

Request for Proposal – Knowledge Hub/ Information Exchange

April 2021

Introduction

This **Request for Proposal** ('RFP') has been prepared by the General Optical Council (GOC) for the purpose of inviting proposals for the provision of a knowledge exchange/ information hub ('hub') as described in 'our requirements' in section one.

About Us

The General Optical Council (GOC) is the statutory regulator for UK optical professions. We register around 30,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses. Our mission is to protect and promote the health and safety of the public.

Background

In our strategic plan, we committed to delivering and implementing a strategic review of optical education and training to ensure that the qualifications we approve are fit for purpose, meet patient or service-user needs and ensure optical professionals have the expected level of knowledge, skills and behaviours and the confidence and capability to keep pace with changes to future roles, scopes of practice and service redesign across all four nations.

In February 2021 we updated our requirements for GOC approved qualifications for optometrists and dispensing opticians. Our updated requirements (outlined below) will replace our current Quality Assurance Handbooks for both professions:

- **Outcomes for Registration**, which describe the expected knowledge, skills and behaviours a dispensing optician or optometrist must have at the point they qualify and enter the register with the GOC.
- **Standards for Approved Qualifications**, which describe the expected context for the delivery and assessment of the outcomes leading to an award of an approved qualification.
- **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Method**, which describes how we will gather evidence to decide whether a qualification leading to registration as either a dispensing optician or an optometrist meets our Outcomes for Registration and Standards for Approved Qualifications, in accordance with the Opticians Act.

You can read more about the background, purpose and fit of the knowledge hub/ information exchange within our wider Education Strategic Review on P144 of our [July 2020 Council papers](#).

Section One – Our requirements

Provision of a knowledge exchange/ information hub to facilitate knowledge-led collaborations within the optical sector to support programme leaders and academic faculty in their design of qualifications that meet our updated requirements for qualification approval.

Background

We wish to appoint an organisation or a group of organisations (a consortia bid– see below for more information) to develop, manage and lead a knowledge exchange/ information hub (**‘hub’**) to facilitate knowledge-led collaborations within the optical sector to support programme leaders and academic faculty in their design of qualifications to meet our updated requirements for qualification approval. *(Our ‘Outcomes for Registration,’ ‘Standards for Approved Qualifications’ and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Method’ which were approved by GOC Council in February 2021 –can be read [here](#). We anticipate most providers of GOC approved or provisionally approved qualifications will work towards admitting students to adapted qualifications which meet the new requirements in either the 2023/24 or 2024/25 academic year. However, applications for new qualification approval can be made at any time to the GOC.)*

The selected organisation or a group of organisations will be expected to forge close working relationships with providers and prospective providers of GOC-approved and provisionally approved qualifications (**‘providers’**). The knowledge hub will be a resource readily open to programme leaders, academic staff, module coordinators, preceptors, supervisors and practice-based staff/ employers, sector businesses to support the academic community as a whole in their design and development of qualifications to meet our outcomes and standards and further support practices and sector businesses in their role as placement providers within the new qualifications.

Our requirements

We are inviting proposals from organisations or a group of organisations (the contractor) for the provision of an independently curated knowledge exchange/ information hub to be operated on a contract basis on behalf of GOC for a four-year term (the lifespan of the hub) with a break clause at year two. The hub will have a limited lifespan, commencing once the contract is awarded (July 2021) and closing once providers of currently approved and provisionally approved qualification have migrated into the new system (July 2025).

Hub's organisation and activities

The hub will offer an independent forum organised around three themes; **Journal**, **Community** and **Projects** (described further below) with the aim of facilitating cross-sector collaborations to:

- explore, establish and share best practice;
- develop indicative curricula, share and co-create documentation;
- achieve potential economies of scale in qualification design, development and delivery;
- realise the benefits of enhanced collaboration;
- help mitigate or counter risks in qualification design, development and delivery;
- agree and deliver an agreed programme of activities organised around three themes, Journal, Community and Projects.

Proposals will be expected to evidence how the contractor intends to collaborate with optical sector and academic community to select and deliver the hub's programmes, activities and projects within the three themes, as follows:

Journal

- a. Create, share, exchange and disseminate knowledge, ideas, insights, data and documents to support providers in their design and development of integrated qualifications; generating a library of commissioned co-produced resources;
- b. Build a digital archive of resources, published output and indicative documentation (documents, evaluations, studies, reviews, videos, reports, papers, etc.) to support academic staff/ faculty and the sector in implementing the new outcomes and standards;

Community

- c. Curate a vibrant forum open bringing together (for free) providers, academic and college faculty and practice-based staff, including programme leaders, module coordinators, preceptors and supervisors, students, employers and optical sector bodies, providing leadership and support for providers and the academic community;
- d. Provide a structured platform for digital connectivity to inform and facilitate cross-sector knowledge-led collaborations and information exchange for the benefit of the academic community and practices/sector businesses in the design and development of qualifications to meet the outcomes and standards; and support sector businesses in their role as placement providers; so that the skills and abilities of future registrants remain up to date and responsive to the needs of the healthcare system;

Projects

- e. Deliver one or two collaborative, cross-sector projects in each year of the hub's lifespan to assist providers in their design of new/adapted

qualifications to meet the proposed new outcomes and standards. In the first year of the hub's lifespan the hub's first project will be to develop the sector-led co-produced indicative documentation¹ to supplement the Outcomes for Registration. Subsequent projects will be established by the hub's advisory/ leadership team in close consultation with the optical sector and academic community in response to provider need on a rolling schedule, and agreed each year by the GOC. Potential projects could include topics such as: publication of guidance of assessment item design; standards setting; value-based admissions; development of fitness to train procedures; work-based/ experiential learning; patient, service user and stakeholder engagement in qualification design; etc.

Participation

Our expectation is that participation in the hub's programmes, activities, projects and forums, and access to the hub's publications/ documentation will open (free of charge) to all providers of GOC approved or provisionally approved qualifications / prospective providers including programme leaders, academic staff, practice-based staff, module coordinators, preceptors and supervisors, as well as optical sector and third sector/ patient and public bodies, employers and students, with all encouraged to contribute. Ideally this will be facilitated by secure UK-hosted digital platform with a combination of some or all of the following functionalities:

- A secure UK-hosted collaboration space with ability to create open, restricted, privileged, and private collaboration groups
- Collaboration tools such as blogs, discussions, library and real-time document collaboration
- Potential for hub (not GOC) branding across pages and groups
- Ability to manage network information and curate news
- A search and recommendations engine, content tagging, categorisation and indexing facility.

NOTE: Potential contractors may like to consider using the online public service collaboration platform, <https://www.khub.net/> which can provide at low cost (approx. £2-4k a year) a digital platform for information sharing, a repository for information and a forum for live discussions. Other platforms digital platform, including academic or bespoke digital platforms may also offer equivalent functionality.

¹ In February 2021 we said 'The outcomes will be supplemented by a GOC commissioned sector-led co-produced indicative document which will provide a greater level of detail for each profession to support providers as they develop new qualifications or adapt existing approved qualifications to meet these outcomes. Providers of GOC approved qualifications will be expected to map their programmes to the indicative document on a 'map or explain' basis.'

Performance Expectations

GOC's Education Projects, Policy and Research Manager will have oversight of the contractor's performance and adherence to the contract terms.

The contractor will be responsible for the hub's day-to-day performance to deliver our requirements and meet its contracted purpose, intended aims, budget and reporting, coordinated through a hub advisory (or leadership) committee hosted and organised by the contractor. Our expectation is that successful proposals will be able to describe an approach to engaging with the academic community and the optical sector across each of the four nations which ensures the sector's appropriate involvement in the leadership of the hub.

The key success indicators will be:

- the active involvement of providers, the academic community, students, service users and optical sector bodies across each of the four nations in the hub's leadership, governance, programmes, activities and projects
- the impact of those activities upon providers' ability not only to design qualifications that meet our outcomes and standards, but also to thrive, attracting good-quality applicants to high-quality programmes which meet patient, stakeholder and service-user needs
- ability to deliver the hub's intended first project to develop the sector-led co-produced indicative documentation to supplement the Outcomes for Registration by end of October 2021

Budget

We have an approved budget of up to £140,000 for the full four years of the hub's lifespan (i.e., £35,000 a year for four years including VAT if charged and all other contractor costs).

Proposals over £140,000 will not be considered.

RFP Submission Instructions

Please read the instructions below carefully. Failure to comply with them or to return any of the required documents or information may invalidate your proposal, which must be returned by 10am, 8th June 2021 to ESR@optical.org.

To bid for this contract, you must submit a proposal which answers the questions in the 'Questionnaire' in section three, explaining how you will meet our requirements described above. You must use the pricing schedule to explain the cost breakdown for your proposed approach to carry out this work.

Questions about this RFP

You may submit, by no later than 5pm on 28th April 2021 any queries that you have relating to this RFP. Please submit queries by email to ESR@optical.org.

Any queries should clearly reference the appropriate paragraph in the documentation and, if possible, should be aggregated rather than sent individually. As far as is reasonably possible, we will respond to all reasonable requests for clarification of any aspect of this RFP and supporting documents provided they are received before the above deadline. No queries received after the above deadline will be answered.

Submission of Tenders

Your proposal must be received in MS Word format (not PDF) by email to ESR@optical.org no later than 10am, 8th June 2021. Proposals must be written in English language.

Late proposals will not be considered.

Following assessment of proposals, we reserve the right to request of selected contractors a further tender, proposals or pricing details, or a response to an Invitation to Tender (ITT).

Data and Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOIA") applies to GOC and should be aware of our obligations and responsibilities under FOIA to disclose, on written request, recorded information held by GOC. Information provided by you in connection with this proposal, or with any contract that may be awarded as a result of this exercise, may therefore have to be disclosed in response to such a FOIA request, unless we decide that one of the statutory exemptions under the FOIA applies. If you wish to designate information supplied as part of this response as confidential, or if you believe that its disclosure would be prejudicial to any person's commercial interests, you must provide clear and specific detail as to the precise information involved. Such designation alone may not prevent disclosure if in our reasonable opinion publication is required by applicable legislation or Government policy or where disclosure is required by the Information Commissioner.

Warnings/Disclaimer

Offering an inducement of any kind in relation to obtaining this contract with GOC will disqualify your proposal from being considered. You must not tell anyone else what your proposal or tender price is or will be before the deadline for proposals. You must not try to obtain any information about anyone else's proposal make any arrangements with another organisation about whether or not they should propose, or about their or your tender price. Failure to comply with any of these conditions may disqualify your proposal.

Nothing contained in this RFP or any other communication made between GOC or our representatives and any person shall constitute an agreement, contract or representation (except for the formal written contract between GOC and our preferred supplier). Receipt by the tenderer of this RFP does not imply the existence of a contract or commitment by or with GOC for any purpose and tenderers should note that this RFP may not result in the award of any business.

It is the responsibility of tenderers to obtain for themselves all information necessary for the preparation of their response to this RFP.

The information contained in this RFP and the supporting documents and in any related written or oral communication is believed to be correct at the time of publication. GOC will not accept any liability for its accuracy, adequacy or completeness and no warranty is given as such. We reserve the right to change any aspect of, or cease, the tender process at any time.

By issuing this RFP, GOC is not bound in any way and does not have to accept the lowest or any tender.

You will not be entitled to claim from us any costs or expenses which you may incur in preparing your tender whether or not your tender is successful and regardless of whether a contract is awarded.

Consortia Bids

If you are bidding for this contract in association with another organisation or organisations you must explain the structure of the team submitting your proposal. Failure to do so may lead to your bid being disqualified.

For example, if you are bidding as a lead partner you must explain how the other organisations involved with your team will support you, and who will deliver the contract in the event that you are unable to continue.

If you are intending to bid as a consortium and to establish a new legal entity to perform the contract, please give full details of how that entity will be constituted, including its legal status, who will own it and in what proportions.

Timetable

This is the timetable for submission of proposals. We reserve the right to alter this timetable.

