**Professional Skills Tests for Prospective Teachers**

The Department for Education (the Authority) wishes to procure a test delivery service and associated development processes to support the Professional Skills Tests for Prospective Teachers. The service will incorporate delivering the skills tests at a network of test centres, supporting the delivery of test content and analysing and delivering reports required by the Department. The tests play a vital role in ensuring the Government’s commitment to the recruitment of capable, high quality teachers and they are required to be available to prospective teachers on a continual basis.

The procured service will incorporate delivering the Professional Skills Test for Prospective Teachers at a network of test centres, supporting the delivery of test content, analysing associated data and delivering reports required by the Department and other external stakeholders.

Approximately 110,000 tests are delivered in each recruitment cycle, which runs from 1 October to 30 September each year. In total, approximately 130,000 tests are billable each recruitment cycle.

It is a requirement for any candidate to pass a literacy test and a numeracy test before embarking on Initial Teacher Training and subsequently gaining Qualified Teacher Status. Candidates can take the skills tests up to three times per subject free of charge. Candidates must pay for any additional attempts at the test, although there is no limit to the number of attempts candidates may make. The numeracy and literacy skills tests:

* cover the core skills that teachers need to fulfil their professional role in schools. This is to ensure all teachers are competent in numeracy and literacy, regardless of their specialism;
* do not replace the GCSE grade C or grade 4 equivalence entry requirement but ensure that the skills are current for those wishing to enter the profession;
* are set in the context of the professional role of a teacher. All questions are based upon scenarios which teachers are likely to encounter;
* are computerised (although each year a total of approximately 450 tests are delivered as paper based tests, for candidates requiring reasonable adjustments).

The literacy skills test is a computerised test divided into four sections: spelling, punctuation, grammar and comprehension. Candidates are allocated 45 minutes to complete the test, unless special arrangements have been granted.

The numeracy skills test is a computerised test covering three areas in two sections: mental arithmetic; interpreting and using written data; and solving written arithmetic problems. Candidates are allocated 48 minutes to complete the test, unless special arrangements have been granted. The first section is strictly timed.

The Authority will be responsible for devising the content of all tests and analysing aspects of test and item level data. The intellectual property rights vested in the tests rest with the Authority.

There is currently a network of over 40 test centres (a mix of prime Supplier and third party sites) mainly in England. Testing also takes place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. All tests take place in a test centre environment. Tests are also currently delivered at three European Test Centres, located in Frankfurt, Madrid and Paris. The Authority wish testing to continue in Europe as part of the new service requirements, but have no constraints with regard to specified location(s). There is no requirement for the Supplier to reimburse travel and subsistence to candidates unless there is a test delivery issue that affects the candidate, for example, a test system failure requiring tests to be cancelled at short notice.

There shall be a requirement to refresh the test content during the life of the contract, usually on an annual basis. User acceptance testing processes will need to be in place to ensure the new/refreshed tests work on the successful supplier’s systems. This may include a refresh of the practice tests.

The contract will be for 3 years with the option to extend for a further 2 years (1+1).