

# Universities UK

## Invitation to tender – 2018/01

High level skills through effective partnerships and pathways

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## Invitation to tender

This specification invites tenders for a research study in to how higher education institutions are supporting pathways to technical and vocational education through effective partnerships with business and other parts of the tertiary education system.

The findings of this study will support Universities UK's policy and advocacy work on high level skills, helping us to ensure higher education can continue to respond effectively to the skills needs of the economy and wider society.

This ITT is available to download at [universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://universitiesuk.ac.uk)

## Universities UK

**Vision** An autonomous university sector in the United Kingdom that through teaching, research and knowledge exploitation, raises aspirations, has an international reputation for innovation and contributes to the wider economy and society

**Mission** Our mission is to be the definitive voice of higher education in the UK. We provide high quality leadership and support to our members, to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector

### Aims

- 1 To support and enhance the collective strength and success of universities in the UK
- 2 To promote the international competitiveness of UK universities
- 3 To inform and shape the future agenda for higher education
- 4 To provide high quality services to members
- 5 To be an effective and responsive organisation

# Background

## *Aims*

Within the context of Brexit, productivity challenges, a changing economy and shifting demographics the skills challenges of the country are currently at the forefront of political and policy thinking. This has been seen most recently, for example, through the publication of the Industrial Strategy White Paper, the Sainsbury Report and the government's Post-16 skills plan. Within the debate about how to best address future skills needs there has been an increased focus on the importance of vocational and technical skills. These issues are also likely to feature significantly in the forthcoming review of tertiary education funding.

Higher education has a critical role to play in meeting the country's skills challenges, but its role in supporting and delivering vocational and technical education is not always fully recognised. The debate about high-level skills can often be one that is categorised as a simple choice between 'academic' and 'vocational/technical' routes with higher education seen as the main vehicle for delivering the former. However, with the introduction and success of initiatives like Degree Apprenticeships the reality is that higher education increasingly operates across these domains.

Building on Universities UK's existing work on higher education and skills this study aims to explore this role in more detail and is particularly interested in how higher education institutions are partnering with business and other parts of the tertiary education system to provide integrated pathways to higher levels skills, drawing on their role in delivering high quality higher education, their academic and scholarly expertise and the central role many now play in a region's economy and leadership.

This project builds on the 2014 publication [Forging Futures](#), commissioned jointly with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES).

The purpose of this work is to understand:

- the current role that higher education institutions play in providing technical and vocational skills pathways
- the nature and extent of the partnerships with business and other parts of the tertiary education system in support of the above
- the drivers (from regions, government, employers and prospective students) for establishing these partnerships and how they are supported and sustained
- the barriers and challenges faced in achieving these partnership, how these could potentially be overcome and implications for funding, regulation or policy

The evidence and findings arising from this work will inform Universities UK's policy and advocacy work, particularly as it relates to the implementation of the Industrial Strategy, but also the evolving and overlapping roles of the Office for Students and the Institute for Apprenticeships in skills policy in England, and the wider review of English tertiary education funding when the details are announced by government.

### *Research required*

We would expect this work to provide an overview of the breadth and scope of activity currently taking place across the sector, with a selection of more in-depth case studies that highlight different or innovative approaches. It will be important to examine the outcomes being achieved by these initiatives as well as the drivers and mechanisms through which they are established and any challenges faced. We would also wish the study to look more widely than STEM, examining the role that these partnerships play across a wide range of industrial sectors.

The study would be UK-wide, drawing on examples from across the UK where appropriate.

As well as institutional case studies, we would like to see examples that highlight the experiences of individual students, the pathways they have followed and the impact this has had on them.

Universities UK will provide supporting data analysis on progression routes, in close liaison with the successful contractor.

### Deliverables

This work will be commissioned in early 2018. It is expected that the study would begin in February or March 2018 and be completed by the end of May 2018

The output would be a concise report highlighting the main findings and recommendations, and a compendium of case studies. We would also want a short executive summary and the option to package material for use with social media/infographics.

### Budget

£30,000 (inc. VAT)

### Management

This project would be managed on a day-day basis by the Universities UK Policy Group. Universities UK will identify a Vice-Chancellor champion for this work (TBC) who will provide input

and advice as required. We would also seek to utilise the Universities UK Innovation and Growth Policy Network for advice and input.

## Tender requirements

### 1. The tender proposal

Candidates should deliver a concise tender, focusing on the proposed work and budget. The tender should include information on the following:

- details of organisation including name, legal status, full contact details and lead contact
- details or CVs of staff who will undertake the work and a clear break down of how much time each person will contribute to the project
- details of other pieces of work that your organisation has delivered which are similar in focus, scope and tone to the project / activity
- reasons why you are interested in applying for the research (only applies to research project)
- professional experience and expertise relevant to the project / activity including experience and expertise of working within the HE sector and on issues connected to the research
- any other details about yourself or your organisation you feel may be relevant
- a proposed approach/methodology to deliver the research / activity including:
  - a clear timetable for the work, including key milestones and clear timescales for completing the project
  - a schedule of all costs including a detailed breakdown of how costs will be allocated in terms of staff hours, travel, VAT etc, including any preferred variation to the payment terms set out in section 2 below
  - details of any potential sensitivities involved in researching this area and how they will be managed
  - details of how you will work closely with UUK, HEIs and stakeholders
  - a risk assessment of your proposed approach and how you will mitigate any key risks
  - conflicts of interest (as requested in section 7 below)

- a signed certificate of non-collusion and declaration, set out in the form given in **Appendix A** to this ITT
- If the tender is submitted on behalf of a consortium, please:
  - list the members of the consortium
  - identify the lead member and a point of contact
- If the tender contains a sub-contracting relationship please state:
  - the main contractor and sub-contractors
  - the nature of this relationship

## **2. Fees**

The total amount available for this work, including all fees and expenses is £30,000 including VAT. This includes all attendance fees, conference fees and expenses related to the project including giving a presentation at a sector dissemination event.

