

Quality Assurance of National Professional Qualifications

Frequently Asked Questions from early supplier engagement stage, including WebEx events on 16/08/17 and 23/08/2017

This document will be updated and published periodically to reflect the questions raised during the early supplier engagement stage.

Please note that:

- **the responses in this document are a statement of the proposals as they currently stand and are subject to change in light of the supplier engagement activity.**
- **the final requirements will be set out in full in the Invitation to Bid (ITB) and accompanying tender documents, which will take precedence over this FAQs document.**

If you have further questions regarding the proposals that have been set out, please email npq.reform@education.gov.uk, with 'QA Agent' in the subject.

NPQ Providers

Have the NPQ providers already been selected?

Yes. Following a competitive tender process, we notified 44 organisations/consortia that, subject to contract, they have been selected to deliver the reformed NPQs from Academic Year 17/18.

Their details will be communicated shortly, including on gov.uk, and we will notify all organisations that have expressed an interest in this procurement once they have been announced.

How long are the NPQ providers' contracts?

NPQ providers' contracts are for an initial term of 3 years, with the option to extend for a further 2 years. They all commence in Academic Year 17/18.

How many candidates are you expecting for each provider over the course of the contract? Are you able to give further details about them?

Overall, we expect there to be in the order of 9,000 – 12,000 participants commencing an NPQ each year. The scale of each provider varies, ranging from those delivering on a small scale (for example, to one or two local authorities), to those delivering nationally on a significant scale.

Each provider will be delivering one or more of the NPQ levels, ranging from those delivering just one NPQ level, to those delivering all four.

We will announce the NPQ providers publically shortly, including on gov.uk, and will outline further details of each provider's delivery plans in the tender documents for this procurement.

QA Agent's Role

Will the QA Agent be required to obtain information from NPQ providers in terms of their candidate supply, delivery schedule, etc.?

Yes. As the Quality Framework sets out, NPQ providers are required to report a range of data and evidence on their performance to DfE/its QA agent regularly. One of the QA agent's functions will be to gather this information, analyse it, and identify any quality issues that materialise, in order to put remedial action in place. It will be for the QA agent to determine how to deliver this function to DfE's specification.

What is the role of the QA Agent when a provider is not delivering the expected number of candidates?

DfE expects the QA Agent to gather a range of evidence on NPQ providers' performance, including its performance against the requirements and metrics in the Quality Framework that relate to recruitment. Where there is under-recruitment, the QA agent will establish the reasons for this and work with the provider to put in place remedial action.

Where, through its QA activities, the QA Agent identifies low take-up of NPQs in particular areas, or a shortage of NPQ provision, the DfE expects to work with the QA agent to tackle this.

What are the links between the QA Agent role and the general evaluation of NPQ policy?

DfE has recently released an expression of interest to appoint an external organisation to evaluate the impact of NPQ policy. Once appointed, we expect the QA agent to work closely with the external evaluators to assess the quality and impact of NPQs.

Who will award NPQ certificates?

DfE expects to administer this process in-house, working from the information supplied to it by the QA agent.

Minimum Requirements

Can you elaborate on what you would consider to be the minimum qualification for suitably qualified assessors, and will you include this specification in the ITB?

In general terms, DfE will want assurance that assessors are high quality with recent and relevant experience. We will set out specific details on this requirement in the full procurement documentation.

Can you elaborate on requirement 3 (expert knowledge of the teaching and school leadership evidence base)?

In general terms, DfE wishes NPQ provision to be grounded in high quality research and evidence, particularly in relation to the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and successful school leadership, and is therefore seeking an

organisation/consortium with the ability to provide assurance on this point. We will set out specific details on this requirement in the full procurement documentation.

Can you elaborate on what you mean by ISO 9001 or equivalent; what do you consider an equivalent standard?

We are reviewing this requirement in light of feedback received during the supplier engagement stage, and if we choose to proceed with this requirement, will set out specific details in the full procurement documentation.

Price Evaluation and Payment Mechanisms

How will the applicants be asked to provide financial information for the procurement, will it be within a template?

Applicants will be asked to complete a template detailing the price of their tender and how these costs are broken down. This will be based on a set of planning assumptions, so that all applicants can be evaluated consistently.

Will payment be made to the QA agent based on agreed-upon levels of activity in the contract?

As part of their bid, applicants will be required to detail the cost breakdown of their service model, including fixed, variable, stepped and set-up costs. On award of the contract, DfE expects to agree with a payment schedule with the provider that ensures set-up and any fixed costs are paid in the relevant period, whilst any variable costs are paid, in arrears, based on actual service activity undertaken by the provider. Payments will also be subject to satisfactory achievement of contract KPIs.

Procurement and Mobilisation Timescales

How quickly does the DfE expect to have the QA agent contract up and running?

On current timescales, we expect to publish the tender documents in late October and award the contract in early 2018. The QA agent will then be expected to mobilise such that quality assurance activities begin in April 2018.

Full details of the procurement and mobilisation timescales will be provided in the

Other

What is NCTL's role in the reformed NPQs?

The National College of Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) is an executive agency of the DfE. Both organisations have worked extremely closely together to reform NPQs, including through the Expert Working Group established for the reforms, which was chaired by Roger Pope CBE, the Chair of NCTL.