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Planning

Quality Assurance for the Test of Competence (Computer Based Testing and Objective Structured Clinical Examination)

NURSING AND MIDWIFERY COUNCIL

F01: Prior information notice

Prior information only

Notice identifier: 2023/S 000-020237

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-03e1da

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Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

NURSING AND MIDWIFERY COUNCIL

23 Portland Place

LONDON

W1B1PZ

Email

Procurement@nmc-uk.org

Country

United Kingdom

Region code

UK - United Kingdom

Charity Commission (England and Wales)

1091434

Internet address(es)

Main address

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/>

I.3) Communication

The procurement documents are available for unrestricted and full direct access, free of charge, at

<https://nmcprocurementportal.force.com/s/Welcome>

Additional information can be obtained from the above-mentioned address

I.4) Type of the contracting authority

Other type

UK Health Regulator

I.5) Main activity

Health

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

Quality Assurance for the Test of Competence (Computer Based Testing and Objective Structured Clinical Examination)

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 72225000 - System quality assurance assessment and review services

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

We are the independent regulator for nurses and midwives in the UK, and nursing associates in England.

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery that improves everyone's health and wellbeing.

As the independent regulator of more than 788,000 nursing and midwifery professionals, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.

Our core role is to regulate. First, we promote high education and professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England. Second, we maintain the register of professionals eligible to practise. Third, we investigate concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates - something that affects less than one percent of professionals each year. We believe in giving professionals the chance to address concerns, but we'll always take action when needed.

To regulate well, we support our professions and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout people's careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address new challenges. We also support people involved in our investigations, and we're increasing our visibility so people feel engaged and empowered to shape our work.

Regulating and supporting our professions allows us to influence health and social care. We share intelligence from our regulatory activities and work with our partners to support workforce planning and sector-wide decision making. We use our voice to speak up for a healthy and inclusive working environment for our professions.

The NMC are excited to announce our intention to go to market to source and appoint a Quality Assurance (QA) Partner who will have sole responsibility for undertaking all aspects of QA covering our test of competence.

II.1.5) Estimated total value

Value excluding VAT: £125,000

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.2) Additional CPV code(s)

- 72224200 - System quality assurance planning services

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UK - United Kingdom

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

The over-arching objective of the NMC in exercising its functions is the protection of the public. The principal functions of the NMC are to establish the standards of education, training, conduct and performance for nurses, midwives and nursing associates and to ensure the maintenance of those standards. This is to ensure that everyone we register can deliver high quality healthcare throughout their careers.

We are looking to appoint a Quality Assurance (QA) Partner who will have sole responsibility for undertaking all aspects of QA covering our test of competence.

The test of competence is designed to assess a candidate's ability to meet the NMC's standards of proficiency and to practise safely, effectively and in accordance with the NMC's Code of Conduct (the 'Code').

The test currently comprises two elements. The first is a computer-based test (the 'CBT') which assesses a candidate's clinical and numerical knowledge through two multiple choice test papers. The second element is the objective structured clinical examination (the 'OSCE') which is a practical, simulated assessment of the candidate's practical clinical skills and knowledge.

Whilst there are two elements to the test of competence, the test itself should be seen as a single, holistic test. Both parts of the test of competence are designed and developed in conjunction with each other so that the full breadth and depth of a candidate's skills, knowledge, experience and training are tested efficiently and effectively.

The NMC regularly reviews and assesses the format and content of the test of competence to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate. We are committed to working with the appointed specialist to maintain the test and its future development.

Who can sit the Test of competence:

For applicants to the nursing or midwifery part of the register who were trained outside of

the EU or the EEA, the NMC will ask candidates to demonstrate that they hold a qualification that has or could lead to registration in the candidate's home country, which is referred to as our eligibility criteria. As part of our registration process, the candidate is required to sit test of competence to demonstrate that they have the requisite standard of proficiency for admission to the nursing or midwifery part of the register.

Those who were trained in the UK but who did not register their qualification with the NMC within five years of award are may also choose to complete the test of competence. In addition, the NMC also requires those wishing to return to the register after a period of absence, to complete a test of competence to demonstrate they are competent and safe to practise or alternatively complete a return to practise programme.