The printing costs of any final report, and the costs of any dissemination event or conference, will be borne by UUK.

In calculating project overheads account should be taken of the fact that UUK is a registered educational charity and non-profit making body.

Our preference is to pay for the work in three stages:

Initial payment of 10% on signing the contract;

Interim payment of 40% on presentation of the draft report or delivery of the contract;

Final payment of 50% on receipt of the final report or final sign off.

UUK wishes to agree a fixed price for the work.

UUK is not bound to accept the lowest priced tender and shall not be bound to accept the contractor as a sole supplier.

## **3. Selection criteria**

In awarding the contract, UUK will consider the balance between the quality of the candidate's tender and value for money, taking account of the factors listed in this ITT and in particular the proposed methodology.

Each candidate's tender shall be assessed on the following:

- Relevant experience and research credibility of the team, including publications and track record in managing credible and significant research projects.
- Understanding of the higher education sector.
- Understanding of potential issues in researching this topic, and identification of practical solutions to the challenges of the proposed research.
- Appropriateness of the proposed methodology in terms of securing credible and robust research.
- Feasibility of completing a practical programme of work to a high quality within the specified timetable.
- Understanding of need to work closely with UUK's strategic aims for the project.
- Risk mitigation.
- Overall value for money.

#### **4. References**

The name and contact details of two referees for whom the candidate has recently worked (within the past five years only) should be provided so that references can be taken up.

#### **5. Timing**

The project should be undertaken between March and May 2018. The candidate should note the following key dates:

- Deadline for receipt of emailed tenders: 22 February at 12 noon
- Award of tender to successful candidate: by end of February
- Delivery of work by: end of May

Shortlisted applicants are likely to be invited to interview on w/c 26 February.

The dates set out in this paragraph are provisional only and may be altered by UUK at its discretion.

#### **6. Reporting responsibilities**

The successful candidate will report to Stephanie Harris, Policy Analyst and Christopher Hale, Director of Policy.

## 7. Conflict of interest

Details of the candidate's policy on handling conflicts of interest which may exist or arise regarding this engagement must be provided. In the event that a director, partner, employee or employee's representative of the candidate has an interest or connection in UUK, please provide that person's full name, position and the nature of the connection/interest in UUK.

## 8. Tender submission

Please send an **email copy** of your response to

[stephanie.harris@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:stephanie.harris@universitiesuk.ac.uk) &  
[christopher.hale@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:christopher.hale@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

**An email copy of tender documents should arrive no later than 22 February at 12 noon.**

UUK shall have the right to disqualify any candidates who submit incomplete or late tenders.

## 9. Contracting

This tender is being issued by UUK. Any contracts with the successful provider will be made with UUK. The form of contract that the successful candidate will be expected to enter into with UUK can be asked for upon request.

## 10. Further information

For further details, please contact Stephanie Harris on telephone 02074195466 or [stephanie.harris@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:stephanie.harris@universitiesuk.ac.uk), who is also candidates' point of contact for any queries that you have relating to this ITT.

Any queries should clearly reference the appropriate paragraph in the documentation and, to the extent possible, should be aggregated rather than sent individually.

UUK will respond to all reasonable requests for clarification of any aspect of this ITT and supporting documents as soon as it is reasonably possible. Please note that the response to your query shall be posted on our website (without naming your organisation), therefore your query should not contain any details which are confidential.

Please note that no pre-tender negotiations are permitted.

## **Confidentiality statement and disclaimer**

The information contained in this ITT and all other information made available at any time to the candidates by and on behalf of UUK in connection with the project is supplied on the basis that the candidates will keep such information confidential at all times and that such information will be used only for the purposes of participating in the bidding process.

No information contained in this ITT or any other written, oral or other information made available to the candidate shall form the basis of any warranty, representation or term of any contract by UUK with any third party.

UUK does not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy or completeness of the ITT or any other oral or written information provided by UUK to any candidate.

UUK reserves the right not to follow this ITT in any way and/or to withdraw from or amend the procurement process.

## **UUK rights to cancel**

UUK reserves the right, without prior notice and in its absolute discretion, to change or terminate the tendering procedure for the project at any time before signing the contract with the successful candidate.

# Appendix A

## Certificate of Non-Collusion and Declaration

I certify that:

- a. The prices in the Tender have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, agreement or understanding for the purpose of restricting competition, as to any matter relating to such prices, with any other Candidate or with any competitor.
- b. Unless otherwise required by law, the prices which have been quoted in the Tender have not knowingly been disclosed by the Candidate, directly or indirectly, to any other Candidate or competitor, nor will they be so disclosed.
- c. No attempt has been made or will be made by the Candidate to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit a Tender for the purpose of restricting competition.
- d. No attempt has been made directly or indirectly to canvas any employee or adviser of UUK concerning the award of the contract which is the subject of this invitation to tender.

I acknowledge that any price fixing or collusion with other Candidates in relation to the Project shall give UUK the right to exclude a Candidate from the procurement process and may constitute an offence.

I am authorised by the Candidate (and all relevant associated companies and organisations) to supply the information given in the Tender.

I declare that, at the date of signing this declaration, the information given is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge having made reasonable enquiries.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

On behalf of: