COVID-19 FAQs for Services, Supplies and Shipping

(Updated: March 27, 2020)

What is the continuity plan for Procurement?

Procurement Services continue to operate remotely. Contact Procurement as you normally would via phone or email.

What steps can be taken to ensure needed supplies are received?

Contingency planning is an important first step. Order crucial supplies now to ensure availability in the event of a supply disruption. Procurement is working with EHS to coordinate orders for hard-to-find personal protective equipment (masks, gowns, etc.) and sanitization items (sanitizers, sprays, soap). Please be sure to communicate your needs to EHS or Procurement. We may be able to help you with the items you need.

Items in short supply, such as hand sanitizer and masks, are being sourced from many existing and new suppliers with stocks available to Princeton. Available stock will be communicated by the Procurement buyers with an expectation that orders are placed right away. Products not ordered timely may not be available due to high demand and low supply in the market.

Will shipping materials to and from campus be affected?

Shipping will continue. There are no known constraints on domestic shipments. However, there may be delays in getting materials to and from affected areas globally. Shipments from Chinese ports are continuing to improve though air shipments globally are limited due to the extensive cut back on flights. Expect delays. For the most recent information from UPS and FedEx regarding shipping delays, please refer to the latest alerts on the FedEx website, [here](#), and the UPS website, [here](#). Links to both of these sites are available on the eShipGlobal main page.

Will critical gas supplies, such as Liquid Nitrogen and Helium, continue?

Procurement maintains regular communications with Airgas regarding deliveries of liquid nitrogen and helium. At this time, there are no current or planned disruptions of supply for these two materials. If there are other materials which are critical, please contact Procurement.

To mitigate the spread of the virus, Airgas drivers are complying with basic social distancing practices and using hand sanitizer. Some Airgas customers, including hospitals with known COVID-19 patients, must sanitize their cylinders before they are picked up. At this time, Airgas will continue to deliver and pickup from Princeton University locations without sanitizing empty cylinders so long as there are no confirmed COVID-19 cases in that building. Should there be a
confirmed case in a building which requires delivery and pickup of cylinders, Airgas will need to be notified, and sanitizing procedures would be required. Bulk is not affected.

There is, however, a lack of empty cylinders in the supply chain as a result of excess stock purchased by some companies, and empties from hospitals not being picked up. Airgas has recently instituted a one-for-one pickup with delivery – each new cylinder delivered requires an empty to be picked up.

For helium, there is no planned change to our current allocation which is a result of global events and market conditions unrelated to the coronavirus. Procurement is working with Airgas to understand the supply risks and evaluating information on the impact of the coronavirus to the demand of natural gas, from which helium is a production by-product.

Should there be any updates, Procurement will communicate this information.

**Are there precautions which need to be taken with regard to incoming shipments?**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance indicates that incoming shipments pose minimal risks and thus no special equipment or procedures are needed. In addition, one of our contract customs brokers has advised that there are no constraints for incoming products. People working in shipping and receiving should take the utmost care to follow the general CDC-recommended hygiene practices as they handle materials.

**Will suppliers’ personnel be allowed on campus?**

The University instituted a series of policies and practices based on the concept of social distancing. This includes the need to limit the number and size of campus gatherings and meetings, and the use of virtual meetings wherever possible. In-person meetings are strongly discouraged amongst Princeton colleagues. Therefore, we highly discourage in-person meetings with suppliers. For those suppliers who have personnel on campus in support of regular operations, we ask that you ensure they are following social distancing practices and are aware of the latest information on the University website. FAQs for suppliers are also published on the F&T website, here, and are linked from the University COVID-19 FAQ for Visitors page.

And, as of March 4, the University has prohibited anyone from CDC Warning Level 3 countries (currently mainland China, Iran, Italy, and South Korea) from visiting campus unless they have been outside of these countries for at least 14 days. This is due to the particularly international nature of our campus and our limited capacity to review travel itineraries and undertake medical assessments of visitors.

**Can suppliers be on campus to perform needed services or deliver goods?**

Some suppliers may need access to buildings in order to deliver goods or perform services. With access to campus buildings now in weekend mode, this should not affect many of our core
suppliers as they have access cards. Should it be necessary for a supplier to have an access card to enter the building, please send a request to purchase@princeton.edu and our team will work with the appropriate departments to provide such access.

As noted above, suppliers should ensure they are employing social distancing practices when performing services. If it is necessary to work with those suppliers, Princeton employees should be sure to do so using social distancing.

**Because of the coronavirus situation, how do I order supplies to have them sent to an offsite location?**

This is possible for certain products though there may be additional shipping costs and time involved. To do this, it is necessary to add a new Ship-To profile which can be selected by the requisition creator when completing the requisition. This new profile will be available for future orders.

To request the new Ship-To address, contact the Financial Service Center (FSC) at finance@princeton.edu with the details of the request including the supplier, the address, and the reason for the request. If it is not possible because of the supplier or the item in question, it would be necessary to have the item delivered to the department as per normal procedures and then shipped back out via FedEx or UPS using eShipGlobal as per a normal outbound shipment.

As always, if the item is of significant value, it should be tracked, require signature, and be appropriately insured in the event of the theft of the item from the residence destination.

