

Licensing: A buyer's guide to procurement

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Version	1.3
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Last Updated	04/06/2026

1. What does Jisc's licensing team do?

The Jisc licensing team, work with and on behalf of **the sector and its members**, to identify the right solutions to meet institutional needs for software and learning resources across our three portfolios:

- Enterprise systems (e.g. cybersecurity software)
- Learning, teaching and assessment (e.g. curriculum management and assessment)
- Research, including research content, tools and software (e.g. journals, electronic research notebooks, datasets).

We continually seek to improve and expand the range of solutions on offer by creating agreements, on behalf of members and customers, with vendors and publishers to licence their unique content, software, tools or infrastructure solutions.

2. Benefits of working with us

We leverage sector spend and voice to advance the interests of all UK higher and further education institutions as well as research institutions. We work with our **strategic groups** in the following key areas:

Saving you time and money: Negotiating/brokering the best possible costs and commercial terms using market intelligence and data to drive institutional decision-making. We work closely with staff across institutions, to gain a deep understanding of their requirements and identify solutions that will transform systems, research, teaching, learning and assessment and drive efficiencies. This includes the negotiation of model licence terms via legally approved terms, negating the need for Institutions to draw up their own.

Assurance: We carry out a range of due diligence and assurance activities on technology, finances, legal, standards and procurement. We then ensure that suppliers meet essential requirements, and then monitor compliance through robust service levels and contract management

Delivering the right solutions: A critical part of our role is to stimulate transformative change in the sector's use of technology to improve teaching, learning and research. We undertake and commission research into innovative technology solutions, licensing models and evaluation tools to anticipate and respond to changes in technology, policies and institutional needs.

3. How do we procure agreements?

We consider all options available to gain the best outcome for our members. This includes the use of tendered framework agreements, direct award frameworks, dynamic purchasing systems/Dynamic Markets, or brokered agreements using direct negotiations with vendors following vigorous market research, consultation and analysis.

Framework agreements: Where suitable, Jisc Licensing will create framework agreements in compliance with the procurement Act 2023. These could be either multi-supplier and/or multi-lot frameworks, or as is common for digital content, single supplier, directly awarded frameworks.

In the former instance, members can expect call-off mechanisms such as direct award, further competition or desktop calculators, meaning a familiar, compliant and reliable way to procure. Since 2025, the traditional 'closed' frameworks have been joined by 'open' frameworks, which permit reopening of competition and fresh bids, hopefully driving innovation and value.

With the latter direct award frameworks, these are awarded based on sole-ownership of intellectual property rights (or other technical reasons) and members will in-turn call-off directly.

Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPSs)/Dynamic Markets (DMs): these can be considered as an alternative 'tool' to framework agreements, that create a pre-qualified pool of vendors capable of bidding against a set of requirements. Unlike a framework, these aren't agreements in and of themselves so further competition by Members is required, but these can be designed to suit, new suppliers have the freedom to apply and join – subject to due diligence – at any time.

Brokerage: following extensive market research and consultation with institutions, Jisc Licensing will act as a broker and enter into negotiations with vendors who offer solutions of interest. Whilst these are not undertaken via a formal PA23 procedure, the resultant negotiated agreements can often be procured via a reseller on the **SUPC's Software License Resellers' Agreement (SLRA)**, as well as directly.

Whichever route is used, we consider multiple areas such as product suitability, support, terms of use, pricing, and vendor credentials (see **due diligence**) to ensure both the quality and sustainability of the provision is maintained.

4. What does this mean for members and customers – can they buy compliantly?

Wherever a framework or a DPS/DM is used, Members can be assured that they will be buying compliantly. Jisc publish all required transparency and award notices as required by the procurement regulations, and will provide links to them on the product pages of our **Licensing Subscription Manager (LSM)** and **Chest** platforms. Members should adhere to any instructions provided that apply to call-offs.

Where a member is considering using a negotiated agreement, these can be often be procured via one of the SLRA reseller suppliers, ensuring compliance with the procurement regulations. Transactions are still completed via the Jisc platforms. Please note that in some instances, resellers may not be available, so the member will have to regard its own position in relation to the regulations. However, if their spend on an agreement is below threshold¹ then it is not a requirement to run a tender procedure, though they should be careful to comply with any internal procurement rules that their institution employs. In practise, many of our agreements will total less than the threshold even over the life of the contract. Increasingly, some members are opting out of the procurement regulations altogether, offering a more flexible approach to procurement.

¹ Currently £207,720 incl. VAT for supplies and services, although Members in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should consider local variations

5. Due diligence and contract management

Jisc undertakes due diligence on every agreement we negotiate so that members can buy with confidence. Typically, this will include, but isn't limited to:

- Financial probity – the financial standing of a vendor is assessed, alongside business insurances, so that we can be confident the vendor is in a good position to support members.
- Modern slavery – checks to make sure in-scope vendors are providing annual statements that comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- Environmental management – whether the vendor has credentials that demonstrate their commitment to reduce impacts on the environment E.g. ISO14001 certification.
- Information security – ensuring the vendor has adequate protections in place to prevent unauthorised access to information and information systems E.g. Cyber Essentials certification
- Data protection – where personal or sensitive data is being stored or processed, vendors must evidence compliance with several mandatory aspects of the regulations.
- Artificial intelligence - our diligence extends to ethical practices, data governance, bias mitigation, explainability, security, adherence to industry standards, and a commitment to continual improvement.
- Quality management – vendors need to be able demonstrate that they can provide a consistent level of service or quality of product time and time again E.g. ISO9001 certification.
- Accessibility – to ensure a vendor's products and services can be used by as many people as possible using clear design or tools which promote better access E.g. meeting WCAG 2.1/2 criteria on websites and mobile applications.
- Data Interoperability and Portability – to ensure vendor's products and services will enable seamless migration of data, allow users to leverage advanced analytical capabilities and derive maximum value from their software platform solutions or features.

Whilst Jisc's licensing team works hard to provide a rounded assessment of the vendors we work with, Members are encouraged to perform their own due diligence checks especially where they have unique considerations.

6. Membership

All **Jisc members** are eligible to purchase from the agreements we negotiate and broker for them. Many of our agreements are available for non-member customers too.

7. Contracting

Where Jisc negotiates with a vendor on behalf of members to benefit from the terms and conditions and improved pricing, the institution **must** accept the Jisc licence agreement.

The Jisc and Chest model licences are the foundation for all our agreements and ensure that any software, tools or content ordered through Jisc are governed by fair and consistent terms and conditions that have been developed to reflect the realities and needs of education, research and institutional systems. This means that Institutions can trust our licences to protect their institutions and users. They also ensure that the solutions we broker can be used to their fullest extent for the purposes of teaching, study and non-commercial research and integrated effectively into institutional systems. We negotiate the terms of our licences with publishers and suppliers centrally, using external expert legal counsel to draft the model licences and any deviations so no further negotiation or legal consultation should be needed. We also offer online acceptance of our licences as part of our ordering process, so no signatures are required.

Learn more here:

<https://subscriptionsmanager.jisc.ac.uk/about/jisc-model-licence>

Chest - Standard Jisc Licence for Software (September 2025)

In some instances where frameworks or DPSs/DMs are used, a template call-off contract may be provided, with a Buyer's Guide providing support.