A Guide to Sustainable IT Purchasing with TCO Certified
IT Products - a Risk Category
IT products are associated with a wide range of sustainability risks throughout their life cycle. Purchasers need to consider issues such as supply chain working conditions, effect on the environment, energy consumption, hazardous content and e-waste connected to the products they buy, while not risking product performance, usability and user health and safety.

A Complex Product Category
When purchasing IT products it takes specialist knowledge and insight to set product criteria that drives sustainability criteria. Even more challenging is how to know that the products you buy meet the criteria throughout the life of the contract and that any breach will be handled in a systematic and effective way.

Making Sustainable IT Purchasing Easier
TCO Certified helps organisations around the world set product criteria that incentivize the IT industry to work in a more sustainable way. Independent verification in TCO Certified makes sure that certified products live up to these criteria throughout the life of the contract.

Your Choices Have a Direct Effect on the IT Industry
With the help of TCO Certified, purchasing organisations around the world can uphold the sustainability criteria and verification systems that leads to an increased clarity as well as effect on the industry. This creates better conditions for increased environmental and social responsibility linked to IT products and the manufacturing of these products.

We’re seeing continual improvements in environmental and social responsibility connected to IT products and their manufacture. This is a direct result of organisations using TCO Certified as part of a sustainable purchasing program.

- When buyers act, industry listens.
What Makes TCO Certified Unique?

Experience, Competence and Breadth
TCO Certified is a sustainability certification for IT products, helping organisations around the world make more responsible product choices. For over 25 years we have provided solutions for reducing risk and meeting sustainability challenges connected to computers and other IT products.

TCO Certified is a Type 1 Ecolabel in accordance with ISO 14024 and includes life cycle criteria for environmental and social responsibility. Based on our competence and experience in handling social and environmental challenges related to IT products and their manufacturing, we offer a comprehensive set of balanced criteria that can effectively drive sustainability in the IT space.

We Hold the IT Industry Accountable
IT brands, are the companies behind the computers and other devices we use, and the name you see on computers, monitors, tablets and other IT products. They are in the best position to drive improvements in the supply chain. They have the complete oversight of the supply chain and brand companies are also best positioned to drive improvements among their suppliers.

Criteria in TCO Certified hold the brand companies responsible, both for compliance with the criteria and for consequences where any nonconformities are found.

Our direct contact with brand companies and factories gives us unique insights and dialog with brand owners and manufacturers. These relationships help us monitor effective implementation of the criteria and any corrective actions.

Sustainability Criteria and Independent Verification
Criteria in TCO Certified are based on international conventions, scientific research and expertise. Criteria levels are intentionally set higher than typical industry standard and are regularly updated, with a new generation every three years. This structure allows TCO Certified to continually drive the IT product life cycle in a more sustainable direction.

TCO Certified is also harmonized with existing internationally accepted systems, including ENERGY STAR®, ISO14001 for environmental management, as well as ILO and UN Conventions in the area of socially responsible manufacturing.

TCO Certified also includes a comprehensive system of independent verification at the product, factory and brand company levels. To monitor continued compliance, verification takes place both pre certification and for the duration of the validity period of the certification.
One Certification - A Two Part Solution

1. Leading Edge Sustainability Criteria

The criteria in TCO Certified are designed to drive the IT industry to reduce the negative environmental and social effects of product manufacture, use and end of life. Criteria are intentionally ambitious and levels are consistently set higher than industry standards. A new generation criteria for each product category is released every three years to drive continuous sustainability improvements.

- **Socially responsible manufacturing**
  ILO Core Conventions, UN Convention on Rights of the Child, worker rights, health and safety

- **Engagement in conflict minerals initiatives**
  OECD process or other initiatives for responsible mining of tantalum, tin, tungsten and gold

- **Environmental management system**
  ISO 14001 or EMAS registered, independent measure of environmental improvements

- **Declared material content**
  Information on percentage of recycled plastic content

- **User Ergonomics**
  Image quality and design of products for user ergonomics

- **Extended product life**
  Product warranties, availability of replacement parts

- **User health & safety**
  Acoustic noise protection, low emissions, electrical safety

- **Energy effective products and power supplies**
  Energy Star or equivalent low energy consumption

- **Information on energy consumption**
  Account of product energy consumption

- **Reduction of hazardous substances**
  Limits on phthalates, halogens, heavy metals (beyond RoHS), i.e. independently verified safer alternatives

- **Product take back**
  Brand company offers product take back at end of life

- **Product and packaging designed for recycling**
  Coding of plastics, limits on number of different plastics, all packaging recyclable

- **Product weight**
  Declaration of total product weight
2. Independent Verification of Compliance

Both pre and post certification, we work with independent, accredited verification partners to monitor compliance among products, manufacturing facilities and brand companies.

Verification Pre Certification

1. **Product testing**
   Testing by an accredited test facility and proof of compliance that the product meets all criteria in TCO Certified.

