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Tender

Contract for the Provision of Staff and Student Counselling Services

Queen's University Belfast

UK4: Tender notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-041388

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-05624a ([view related notices](#))

Published 18 July 2025, 3:36pm

Changes to notice

This notice has been edited. The [previous version](#) is still available.

Published Closing time is not accurate, the correct closing time is 16:00pm

Scope

Reference

250083

Description

Queen's have a requirement for the Provision of Staff and Student Counselling Services. The University's requirements have been spilt into the following two Lots:

Lot 1: Provision of an Employee Assistance Programme

The University is fully committed to the wellbeing of its staff and recognises that many staff have competing demands on their time and resources, both inside and outside work.

The importance of achieving and maintaining a satisfactory work/life balance is fundamental to the maintenance of good health and wellbeing, and counselling has been shown to be of benefit to those who are in need of support and guidance on a wide variety of personal, social and occupational issues.

The Employee Assistance Programme will supplement the other sources of support to staff which include their line management, the People and Culture Directorate, the Occupational Health Service, Trade Union advisers etc.

The current service usage includes approximately 720 personal counselling sessions delivered to approximately 160 new clients per year, using a maximum six session counselling model. Counselling is mainly delivered face to face, but telephone and online video sessions must also be allowed.

Lot 2: Provision of a Student Counselling Hub

By working in partnership with the University's Student Wellbeing and Accessible Learning Support the Supplier will be required to mobilise their diverse and inclusive workforce to provide an effective, timely, confidential and professional psychological therapy and support service through a 'matched stepped care model'.

In addition, the Supplier will have responsible for:

- Appropriate signposting and onward referral to NHS or third sector providers for specialist or longer-term support for complex cases.
- Clinical governance
- Service marketing and accessibility
- Delivery in partnership with the University

Please note that provision of services under Lot 2 is to Queen's University registered students only and does not include students from University Colleges or INTO Queen's.

Suppliers are invited to tender for one or both Lots. There are no restrictions on how many Lots a Supplier can apply for. Each Lot will be evaluated independently against the evaluation criteria as set out in the Tender Response Pack and Queen's reserves the right to award each lot separately. The award in respect of each Lot shall be made to one Supplier.

Total value (estimated)

- £2,166,666.67 excluding VAT
- £2,600,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 11 January 2026 to 10 January 2027
- Possible extension to 10 January 2031
- 5 years

Description of possible extension:

For both Lot 1 and Lot 2, the Contract shall be for a period of 3 years, subject to satisfactory annual review, with the option to extend the contract by up to a further 24 Months .

This option to extend shall be entirely at the discretion of Queen's and shall be subject to satisfactory review of performance.

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 85312300 - Guidance and counselling services
- 85312320 - Counselling services

Lot constraints

Description of how multiple lots may be awarded:

Suppliers are invited to tender for one or both Lots. There are no restrictions on how many Lots a Supplier can apply for. Each Lot will be evaluated independently against the evaluation criteria as set out in the Tender Response Pack and Queen's reserves the right to award each lot separately. The award in respect of each Lot shall be made to one Supplier.

Lot LOT-0001. Lot 1: Provision of an Employee Assistance Programme

Description

The University is seeking to appoint a Supplier to deliver an Employee Assistance Programme in Queen's University Belfast.

The Supplier must provide the core requirements which must include, but not limited to:

1. Telephone Triage and Support Services

2. Counselling Services
3. Online Wellbeing Support Hub
4. Trauma and Critical Incident Support
5. Management Support Services
6. Manager support and advice
7. Case Management
8. Health and wellbeing promotion and awareness
9. Publicity and awareness of service

The goal is to:

- provide professional, confidential, and accessible support services to improve staff wellbeing.
- focus on mental health, financial wellbeing, legal guidance, and workplace challenges,
- ensure employees receive timely and effective support.

This aligns with Queen's commitment to fostering a healthy and engaged workforce.

Lot value (estimated)

- £291,666.67 excluding VAT
- £350,000 including VAT

Same for all lots

CPV classifications and contract dates are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Lot LOT-0002. Lot 2: Provision of a Student Counselling Hub

Description

The University is seeking to appoint a supplier to deliver Student Counselling services via a Student Counselling Hub.

The goal is to :

- complement existing nontherapeutic supports offered through University support services.

- Deliver a psychological therapy and support service through a 'matched stepped care model' that empowers students as healthy learners to manage their mental health, build resilience, and develop practical coping strategies.