Activity	Deadline
RFP publication	12 th April 2021
Deadline for questions on RFP	28 th April 2021
GOC responses to questions on RFP	11 th May 2021
Deadline for proposals	10am 8 th June 2021
Selection process	w/c 14 th June 2021
Contract preparation for sign-off	w/c 21 st & 28 th June 2021
Project kick-off meeting	w/c 11 th July

Section Three - Questionnaire

In order to bid for this contract, you must submit a proposal explaining how you will meet our requirements described in section one. Your proposal must include the answers to the questions set out in this section of the RFP to enable GOC to make an informed selection of the most appropriate contractor. You must use the pricing schedule to explain how you will charge for the work you do.

In structuring your response, please repeat the question in your proposal and then include your answer. Please number every page sequentially and include the date and title of your document on each page. Please submit your proposal in MS Word (not PDF) format.

Additional material which may expand upon your proposal may be included as appendices.

Our questions:

Contractor information: (max 1 A4 page)

1. Name(s), address, legal status and contact details of contractor team
2. Profile(s) and expertise of contractor team including examples of similar projects
3. If a consortia, the structure of the team submitting the tender and lead partner. If you are intending to bid as a consortium and establish a new legal entity to perform the contract, please give full details of how that entity will be constituted, including its legal status, who will own it and in what proportions

Evidence you understand and can deliver what GOC requires: (max 6 A4 pages)

4. Please describe how you will engage the academic community, students, service users and optical sector bodies in the hub’s leadership, governance, programmes, activities and projects
5. Please describe your approach to the delivery of our requirements, detailing how you intend to collaborate with the academic community and optical sector bodies across the four nations to support programme leaders and academic faculty to establish the type, scope and outcomes of programmes, activities and projects you envision within the three themes
6. Please detail how you would carry out the hub’s first project, the production of a sector-led co-produced indicative document. including timelines and your approach to sector engagement²
7. Please describe how you will measure and report on the impact of the hub’s work, the effectiveness and reach of its engagement with the academic community and optical sector and management of risks, including proposed metrics/ KSI/KPIs
8. Please describe how you will manage and support the hub over its lifespan, including your overheads and the number and type of proposed FTE staff, and your capability and capacity to manage the hub successfully
9. Please confirm the types and amounts of insurance cover you hold (including employer’s liability, public liability and professional indemnity insurance)

Pricing Schedule

All pricing should be in pound sterling (£GBP).

10. Please describe your price for each year of the hub’s proposed four-year lifespan, allocated across the three themes as follows:

	Overheads + staffing	Activity Costs			Total
		Journal (digital costs+ content)	Community (curation and hosting)	Projects (approx. 1-2 per year)	
Financial Year 1 (July 2021-March 2022)	£	£	£	£	£
Financial Year 2 (April 2022 - March 2023)	£	£	£	£	£
Financial Year 3 (April 2023 - March 2024)	£	£	£	(£	£
Financial Year 4 (April 2024 - July 2025)	£	£	£	£	£
Total					£

² The GOC is flexible in how the content of the sector-led indicative document is developed; however, it must hold the confidence of the sector given its intended use.

Please note: We have an approved budget of up to £140,000 for the full four years of the hub's lifespan (i.e., £35,000 a year for four years including VAT if charged and all other contractor costs)

Tenders over £140,000 will not be considered.

A more detailed budget and potential proposed programmes, activities and projects within the three themes may be included as an appendix.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be assessed with reference to the following criteria:

- extent to which proposals evidence the contractor understands and can deliver GOC's requirements
- the contractor having the best approach, skills, qualifications and track record of delivering a similar initiatives
- the ability to deliver proposals within time and budget

Responses to each question will be scored on a range from 0 to 5. Each score has the following meaning:

0. Unacceptable
1. Unsatisfactory - below requirement
2. Weak - well below requirement
3. Meets requirement
4. Good – exceeds requirement
5. Outstanding – considerably above requirement

Weightings are given to each of the questions that are scored. Your total score will be determined by the score for each question multiplied by the applicable weighting.

Question	Weight
1	Unscored (Essential)
2	5%
3	5%
4	20%
5	20%
6	20%
7	10%

8	10%
9	Unscored (Essential)
10	10%

For Information - Sector implementation map (v.22nd March 202) *For illustrative purposes only, to help potential contractors understand how the hub relates to other activity*

