

MENSTRUAL PRODUCT SCHEME COLLEGES GUIDE

**HOW TO SET UP A MENSTRUAL PRODUCT
SCHEME IN YOUR COLLEGE**

THE CAMBRIDGE PERIOD PROJECT - 2022



HELLO FROM THE CAMBRIDGE PERIOD PROJECT!

Following The Cambridge Period Project's proposal to the Senior Tutors' Committee in 27th May 2022, the Senior Tutors' Committee officially recommend that "individual colleges revise their provision of period products, in respect to the recommended baseline provided by the Cambridge Period Project". This will ensure inclusivity and access to period products when they are needed most, as well as reducing the stigma associated with periods.

This guide is to support University Colleges to set up a menstrual product scheme. If you have any questions or concerns please contact periodproject@cambridgesu.co.uk.



PRIMARY PROVISIONS REQUIRED FROM COLLEGES

An agreement from all Colleges to provide a baseline level of menstrual products secures equitable access to products for all students across the collegiate university. The recommended details of the provision of menstrual products include the following.

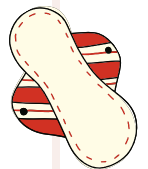


1. LOCATION



products to be provided in **all** College public bathrooms, including disabled, male, female and unisex toilets across all locations in Colleges from libraries to barspaces.

2. REPLENISHING PRODUCTS



Regularly replenish supplies with products restocked by ancillary staff i.e. those who restock the bathrooms in colleges with other supplies such as toilet paper. This ensures that menstrual products remain regularly topped up.

3. BUDGETING

A required minimum spend of £1.26 per year per menstruating student, this would ideally be added to the funds for College bathroom spending budget.



ADDRESSING COMMON CONCERNS

There may be some concerns about the viability of a college scheme from staff and fellow students. Here are some common concerns raised and how we can address them.

"PERIOD POVERTY DOESN'T IMPACT UK STUDENTS"

THIS ARGUMENT IS SIMPLY UNTRUE. THE STIGMA SURROUNDING THE DISCUSSION OF MENSTRUATION MEANS THAT THE PREVALENCE OF PERIOD POVERTY IS OFTEN ERASED FROM OUR DISCUSSIONS ABOUT FINANCIAL HARDSHIP. PLAN INTERNATIONAL ESTIMATES THAT A SINGLE YEAR OF MENSTRUATION COSTS £128 A YEAR, OR JUST UNDER £11 PER PERIOD. RESEARCH HAS FOUND THAT 1 IN 10 GIRLS BETWEEN THE AGE OF 14 AND 21 IN THE UK EXPERIENCE PERIOD POVERTY. STUDENT LOANS HAVE TO COVER THE COST OF RENTS, FOOD, TRAVEL AND OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS. LOANS ARE ALSO THE SAME IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER YOU MENSTRUATE OR NOT. FOR MENSTRUATING STUDENTS, THESE BUDGET CONSTRAINTS MEAN THAT MANY ARE IN A POSITION WHERE THEY ARE UNABLE TO AFFORD THE PRODUCTS THAT THEY NEED.

"STUDENTS WILL JUST ABUSE THE SCHEME"

A CONCERN MAY ARISE THAT A SCHEME OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS MAY NOT NECESSARILY DIRECTLY HELP THOSE MOST IMPACTED BY PERIOD POVERTY. HOWEVER, THIS UNDERMINES THE SIMPLE FACT THAT MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS SHOULD BE FREELY AVAILABLE TO ALL THOSE WHO NEED THEM. IN PRACTICE, PEOPLE WILL HAVE THEIR OWN PREFERENCES REGARDING THE SPECIFIC MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS THEY USE AND WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TO PURCHASE THEIR OWN IF THEY ARE ABLE TO DO SO.

"IT ISN'T A COLLEGE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS"

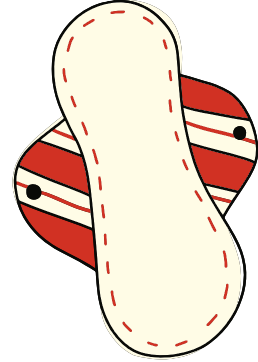
THE UNIVERSITY HAS A DUTY OF CARE TOWARDS ALL STUDENTS DURING THEIR TIME AT CAMBRIDGE. ON AN ISSUE THAT CAN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT UPON THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THEIR STUDENTS, THE PROVISION OF MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE FUNDING THAT GOES INTO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT. IT MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED A COMPONENT OF THE ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY OF A COLLEGE - NO STUDENT SHOULD FIND THEMSELVES AT A DISADVANTAGE AS A RESULT OF THEIR FINANCIAL BACKGROUND.



PRODUCTS TO SUPPLY

Pads

These are the staple of period product provision. An adhesive pad that sits in the underwear and absorbs blood flow. They are the most frequently used menstrual product and are cheaply available



Tampons



The second most used period product. A small absorbent product inserted into the vagina to absorb menstrual blood. Usually changed every 6-8 hours and are cheaply available.

Note: There are a small number of rare health risks for tampons, including toxic shock syndrome, not often discussed. It may be useful to provide information on these risks when distributing tampons.

Both pads and tampons have multiple absorbency options, regular & maxi for pads and regular & super for tampons. It is beneficial to provide both options as part of the scheme.



Important: some people who menstruate may suffer from health conditions that make fragranced products or insertion of tampons not appropriate for them. Please consider providing both pads and tampon provisions to make the scheme accessible for all.

DISTRIBUTION TIPS

What works best for you will depend on the physical space in your toilets. However, it is important to ensure that people can access the products **discreetly, freely and without shame**. Period products should be made available **in all College public bathrooms**, e.g. toilets in libraries and bars.

