



Guidance on writing a Specification

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4	09/02/2024	Bahar Shahin MCIPS (Chartered) – Director of Procurement	Previous Version Updated

Guidance on writing a Specification

Procurement provides the below guidance to assist colleagues to compile robust specification documents:

The Specification must:

- Clearly describe what is required.
- Focus on outputs required without being prescriptive as to the method the supplier should use to provide it (output specification)
- Be sufficiently tight so that the product or service fits the user's needs, but not so explicit that it discourages the supplier from proposing innovative solutions that optimise Value for Money (VFM)
- Include performance targets or include criteria for acceptance of the products or services.
- Include service levels and a process for measuring ongoing performance.
- Avoid over-specification of performance (more than "Fit for Purpose" or than is actually required) to ensure procurement at the optimum cost.
- Take account of any e-Commerce requirements
- Take account of sustainability policies where appropriate
- Take into account suitability of design for all users.
- Take account of relevant legislation e.g. health and safety and equality
- Take account of relevant policies e.g. is the requirement one that would be suited for the inclusion of a Community Benefits clause?
- Take account of all licensing requirements that a supplier must have in order to operate in a particular industry/sector, and which are relevant to the performance of the contract e.g. a security guard must have the appropriate SIA licensing to ensure they are properly trained and qualified to do their job.
- Not refer to brands or trade names but refer to the characteristics of the product e.g. it is not permissible to specify a particular product brand. Think Ball point pen rather than Biro.
- Ensure that any requirements for limits, tolerances, deliverables timescales etc. are practical and realistic.
- Consider commercial and ongoing performance management aspects of the contract throughout the supply chain e.g. payment terms including those to sub-contractors.
- Support a structured method of evaluating the Tenders / Quotes
- Be able to form a major part of the formal contract between Queen Mary and the Supplier.

If the specification is wrong, it may result in:

- Failure to meet the objectives/ outcome.

- Wasted money.
- Unsuitable tenderers
- Unsuitable bids
- Misinterpretation of requirements
- Major difficulties in evaluating the bids.
- Wrong or unsuitable products/services supplied.
- Claims of unfair treatment being made by tenderers.

Should you have any specific queries/ question or require further guidance please contact the Procurement team via email at Finance-procurement@qmul.ac.uk or a member of the procurement team directly. The Procurement team member's details can be found at <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/finance/intranet/purchasing/meet-the-team/>