Supports required include:

- o On-line self-help resource platform that equips students with self-help tools to manage their mental health independently.
- o Guided self-help to support students to implement strategies
- o Short-term, solution-focused talking therapy counselling for students
- o 24/7 helpline
- o low intensity group work and psycho education workshops
- o "Out of Hours" Support calls

In addition, the Supplier will have responsible for:

- Appropriate signposting and onward referral to NHS or third sector providers for specialist or longer-term support for complex cases.
- Clinical governance
- Service marketing and accessibility
- Delivery in partnership with the University

Lot value (estimated)

- £1,875,000 excluding VAT
- £2,250,000 including VAT

Same for all lots

CPV classifications and contract dates are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Submission

Enquiry deadline

6 August 2025, 4:00pm

Tender submission deadline

13 August 2025, 4:00pm

Submission address and any special instructions

Please submit response via <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/queensuniversitybelfast.aspx/Home>

Tenders may be submitted electronically

Yes

Languages that may be used for submission

English

Award decision date (estimated)

10 October 2025

Recurring procurement

Publication date of next tender notice (estimated): 19 July 2030

Award criteria

Lot LOT-0001. Lot 1: Provision of an Employee Assistance Programme

Name	Description	Type
Simple description	The award criteria consist of 60% Technical and 40% Price, with the Technical criteria broken down as follows: Implementation - 10%, Service Provision - 20%, Service Promotion - 10%, Data Analytics - 5%, Added Value/Innovation - 5%, Quality Review - 5%, and Responsible Procurement - 5%.	Price

Weighting description

The award criteria consist of 60% Technical and 40% Price, with the Technical criteria broken down as follows: Implementation - 10%, Service Provision - 20%, Service Promotion - 10%, Data Analytics - 5%, Added Value/Innovation - 5%, Quality Review - 5%, and Responsible Procurement - 5%.

Lot LOT-0002. Lot 2: Provision of a Student Counselling Hub

Name	Description	Type
Simple description	The award criteria consist of 60% Technical and 40% Price, with the Technical criteria broken down as follows: Service Implementation - 20%, Service Delivery and Impact- 20%, Service Promotion - 5%, Key Personnel Experience - 5%, Innovation and Added Value - 5%, and Responsible Procurement - 5%.	Price

Weighting description

The award criteria consist of 60% Technical and 40% Price, with the Technical criteria broken down as follows: Service Implementation - 20%, Service Delivery and Impact- 20%, Service Promotion - 5%, Key Personnel Experience - 5%, Innovation and Added Value - 5%, and Responsible Procurement - 5%.

Other information

Payment terms

Payment for the services delivered is to be invoiced in arrears, on satisfactory completion of the requirements outlined in a respective monthly service delivery report. Invoices must quote the relevant University purchase order number. Invoices without a purchase order may be rejected.

Description of risks to contract performance

It is known that there may be potential development to the service which may result in

additional requirement, which cannot be adequately quantified or estimated at this time.

Whilst it is not possible to understand at the point of writing the specification what the additional service requirement might be, what impact this may have on the performance of the contract or what the level of impact may be; it is recognised that this may potentially happen in future and as such may lead to a modification of the contract to facilitate these risks arising.

The potential developments may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Expansion of Service Coverage

- Increase in the number of staff, departments, or geographical locations to be supported due to organisational growth.

2. Additional Service Channels

- Introduction of new modes of delivery (e.g. digital/virtual wellbeing services, mobile apps, on-site clinics, or satellite drop-ins).

3. Increased Volume of Demand

- A significant rise in the number of service users due to heightened awareness, increased internal promotion, or external factors (e.g. public health crises, organisational change, legal requirements).

4. Enhanced Data and Reporting Requirements

- More comprehensive reporting, outcomes tracking, or integration with organisational dashboards and systems.

5. Training and Capacity Building

- Delivery of increased volumes or broader scope of training sessions (e.g. manager training, MHFA (Mental Health First Aid) refreshers, or targeted sessions for specific staff groups).

6. Contract Management and Governance

- Additional engagement in performance monitoring meetings, audits, or collaborative development of policies and procedures.

7. Compliance with Legislative Changes

- Adaptations to meet new or amended legal or regulatory requirements related to health and wellbeing, EDI, or occupational health.

8. Expansion of Service Coverage

- Growth in number of students in Queen's or addition of University sites to be supported due to the development of Queen's University regionally and internationally. Indicative increase: Up to 20% more sessions than the original annual volume.

9. World Events

- Increase in number of service uptake due to unforeseen geopolitical events such as global pandemic

10. Change in Balance between Queen's contracted counsellors and sessional counsellors

- An increase in the number of counselling sessions required from the supplier, driven by a change in Queen's staffing levels. Indicative change: by +/- 30% of estimated annual sessions.

Applicable trade agreements

- Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)
- Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

Conflicts assessment prepared/revised

Yes

Procedure

Procedure type

Open procedure

Special regime

Light touch

Documents

Associated tender documents

<https://in-tendhost.co.uk/queensuniversitybelfast.aspx/Home>

Tender Documents can be accessed via <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/queensuniversitybelfast.aspx/Home>

Contracting authority

Queen's University Belfast

- Charity Commission for Northern Ireland: 101788

University Rd

Belfast

BT7 1NN

United Kingdom

Contact name: Fei Li Toh

Email: procurement@qub.ac.uk

Website: <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/queensuniversitybelfast/asp/Home>

Region: UKN06 - Belfast

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government

Devolved regulations that apply: Northern Ireland