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**Document 2**

**Specification of Service Requirement**

**Reception Baseline Assessments Quality Assurance**

**Agreement Number STA 0122**

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Background

The Standards and Testing Agency

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is an executive agency of the Department for Education.

The STA’s main functions are to:

* lead on assessment policy for schools;
* develop high quality and rigorous national curriculum tests and assessments in line with Ministerial policy;
* undertake operational delivery of national curriculum tests and assessment (including printing, distribution, marking and data capture of tests as appropriate);
* support schools and other stakeholders to deliver national curriculum tests and assessments;
* support and implement arrangements for moderation/monitoring of national assessments.

STA is responsible for developing and delivering the national curriculum tests and assessments and ensuring their proper and safe production and administration. These assessments operate across Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and key stages 1, 2 and 3 and are used by a wide range of maintained and other schools.

Further information about STA and the national curriculum tests and assessments can be found at [www.education.gov.uk/assessments](http://www.education.gov.uk/assessments).

Purpose of the Contract

STA are looking to procure a supplier to work with us to determine appropriate models for assuring the national data from the reception baseline. Once possible models have been determined, STA will agree up to three approaches to be implemented by the supplier in small scale pilots during September/October 2015. The supplier will also be responsible for evaluating the approaches using evidence from the pilots with the aim of recommending an approach to be implemented from September 2016. The developed Quality Assurance models will be the property of DfE.

The DfE will use the new reception baseline assessment to capture the starting point from which the progress that schools make with their pupils will be measured. The content of the reception baseline will reflect the knowledge and understanding of children at the start of reception, and will be clearly linked to the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and key stage 1 national curriculum in English and Mathematics. The reception baseline will be administered within the first half term of a pupil’s entry to a reception class.

Data from the reception baseline will be used to hold schools to account; it must therefore be valid and reliable. Although the reception baseline suppliers are undertaking some activities to quality assure the data they submit, their customer/supplier relationship with schools means that additional central quality assurance will be required.

Initial guidance on proposed models

The reception baseline is a new assessment and the Department has not quality assured assessments of this nature before. As a result, we need to pilot and evaluate different approaches to see what works. When developing models, the supplier will be expected to consider the following factors:

* Different reception baselines – there are currently six approved reception baselines which have very different assessment models. The quality assurance arrangements will need to be suitable for the full range of approved reception baselines.
* Type of quality assurance – in national testing, the Department uses both monitoring and moderation to quality assure outcomes. The definitions of these are given below:
  + Monitoring –an unannounced visit before, during and after the test weeks to ensure they are carrying out the administration in an appropriate way.
  + Moderation – a sample of the judgements made by teachers are checked to ensure they are consistent with national standards. (Moderation only applies where there is an element of teacher judgement.)

Other methods of quality assurance should also be considered.

* Timing – the reception baseline can be taken at any point in the first half term of a pupil starting reception and there is no set test week.
* Pupil age – the age of the pupil means that an external visitor, unknown to the pupil, may affect the outcome, particularly for children who are nervous or shy.
* Written evidence – unlike with older pupils, there is no written evidence produced by the pupil to be reviewed as part of any quality assurance visit, though there will be records of the assessment outcomes.
* Impact of accountability – given how the results will be used as part of the accountability framework to generate a progress measure, there is potential for schools to ensure lower results on the baseline.
* Speed of knowledge acquisition – at this age, pupils acquire new knowledge rapidly and assessments carried out even a few weeks later may generate different outcomes.
* Typical performance – reception baseline suppliers have been asked to work with the Department to determine ‘typical’ performance on their assessment and identify schools where performance may be considered atypical. This will not be available for the pilots, but the supplier should consider how this information could be fed into the quality assurance process.

Schools that choose to take part in the reception baseline will be informed that they may be subject to a quality assurance visit and that this may be announced or unannounced.

