and companies – to find sustainable solutions to systemic labour issues. Companies join the FLA on a voluntary basis, but must meet strict labour standards for as long as they are affiliated.

The organisation is not specific to the clothing industry – member companies are from sectors as diverse as food, IT and sports goods.

1.4. WRC (Workers Rights Consortium)

The WRC is an independent labour rights monitoring organisation, conducting investigations of working conditions in factories around the world. Its purpose is to combat sweatshops and protect the rights of workers who make clothing and other products. The WRC conducts independent, in-depth investigations; issues public reports on factories producing for major brands; and aids workers at these factories in their efforts to end labour abuses and defend their workplace rights. The organisation has the support of over 175 university and college affiliates and its primary focus is the labour practices of factories that make university – related clothing.

SUBU is not currently (2013) affiliated to the WRC but this is a possibility in the future. To do so it would need to create a code of conduct for all its clothing suppliers who would disclose their factory details to the WRC who would then audit them.

1.5. Fairtrade

Fairtrade ensures better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. By requiring companies to pay sustainable prices for products (which must never fall lower than the market price), Fairtrade addresses the injustices of conventional trade, which traditionally discriminates against the poorest, weakest producers. It enables them to improve their position and have more control over their lives. The Fairtrade logo on clothing means that farmers in developing countries get paid a fair price for their cotton.

SUBU and the university are proud to hold Fairtrade status through collaboration and partnership working. SUBU is committed to maintaining Fairtrade status and to promote and procure Fairtrade and other ethical trade products wherever possible. When purchasing clothing Fairtrade or other ethical trade brand options should always be considered.

1.6. NUS Ethical & Environmental Accreditation

NUS operates an Ethical Supply Chain Programme which is designed to ensure that products which it offers to students are sourced by the most ethically sound means possible. Potential suppliers are asked to complete the NUS Ethical and Environmental Accreditation as part of the tender process and then on an annual basis for the term of their contract. The accreditation takes the form of a bespoke questionnaire which the supplier is required to complete, investigating key areas such as animal welfare, labour standards, and environmental impact. Potential clothing suppliers for SUBU should be checked with NUS to see if they are accredited.

2. ENVIRONMENT

Where possible, SUBU will purchase clothing from suppliers who demonstrate environmental considerations in their supply chains and production methods. Examples of these are as follows:

2.1. *Eco-textiles*

How a raw material is extracted or harvested to make textiles for clothing can have a huge impact on the natural environment. Eco-textiles are fabrics created with the goal of making a system which can be supported indefinitely in terms of the environmental and social impact they may have throughout the total life span: growth, harvest, manufacture, transport, post purchase use and disposal, including carbon footprint. Examples of eco-textiles include:

2.1.1. Organic cotton

Conventional cotton growing uses more chemicals per unit area than any other crop and accounts in total for 16% of the world's pesticides. Organic cotton is made from non-genetically modified plants that are grown without the use of any synthetic agricultural chemicals such as fertilisers or pesticides. Organic cotton is better for the environment, the climate and the people involved.

2.1.2. Bamboo

Bamboo grows naturally without using any pesticides or fertilisers. It is unlike all other natural textiles plants: the yield per hectare is 10 times greater than cotton and the input of water, fertilisers and other resources is almost zero. It is also a grass so doesn't need replanting – which helps reduce topsoil erosion. It can grow up to a yard a day, efficiently

pulling in sunlight and greenhouse gases and converting it into biomass. For these reasons, bamboo is amongst the world's most sustainable resources however as a textile there can be a gulf between the sustainability of bamboo as a crop, and the sustainability of the way it is processed. Ethical bamboo comes from a traceable, ethically accredited source and is processed according to specific environmental guidelines.

2.1.3. Hemp

Hemp is one of the most environmentally friendly and versatile natural textile plants on Earth - and one of the first textile plants in human history. Hemp is incredibly strong and requires no herbicides as it grows so fast that weeds can't compete. It requires no pesticides as it is unpalatable to insects, and needs very little water to grow. It is UV protective and anti-bacterial. and produces 250% more fibre yield per acre than cotton. For clothing it is used in outerwear, socks, jeans and jackets.

2.1.4. Recycled polyester (PET)

Some textile companies recycle plastic bottles to make polyester t-shirts. The bottles are refined and purified, chopped down and processed into spun fibre strands. These strands are then knitted and woven into fabric. The process is environmentally friendly as the only energy used is in melting and reforming the plastic and no extra materials are required.

2.2. Carbon footprint

The direct carbon footprint contribution of textile manufacturing plants from material to customer including spinning, knitting, dyeing, finishing, cutting and sewing, plus transportation to the distribution centre can reach up to 12.5 kg of CO₂ per kg of fabric. The carbon emissions of T-shirt manufacturing in CO₂ equivalents could be more than 12 times the product weight. In comparison the carbon footprint of steel is about 2 kg of CO₂ equivalents per kg of steel.

Clothing factories powered by wind and/or solar energy are better for the environment as they release less CO₂ into the atmosphere. Factories which offset their carbon footprint or use shipping rather than air travel to transport their products are also demonstrating environmental consideration as are those who use vegetable inks and dyes, re-use water,

reduce their use of chemicals and pesticides, use biodegradable and/or recyclable packaging or operate strict recycling practices on site.

3. QUALITY AND PRICE

When purchasing SUBU clothing, the quality of the product should always be important. Cheap t-shirts may look good from a budget point of view, but if they are poor quality, then purchasing them is a false economy as they won't be either durable or a good advertisement for the organisation. Always consider the question – is this product good value for money? In addition, ANY clothing purchase must be made within agreed and practical budget constraints, as we remain mindful of our charitable and not-for-profit status.

4. DATES AND BRANDED ITEMS

When purchasing SUBU clothing or any other promotional items, dates of events and changing of branding should be avoided wherever possible on all products. This gives longevity to the items of clothing as they can be used for more than one academic year; it reduces the cost per wear of clothing items which is needed from a budget perspective. It also reduces waste when clothing is being thrown away after an event. Ideally branding should only be reviewed and changed every 2 to 3 years.

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