2. **Factory social responsibility**
   Independent verification partners review corrective action plans that are put in place to correct deviations from the criteria on social responsibility discovered during inspections of the factory. Corrective actions identified in the audit are followed up to ensure they are implemented.

3. **Code of conduct in supply chain**
   Our verification partners ensure that all brand companies have a code of conduct in place that meets our criteria for socially responsible manufacturing. Implementation of the code in the supply chain is regularly monitored as well as the closure of identified corrective actions in factories manufacturing certified products.

   Brand companies must submit a complete list of all factories manufacturing certified products in their name and provide proof that independent social audits are carried out at each facility at least once every three years.

4. **Contract with brand company**
   We contract with each certifying brand company, that they are responsible for their product and supply chain compliance with TCO Certified, and will be held accountable in cases of non-compliance.

Verification Post Certification

1. **Annual factory spot checks**
   We ask our independent verification partners to carry out spot audits at selected factories manufacturing certified products, to monitor compliance throughout the lifetime of the certificate.

2. **Follow up of corrective action plans**
   Independent verification partners review corrective action plans submitted by brand companies as part of the certification process. Corrective actions identified in the audit are followed up to ensure they are implemented.

3. **Assessment of brand company proactive initiatives**
   To reduce the risk of future violations, we carry out annual reviews with social responsibility management at each brand company to assess corrective actions and proactive initiatives toward a more socially responsible supply chain.

4. **Follow up product spot checks**
   Annual independent follow up testing of selected certified products, in order to monitor continued compliance with product criteria during the life of the certificate. If a product is shown to no longer meet all the criteria, the brand company is held accountable, in accordance with their contract terms.

What Does This Mean for Purchasers?

Our built-in verification system means that your organisation doesn’t need to dedicate resources and find specialist competence that conduct manufacturer inspections, test products and review documentation in order to verify that the products you buy meet the sustainability criteria you set. Our program also monitors that products and their manufacturing meet the criteria during the duration of the certificate and that nonconformities and corrective actions in the supply chain are handled correctly. In a complex, global supply chain, this means you save time and resources from doing this important follow up yourself.
Step by Step Guide to Sustainable IT Purchasing

Pre - Contracting Phase

Secure organisational support
• Make sure that your organisation’s sustainability targets cover purchasing and specifically IT products
• Ensure management-level sign off on sustainable purchasing and sustainable IT policies
• Include team members with sustainability expertise when writing IT hardware contracts.
• Specify TCO Certified in your contract language, to ensure relevant criteria, independent verification and follow up.

Tell vendors about your sustainability criteria early and often
• Tell your vendors early that you intend to specify the latest generation TCO Certified in your contract terms. This will give brand companies time to make sure they certify the product models you need.
• Specify that you will need to see their TCO Certified certificates as proof of compliance
• Be clear. Simply discussing TCO Certified with your vendor is no guarantee of them delivering certified products. Specifying TCO Certified in contract language is the incentive for brand companies to pursue certification.

Put it in context
• Explain to your vendors that:
  • your social and environmental sustainability goals are a priority aspect of your purchasing program.
  • IT hardware purchasing is an integral part of those goals.
Contracting Phase

Include language in the contract title
• Make your sustainability focus clear for vendors by including it in the contract name, e.g. “Procurement of sustainably designed IT products”

Specify that products are certified for the entire contract period
• Specify that products must be certified to the latest generation TCO Certified
• Specify that products must maintain an active certificate throughout the entire contract period - even if the manufacturer refreshes or updates that product model during the life of the contract.
• Request valid product certificates as proof of compliance with TCO Certified.
• Include a contract severance clause or other consequences in case a vendor does not meet your requirements during the life of the contract.
• Don’t equate TCO Certified with other ecolabels or certifications. Otherwise you risk receiving products that don’t meet the breadth of social and environmental criteria unique to TCO Certified.

Use contract conditions to encourage certification
• In case your preferred models are not yet certified, give your vendor a grace period (e.g. 6 months) to certify those products

Post Purchasing Phase

Use consistent contract language with TCO Certified as a condition
• For greatest sustainability impact, use the same contract conditions, including TCO Certified, for all IT hardware purchases.

Raise internal awareness for sustainability issues and IT products
• Educate management and co-workers on the social and environmental risks connected to IT products and how sustainable purchasing using TCO Certified impacts your organisation’s sustainability goals.
TCO Certified offers a comprehensive set of social and environmental sustainability criteria that are updated every three years to ensure they are relevant.

By using TCO Certified when specifying IT products, you get the reassurance of an established system that includes independent compliance verification of products and their manufacturing.

Through our information and customer support we can help your organisation make TCO Certified part of your sustainable IT purchasing strategy.

Contact Us For Help With:

• Guidance on how to use TCO Certified in sustainable purchasing
• Messaging and training materials about sustainable IT purchasing
• Examples of other organisations using TCO Certified
• Information about TCO Certified, the criteria and verification system

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