Summary of requirements

Suppliers shall be required to demonstrate their ability to deliver or provide the following as part of their tender response::

* Organisational capability and experience of designing and conducting quality assurance processes in an educational environment.
* Proven experience in delivering a product to time and quality using an agreed methodology.
* Ability to source and train appropriately qualified representatives.
* Ability to collate, analyse and evaluate data and make recommendations based on evidence.
* Ability to maintain the security of information.

Project Deliverables/Outputs and Critical Steps

The Project deliverables/outputs are provided in the table below, and individual deliverables or outputs are indicated as Critical Steps where appropriate. All deliverables and outputs are categorised as mandatory and it is essential that you confirm that you can meet them in full. Unless indicated below, all dates are negotiable with STA. Failure to provide confirmation in your proposal documents may result in your proposal being rejected. Functional requirements for each deliverable are included in the table.

*The specific date for all Requirements 1 – 10 must be included within the project plan in the response to the Technical Evaluation.*

| **No** | **Deliverables/Outputs, including functional requirements** | **Acceptance Criteria** | **Due Date** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | **Start-Up Meeting – FIXED DATE**  Supplier will provide the following for review and joint sign-off:   * Detailed plan for development of the potential Quality Assurance (QA) models and a plan for piloting and evaluation of the three agreed models; * Detailed plan for when checkpoints will be held for review; * Detailed project risk and issue log (Risk Log); * Project Initiation Document (PID).   STA will provide:   * Clarification of any specific requirements; * List of schools that have chosen to participate in the reception baseline, with an indication of their attainment band[[1]](#footnote-2), from which the supplier will determine the representative sample of schools that will receive a QA visit. | Project Director / Project manager (or equivalent) attend the Start-Up Meeting and provision of listed documents by agreed date. | **By 3 July 2015** |
| 2 | **Submit potential QA Models to STA**  At least five potential models for the QA of Reception Baseline assessments to be submitted to STA.  As a minimum, the supplier should determine the following for each proposed model:   * The form that the QA visit will take, including the proposed length of the visit * The level of expertise required by the representative undertaking the QA visit * The activities that will be undertaken during the QA visit * An outline of the documentation that will be completed by the representative undertaking the QA visit   The potential issues that are likely to be detected through the proposed model and those which are unlikely to be detected. | Provide details of at least five models one week in advance of model selection meeting for consideration. | **By 24 July 2015** |
| 3 | **Model Selection Meeting**  Submitted QA models will be discussed and three selected to take forward to pilot. STA will provide recommendations for any amendments to the proposed models. | Project Director / Project manager (or equivalent) attend the model selection meeting and proscribed information provided for each model | **By 31 July 2015** |
| 4 | **Checkpoint Meetings and Management Information**  To attend regular Checkpoint meetings at least once a month, although they may need to be more frequent as some stages of the project. These meetings may be held as telephone conference calls. Checkpoint reports to be submitted to STA two working days in advance of each Checkpoint meeting. | Project manager (or equivalent) attends each Checkpoint meeting on agreed date and submission of Checkpoint report two working days in advance of each checkpoint meeting. | To be agreed at  start-up meeting |
| 5 | **School QA visit plan**  Supplier will provide the list of schools that will receive a QA visit as part of the pilot for each of the approved models and the date on which the visit will take place. The sample of schools should be broadly representative by attainment, school type and region.  The supplier is responsible for determining the number of school QA visits required in order to generate sufficient evidence on which to base a recommendation.  The School QA visit plan will be used by the STA helpline to provide guidance to schools who call to confirm that the visit is authentic. The plan must therefore be updated regularly if plans need to change for operational reasons, such as illness. | School QA visit plan submitted is broadly representative for each of the approved models. | **By 21 August 2015** |
| 6 | **Final documentation for each model in the pilot**  The supplier must provide copies of the final documentation to be used by the supplier’s representatives carrying out the QA visits for sign-off.  The supplier should also indicate how they intend to capture data from the documentation in order to support their evaluation of the pilots. | Documentation provided by agreed date. | **By 21 August 2015** |
| 7 | **Training for STA helpline**  Supplier to provide training for the STA helpline in terms of the purpose of the pilot and the details of the models in order to support them in receiving calls from schools.  The STA helpline is based in Manchester and training will be face-to-face. | Supplier undertakes training session with STA helpline. | **By 21 August 2015** |
| 8 | **Training for supplier representatives undertaking QA visits**  Supplier to undertake training with all representatives undertaking QA visits to ensure they understand the requirements for the visit and how to complete the documentation appropriately.  The supplier should survey representatives at the end of the training event to ensure they are ready to undertake the QA visits. | Representatives confirm that they understand the requirements and how to complete documentation | **By 1 September 2015** |
| 9 | **Pilot QA models**  Undertake QA visits to schools for each of the models in the pilot and capture data from each visit in order to analyse and evaluate.  The supplier is responsible for determining the most appropriate data capture mechanism in order to support their evaluation. However, they must ensure sufficient evidence is captured in order to support their recommendations. | All pilot visits as specified in the School QA visit plan are under taken and relevant data captured. | **By 31 October 2015** |
| 10 | **Submit final report and recommendations**  Submit report of pilots and recommendations based on evidence of the most appropriate approach to quality assurance that should be implemented from September 2016.  The report should indicate the advantages and disadvantages of each of the three models in the pilot supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence from the pilot.  This should include an evaluation of:   * The cost of the model * The difficulties involved in undertaking the QA visit * The effectiveness of the model in detecting inappropriate behaviour. | Report submitted containing recommendations based on evidence from the pilot. | **By 8 January 2015** |

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| **Specification of Requirements**  Additional Functional Requirements | |
| **Level Assessed** | Reception |
| **Sub-Contractors** | The Supplier shall ensure that each and every proposed sub-Contractor, consortium member and adviser abides by the requirements of the Contract and this ITQ. |
| **Project Management** | Project manager to attend Checkpoint meetings at least monthly to review the timeline, discuss the progress of the project, highlight any risks, issues and actions.  Provide Checkpoint reports and risk / issue logs two working days in advance of the meeting. |
| **Management Information** | The following MI is required once the QA visits are being undertaken on a weekly basis:   * Number of QA visits undertaken against number expected. |
| **Equalities** | The Supplier will at all times comply with and require that its sub-Suppliers comply with the Equality Act 2010. |
| **Exit and Transition** | In accordance with the contract, the exit and transition plan must be signed off by STA no later than 2 months after the commencement date. |
| **Financial requirements** | The Supplier's financial accounting system must be able to capture all financial and system coding in order to fulfil management and statutory accounting. All expenses and invoices submitted will be subject to VAT. For clarity refer to the HMRC rules and regulations.  The Supplier will ensure where BACs is used, for example to pay the representatives undertaking the QA visits, that BACS information is controlled and kept secure in order to reduce the risk of fraud. All payments must be countersigned and have the necessary approval documents/receipts that must be attached and made available prior to payment. All work needs to verified that is has been completed and delivered. |
| **Security** | The Supplier must ensure that an individual is appointed who shall have ultimate responsibility for all aspects of information governance and security management relating to the Supplier Services.  No later than 10 business days after the effective date of the award of a contract, the Supplier must produce and adhere to a security plan, based on and compliant with the mandatory requirements of the latest HMG Cabinet Office Security Policy Framework and Cyber Essentials.  The supplier will, in conjunction with the DfE, undertake an accreditation triage of the ‘Business impact level’ of the data to be processed, managed or otherwise used by the supplier or their sub-Suppliers to ensure the security controls meet the required levels of the current DfE risk appetite. This will be discussed at the start up meeting.  Dependent upon the data involved and the outcomes of the accreditation triage the supplier may have to produce either a full Risk Management Accreditation Documentation Set (RMADS) or comply with a commercial assurance based on meeting the Cabinet Office SPF mandatory requirements. |

1. The attainment bands have been determined to support reception baseline suppliers in recruiting a representative sample in order to meet the volume requirement for the reception baseline. Schools have been divided into deciles based on their current key stage 1 to key stage 2 progress measure. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)