Satisfactory completion of the test of competence provides the NMC with objective evidence that an applicant has the requisite standard of proficiency. Those who pass the test of competence will be deemed to have met one of the requirements for admission or readmission to the NMC's register. Consequently, it is imperative that the quality of the test and its consistent delivery are of the highest standard.

The Code contains the professional standards that NMC registered nurses, midwives and nursing associates must uphold. All registered nurses, midwives and nursing associates must act in line with the Code and while the values and principles set out in the Code may be interpreted in a range of different practice settings, they are not negotiable or discretionary.

More information covering the Code can be found here:

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/>

There are now seven platforms within the new standards of proficiency for registered nurses with two skills and procedure annexes (A and B). The standards of proficiency for registered nurses were launched in May 2018 and came into effect on 28 January 2019. These standards can be found here: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nurses/standards-of-proficiency-for-registered-nurses/>

These standards of proficiency apply to all four fields of nursing practice. However, we recognise that there is an additional depth of knowledge and skills necessary for the applicant's intended field of practice.

The standards of proficiency for nursing associates were agreed in September 2018. These standards align to the new standards of proficiency for registered nurses and allow for smooth progression for those nursing associates who want to become nurses in the future. These will also make it easy to see the distinctions between the nursing and nursing associate roles.

The nursing associate standards of proficiency can be found on our website here:

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nursing-associates/>

Our midwifery standards were updated in 2020, and you can find more details about our midwifery standards here: Standards of proficiency for midwives - The Nursing and Midwifery Council (<https://www.nmc.org.uk/>)

The Supplier shall at all times ensure that the test of competence is designed and delivered in such a way as to always comply with any applicable anti-discrimination legislation and with the NMC's Equality and Diversity "Valuing Diversity" Policy (which may be amended from time to time).

Scope of Services:

1. The Quality Assurance Partner will provide the necessary assurance to the NMC around all aspects of the test design and delivery services of the test, by carrying out a set of appropriate checks which include, but are not limited to:

Test Design

- The appropriateness and quality of the governance processes and controls in place
- The QA Partner will also be required to review a representative sample of test content covering the CBT and OSCE to confirm the validity, accuracy and suitability of the test content and compliance to the NMC blueprints
- The appropriate methodology and approach to content development
- Establish the appropriate controls are in place to monitor test performance and take action to remedy any poor performing stations /questions where it is appropriate to do so
- A robust framework is in place to maintain the security and integrity of the examination

Delivery of the CBT and OSCE

- Establish the appropriate processes are in place for test examiners to deliver the OSCE fairly and consistently within, and across, all 5 OSCE delivery centres
- Review the moderation activity, handling for appeals and complaints to ensure fairness and compliance against agreed processes
- Audit the current processes that are in place to train and induct test centre staff to ensure those delivering the test are adequately trained
- Support and advise the NMC on all matters concerning test quality and consistency

- Support the NMC's operational team with the review and monitoring of all data received by our CBT test publisher. This data will help to monitor candidate performance on the CBT as well as identify any patterns where test fraud may require investigation.

2. The QA Partner will provide the NMC and their partners with the appropriate levels of assurance around all aspects of test quality, robustness, and reliability to enable us to approve its operation and usage amongst our partners and test takers.

The contract will be for an initial term of two years with the option to extend for one year: 2+1 = 3 years maximum.

The estimated lifetime value of the contract, including extensions, will be £150,000 approx. including VAT.

II.2.14) Additional information

This Prior Information Notice is to inform the market of the forthcoming procurement opportunity. Further Contract Notice will be issued as a call for competition for the procurement in due course.

Suppliers interested in participating in this procurement exercise are requested to express an interest in this PIN via the Atamis e-Sourcing portal <https://nmcprocurementportal.force.com/s/Welcome>, where the tender will be published (Project Name: Quality Assurance for the Test of Competence (CBT and OSCE), Project reference: C1256).

You will need to complete a short form to register, providing company details, categories you can provide services for, and user details including an email address that will be used as your login details.

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

15 August 2023

Section IV. Procedure

IV.1) Description

IV.1.8) Information about the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: Yes

Section VI. Complementary information

VI.3) Additional information

The NMC reserves the right not progress to a full potential procurement exercise as a result of this PIN until they are fully ready to do so which will be communicated to the marketplace by the issuing of the formal Contract Notice, which at this stage is estimated to be published in August 2023.