**How do we make sure we get expected deliveries if our department has limited or no staff on campus to receive deliveries?**

Each department is encouraged to have procedures to receive expected deliveries. We highly encourage departments to stay in close contact with suppliers regarding ship dates and potential delivery requirements. If suppliers are unable to deliver to a location, they may attempt several times before sending the product back as undeliverable. Procurement may be notified in some cases, such as a recent situation with Apple, however the individual who placed the order may also be contacted. If Procurement is made aware of a situation by a supplier, we’ll reach out to the department to coordinate delivery with the department and supplier. In some cases, suppliers will accept a different ship-to address. In other cases, they may require a new PO as the supplier’s internal controls may prevent changing a ship-to address while in-transit to limit fraudulent purchases.

**What should be done if a supplier advises us that there will be supply shortages or their operations will be shut down?**
In many cases, alternate suppliers may be able to supply the goods and services needed. If this is the case, contact another University supplier. The list of contract suppliers is accessible via this webpage, here, or contact Procurement at purchase@princeton.edu for information about suppliers who provide that good or service.

If a shortage or operation shutdown is critical to your operation, please advise Procurement by sending the details to purchase@princeton.edu and someone will be in touch to begin the process of mitigating the situation.

What expectations does Princeton have of its suppliers with regard to Business Contingency Planning?

While adverse events are unpredictable, best practice requires a thoughtful, complete, and tested set of plans which allow suppliers to operate through those situations with minimal disruption. When contingency plans are being executed, these should be transparent to the supply of goods and services to the University, however that is not always the case.

As above, should there be issues in the supply chain which will cause a downstream effect impacting the University, we’re encouraging suppliers to provide early, clear, and regular communications to mitigate any disruption.

Will supplier payments be delayed?

Payment processing will continue and payments are being disbursed without delay. As always, the payment date is determined by your existing payment terms, and is calculated from the date an invoice is received by Procurement Services. As specified on all University purchase orders, all invoices should be sent electronically to invoices@princeton.edu for processing.

A supplier wants me to sign a quote or waiver before they will begin work; should I sign?

Even before the coronavirus situation, we discourage the signing of supplier forms as these typically provide terms favorable to the supplier and not to Princeton. If you need assistance, please contact Procurement at purchase@princeton.edu and someone from our team will contact you to help guide the process, negotiate with the supplier, and partner with the Office of General Counsel to find a solution.

We recognize that some purchases may be urgently needed and may require the University to accept unfavorable contract terms. We ask that you contact us as soon as possible so that we can minimize these situations.

What do I do if I’ve engaged with a supplier for a service or event, and now with the coronavirus limitations, we need to cancel the service or event?
The first thing that should be done is to have a conversation with the supplier to attempt to resolve the situation and work out a solution which both parties can accept. In most cases, Princeton is not the only customer who is dealing with this situation. In many cases, a resolution offered by the supplier may be acceptable. If advance payments were already made, the supplier may be reluctant to refund the money. Consider asking the supplier to credit that money towards a future event instead. A written contract addendum might be needed. We ask that if there is any contract, waiver, or other form provided by the supplier that you send these to purchase@princeton.edu for review by our contracts manager prior to signing.

It should also be noted that the University contract language has effective language which helps us to mitigate these types of issues. We strongly encourage departments to use University contracts when engaging with suppliers. For questions, please contact Procurement.

**Can you provide some talking points to guide conversations with suppliers regarding cancellations?**

We’ve had success negotiating with venues and suppliers in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have a contract for an event or service and you did not use a University model agreement, suppliers may be less flexible and may require new terms. The talking points, below, can be used when discussing the situation with the supplier. Ideally, the person who signed the agreement or booked the venue should be the first to call.

1. There is a pandemic as declared by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020.
2. Help us work together to deal with this service/event cancellation.
3. Find common ground with the supplier, though they may be struggling they don’t want to lose business long term
   a. We like your company because...
   b. We want to use your services in the future because...
   c. Remind them if we have used their services in the past and are repeat customers.
4. Facts supporting the University’s request:
   a. Princeton University, like many other schools, has sent their students home and encouraged staff to work remotely
   b. We have confirmed positive testing for coronavirus in Princeton
   c. There has been a travel ban in place imposed by our President since March 9, 2020
5. Events:
   a. Would you allow us to rebook within one year of our originally scheduled arrival date without penalty?
   b. If we need to change that rebooking (not cancel, but change), could we do so without penalty if we do it up to 90 days before the newly scheduled arrival date?
c. We are different from a corporation because we work off of an academic calendar, and that is why we are asking for a full year from our originally scheduled arrival date.

6. Services:
   a. Would you allow us to reschedule the services for a date in the future?
   b. We would like to apply the down payment to a future event.

Our department uses a temp who will now need to work from home and the temp agency wants me to sign a form?

As noted above, we discourage signing supplier forms. Our senior category manager, Arturo Perez, is actively engaged with our preferred and contracted suppliers to address this situation. Please contact Arturo at arturop@princeton.edu with details of your specific situation.

What should I do if our department no longer needs items which have been ordered? In the event that a purchase order needs to be cancelled, please first contact the supplier immediately. There may be situations where a purchase order cannot be cancelled or restocking fees apply. If the purchase order may be cancelled, obtain written confirmation from the supplier and then request the cancellation of the order through Finance@princeton.edu. For assistance with difficult cancellations, please contact Procurement at purchase@princeton.edu.

If a supplier has a question about working with Princeton during this time, where do they get the latest information?

The University maintains a website which is updated frequently and as early as circumstances permit: https://www.princeton.edu/content/covid-19-coronavirus-information

Under the Visitor FAQs there is a link to FAQs for suppliers, and available here, on the F&T website.