There are different ways that you can distribute the products:

- In bags hung on the back of cubicle doors
- In a closed box on the toilet basin
- In a basket by the sink
- In a custom-made wall dispenser



The system through which menstrual products are distributed within your College can present barriers to students who may wish to access the scheme. It isn't just about the physical availability of products, but putting them in spaces that can be easily accessed by all students who menstruate.

Tips for Access:

- Supply products in **all toilets**, gender-neutral facilities and disabled toilets (not all menstruating students will use the same facilities!)
- Provide an email address for **contact** if supplies run low, or provide information for other locations in the College to find menstrual products
- **Advertise** the scheme - put up posters, discuss in meetings, and email everybody who uses the College with relevant information, so they know that the scheme exists!



ESTIMATED COSTS AND PRODUCT NUMBERS

The number of products you will likely need depends on how many people who menstruate use your facilities, and how often. We would recommend doing a **trial run** to work out how many products are likely to be used, and how often you will have to restock. This can be used to gauge how much demand there is and calculate annual costs.



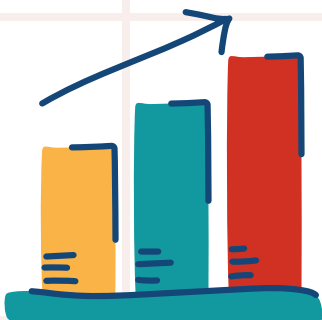
College Example:

300 students with ~50% who menstruate = **150 menstruators**

| Totals for a 3-6 months period | Average requirements per 10 Students | Total for College (150 students) | Number of products per unit* | Number of Units required for College | Cost Per Unit* (£) | Final Cost (£) |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Pads | 48 | 720 | 240 | 3 | 18.00 | 54.00 |
| Tampon (regular) | 40 | 600 | 192 | 3 | 27.04 | 81.12 |
| Tampon (super) | 34 | 510 | 168 | 3 | 27.68 | 83.04 |
| Total: | | | | | | 218.16 |

If you **need more support** calculating how many products you will need and how often, you can email Daisy at HeyGirls (daisy@heygirls.co.uk) who has extensive experience, or contact your chosen supplier directly. For any other advice contact The Cambridge Period Project (periodproject@cambridgesu.co.uk).

REPLENISHING PRODUCTS



This will depend on how your facilities are managed. It may work best for ancillary staff or the janitorial team to restock the products and check how many supplies are there. Whoever is responsible **needs to check regularly**, to ensure that products are restocked when needed.

Some period products, such as tampons, have a **Best Before Date** (due to the risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome). Please ensure that all products in toilets are in date.

DE-GENDERING MENSTRUATION

It is important that we de-gender the language that we use when talking about periods. When advertising the scheme in departments we should remember that *not all of those who menstruate are women and that not all women will menstruate.*

Using language that ties menstruation to womanhood or femininity erases the experiences of trans men and non-binary people who may also have periods. A lack of trans-inclusive language can create barriers to accessing menstrual product schemes by impacting both where products are made available and making students feel unable to make the most of these provisions.

Important ways to make sure that your scheme is trans-inclusive:

- Use the term “people who menstruate” rather than women or female.
- Avoid using terms such as “feminine hygiene” to describe menstrual products.
- Remember that not all women will menstruate!
- Avoid using graphics and media that are highly feminised.
- Put products in all toilets and changing facilities! (including gender-neutral and male toilets).



Maximise anonymity in distribution!

Make products easily accessible in discreet locations so department members don't feel scrutiny when requesting menstrual products.

Student Consultation

Consider talking to academic reps, asking staff and sending out a brief survey to enquire about how they think a menstrual product scheme would best work in your College

Product Purchase

See our list of suppliers for bulk purchasing period products for your College. You can also contact the supplier for estimates on products and prices.

Distribution

Discuss within the College whether the Colleg's ancillary team could be responsible for restocking and monitoring the period product supplies in public bathrooms

Trial Run

Testing your scheme in month-long trial run will give you an idea of how many products and the type of products are in demand

Feedback

Keep evaluating and getting feedback on your system to make sure it is effective!

Framework for Implementation



RESOURCES

There is a high mark-up +VAT on menstrual products sold in stores, so we would recommend purchasing products from a wholesale retailer.

List of Product Suppliers:

Grace and Green

- organic and eco-friendly period pads and tampons. Find their store [here](#)!

HeyGirlsUK

- supplies over 70 Universities. Their price calculator and quote generator is available [here](#)!

DAME

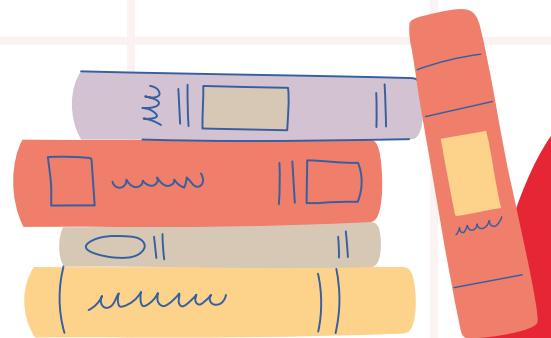
- accessible and sustainable access to periods with less plastic waste. Find their store [here](#)!

Other University Schemes:

1. [University of York](#)
2. [University of Edinburgh](#)
3. [University of Birmingham](#)
4. [Buckinghamshire New University](#)
5. [NYU](#)

Additional Resources

- Email Template to send to suppliers [here](#)!
- 'Advertise Your Scheme' Poster (see final page of guide)



FREE PERIOD PRODUCTS ARE NOW AVAILABLE

**Take what you need, when you
need it!**

If you have any questions or comments,
please contact:

