

REQUEST FOR QUOTES:
QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS FOR THE
RETHINKING ASSESSMENT:
STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES PROJECT

3 MARCH 2022



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Adding Value to Qualifications



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1. Introduction

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the independent State agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training in Ireland.

The functions of QQI are set out in law and include the provision of advice and information to the Minister for Education and Skills on matters concerning policy and practice with respect to quality assurance and improvement in education and training, as well as statutory functions in the areas of:

- External quality assurance of further and higher education and training.
- Validation of programmes and making of awards for certain providers in the further and higher education and training sectors.
- Maintaining, developing, and reviewing the National Framework of Qualifications.
- Maintaining the Irish Register of Qualifications, a database of quality assured education and training programmes and qualifications in Ireland.
- Providing advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland through the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) Ireland.
- Protecting academic integrity and addressing academic fraud and cheating within the further and higher education and training sectors.

The information leaflet - *Who we are and what we do*¹ provides an overview of the services and the organisations we work with and is available on our website, www.qqi.ie

¹ (<http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Who%20We%20Are-Booklet-August%2017.pdf>).



2. Context and Service Requirements

Introduction

QQI wishes to contract a qualitative data analysis service provider to analyse the anonymised transcripts/notes from up to 25 learner focus groups.

Submissions should be made by email only to lbutler@qqi.ie on or before noon on **23 March 2022**. QQI intends to award the contract by 31 March, 2022.

This work is part of a research project that aims to motivate stakeholders to rethink their approaches to assessment for the benefit of the quality of courses and qualifications, learners and ultimately society.

The research project is aligned with the [QQI Statement of Strategy 2022-24](#) and specifically the strategic priority on “Publishing authoritative analysis and insight”.

Context

COVID-19 restrictions precluded many mainstream approaches to assessment such as in-person-invigilated examinations and forced people who may not otherwise have done so, to

- re-examine the precise purposes of each assessment activity precluded by the COVID-19 restrictions,
- confirm the essential learning outcomes that students needed to achieve and demonstrate, and
- engage with alternative approaches to assessment of those outcomes for those purposes.

In 2021 QQI conducted a series of informal soundings with people from FE, HE and PSRBs to identify the forefront issues in assessment of learners in further and higher education in 2021-2. In 2022 we are extending this work to determine the learner perspectives.

Focus Groups

Each of the focus groups will be 60-90 minutes long, will have 6 to 8 active participants including the facilitator, and will take place in March and early April 2022. There may also be note takers and support staff. The anonymised transcripts will be available for analysis by mid-April. The contracted service provider will not be required to process any personal data as part of this contract. The analysis must be completed by 31 May, 2022



After the award of the contract, if there are insufficient focus group numbers to support the delivery of a meaningful report, QQI reserves the right to extend the project deadline so as to accumulate sufficient valid responses. In such circumstances QQI will engage with the successful candidate to negotiate a revised deadline.

Up to 25 focus groups are envisaged. The following is an indicative list potential groups.

- 6 for learners on taught higher education programmes (by field of learning)
- 3 for research degree students
- 1 for international learners on taught programmes
- 1 for international learners on research programmes
- 2 for community and voluntary education learners
- 5 for learners on further education programmes leading to awards at NFQ Levels 4-6
- 3 for apprentices
- 2 for learners with disabilities

Discussion foci for the learner focus group meetings:

The following themes emerged in our interviews with providers and PSRBs in 2021.

1. Innovation and change
2. Examinations and diversifying assessment
3. Assessment in support of learning
4. Over-assessment and learner workload
5. Involvement of learners in assessment
6. Integrative assessment and programme-level coordination of assessment
7. Authentic assessment
8. Intended learning outcomes, programme design, and assessment
9. Remote e-assessment, and e-proctoring
10. Academic integrity including assessment integrity
11. Work-based assessment
12. Assessment and the professions

The following are indicative questions to be considered by the focus groups and they are subject to change

- a) *Comment on the educational return to you on your assessment workload in your programme of study.*
- b) *Tell us about your experience of feedback on assessed work (project, exams, assignments) – can you comment on its usefulness, timeliness, - does it help you improve your learning?*



- c) *Do you think each individual student should have a choice in how she/he is assessed?*
- d) *Have you been in your programme both pre and during the COVID pandemic? What had been your experience of both in-person and remote online assessment – which do you prefer and why?*
- e) *When encountering assessments, have you ever felt the temptation to cheat? What has driven you to feel this way? What could be done to protect you from this?*
- f) *If you could change anything in assessment at your institution/ in your programme, what would you change?*
- g) *For apprenticeships/ programmes with a work-based assessment component – what has your experience of assessment of your work been like? Could you comment on how it could be improved?*
- h) *Any other comments on assessment issues?*

Other issues might include assessment-related matters raised by learners enrolled on programmes that are professionally accredited, e.g., dentistry, accounting, nursing, engineering, law, and such like.

Any other issues (opportunities, challenges, threats) that learners may wish to raise can be discussed subject to the availability of time and relevance to assessment.

Range of Services required:

Specific services that are required include but are not limited to.

- i. Qualitative analysis of focus group transcripts
- ii. Preparation of a publishable report on the findings.

QQI may request that the successful provider present their report at a public event.

Queries and clarifications

All queries or requests for clarification relating to any aspect of this procurement competition or of this RFQ can be submitted to lbutler@qqi.ie. Queries or requests for clarifications will be accepted no later than **12:00** on 14 March 2022 unless otherwise advised QQI.



3. Contract management

Interested providers are asked to submit their proposed methodology and a project plan to indicate how they would engage with QQI. Providers should give information on the qualifications and experience of the personnel assigned to QQI.

Any changes to the proposed personnel during the term of the contract should be communicated in advance to QQI. In turn, where a requirement arises to change personnel, their replacement must be at the same level of seniority and have appropriate experience and knowledge.



4. Cost Model/Price Schedule

Pricing Schedule

Interested providers are requested to provide pricing for the contract in the following format.

Interested providers are also requested to confirm that the same rates will apply for any extensions, if applicable.

QQI is unsure how many focus groups will ultimately require analysis we are seeing mutually exclusive quotations for each of the scenarios below.

Prices for the analysis of

Maximum number of focus groups	Total price exclusive of VAT
Up to 15 focus groups	
Up to 20 focus groups	
Up to 25 focus groups	

For the purposes of this competition and the scoring of responses, each of the above scenarios is deemed to have an equal probability.



5. Qualification Criteria

Candidates will be initially evaluated by reference to the following qualification criteria:

- a. Addressing in full the requirements set out in this RFQ.
- b. Stated ability to meet all requirements.
- c. Inclusion of all information requested.
- d. Inclusion of **2-3** relevant client references, including business name, detailed description of work, and comparability to services required.

Only those proposals that satisfy all the above qualifying criteria will be eligible for further evaluation.

Freedom of Information

Interested providers should be aware that, under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, information provided by them during this public procurement competition may be liable to be disclosed.

Candidates are asked to consider if any of the information supplied by them in their RFQ response should not be disclosed because of its commercial sensitivity. If candidates consider that certain information is not to be disclosed because of its commercial sensitivity, candidates should, when providing such information, clearly identify same and specify the reasons for its commercial sensitivity. If candidates do not identify it as commercially sensitive, it is potentially liable to be released in response to a Freedom of Information request without further consultation with you. QQI will, where possible, consult with candidates about commercially sensitive information so identified before deciding on a request received under the Freedom of Information Act.

Tax Clearance

It will be a condition of the award of any contract under this RFT that the successful candidate shall for the term of any such contract, comply with all EU and domestic taxation law and requirements, including but not being limited to Circular 43/2006 issued by the Department of Finance. This Circular and further information is available at www.finance.gov.ie and www.revenue.ie.

Prior to the award of any contract pursuant to this RFQ, the successful candidate shall be required to supply its Tax Clearance Access Number and Tax Reference Number to facilitate online verification of their tax status by QQI. By supplying these numbers, the successful candidate acknowledges and agrees that QQI has the permission of the successful candidate to verify its tax cleared position online.



Further information can be obtained by contacting:

*Revenue Commissioners
Collector Generals Office
Francis Street
County Limerick
Ireland*

Telephone No: +353 (0) 61310 310 or 1890 203 070 or www.revenue.ie.

You may also contact your local tax office if you are an Irish Company.

Withholding Tax

Where applicable, payments shall be subject to Irish 'Professional Services Withholding Tax' at the prevailing rate (currently at 20%) as laid down by the Revenue Commissioners in Ireland. Non-residents may be able to reclaim such deducted Tax from the *Office of the Revenue Commissioners in Ireland, International Claims Section* located currently at *Government Buildings, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Ireland.* (Tel: 353-1-6733533).

Conflict of Interest

Any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest on the part of a contractor, individual employees, agents, or subcontractors of a contractor must be fully disclosed to QQI as soon as the conflict or potential conflict is or becomes apparent. In the event of any conflict or potential conflict of interest, QQI may invite candidates to propose means by which the conflict might be removed. QQI will, at its absolute discretion, decide on the appropriate course of action, which may in appropriate circumstances include eliminating a contractor from the competition or terminating any contract entered into by a contractor.



Award Criteria

The contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous submission in accordance with the following award criteria and the weightings below:

	Criteria	Weighting	Maximum Score	Minimum Score Required
A	Proposed methodology and plan	35%	350	210
<p><i>Candidates should detail their proposed methodology to demonstrate how they will meet the requirements set out above. An understanding of the objectives of the Rethinking Assessment: Stakeholder Perspectives research project should be demonstrated.</i></p>				
B	Technical Merit of Personnel Assigned and experience of effectively delivering a similar service in the education sector	35%	350	210
<p><i>Candidates should provide information on the team members contributing to the service indicating each members' precise role and responsibilities. CVs demonstrating each members' expertise for the role proposed must be provided.</i></p> <p><i>Candidates should detail their experience in the provision of qualitative data analysis services in the education sector.</i></p>				
C	Service Delivery	10%	100	60
<p><i>Candidates should provide evidence of the timeliness of their service and ability to meet deadline.</i></p>				
D	Cost of the Contract	20%	200	120
<p><i>Candidates are required to provide <u>fixed price</u> quotations exclusive of VAT for the analysis of data produced in each of the following scenarios</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Up to 15 focus groups</i> b) <i>Up to 20 focus groups</i> c) <i>Up to 25 focus groups</i> <p><i>For the purposes of this competition and the scoring of responses, each of the above scenarios is deemed to have an equal probability.</i></p>				



Qualitative criteria will be scored using the following baseline scoring system:(see * below).

80% to 100%	A response with very few or no weaknesses that demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the requirements and assurance that the candidate will deliver to a high standard.
60% to 79%	A response which demonstrates a good understanding of requirements and gives reasonable assurance of delivery to a good standard.
40% to 59%	A response where reservations exist. Lacks full credibility/convincing detail, and there is a significant risk that the response will not deliver a successful outcome for QQI.
20% to 39%	A response where serious reservations exist. This may be because, for example, insufficient detail is provided, and the response has fundamental flaws, or is seriously inadequate or seriously lacks credibility with a high risk of non-delivery.
0% to 19%	Response completely fails to address the criterion under consideration.

*** A candidate may be awarded any baseline score between 0 and 100% under criterion (A) to (C).**

NOTE 2: The lowest cost quote that also meets all the minimum requirements of the **qualitative** award criteria (A) to (C) above will receive the maximum score achievable under this criterion. The scores of the other valid quotes will be calculated using the following formula:

Lowest Cost Quote meeting minimum requirements	A
Cost for the Quote being evaluated	B
Maximum Points available for Cost	200
Formula employed	$\frac{200 \times A}{B}$

NOTE 3: Candidates should ensure in their quote that they provide detailed information in respect of all aspects of the contract award criteria as stated above. This will enable QQI to assess fully the extent of their offers.