

# **Invitation for Expressions of Interest to Join a Panel for Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) External Authentication Work**

**Deadline for submissions:**

5pm, 27 February 2026



National Adult Literacy Agency  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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# 1. About the National Adult Literacy Agency

The **National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)** is a registered charity and membership-based organisation governed by a voluntary **Board** and four subcommittees. NALA is also Quality and Qualifications Ireland approved provider for Levels 1 – 4 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

We believe literacy is a human right. We are committed to making sure people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs in Ireland can fully take part in society and have access to quality learning opportunities that meet their needs. We collaborate with partners to influence policy and practice to support the development of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

Findings from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Survey of Adult Skills 2023, released on 10 December 2024 (Central Statistics Office - CSO 2024), show the following:

- **1 in 5** adults in Ireland (21%, around 700,000 people) do not have basic proficiency in **literacy**. This means that 1 in 5 adults can, **at best**, understand short texts and organised lists, when information is clearly indicated.
- **1 in 4** adults<sup>1</sup> in Ireland (25%, around 835,000 people) do not have basic proficiency in **numeracy**<sup>2</sup>. This means that 1 in 4 adults can, **at best**, do basic calculations but may struggle with tasks needing multiple steps.

Other findings on digital skills in 2023, from the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI, European Commission 2024), show that:

- **More than 1 in 4** adults<sup>3</sup> in Ireland (27%, just over one million people) do not have basic **digital** skills. This means that they have not done at least one activity in each of five digital competence areas<sup>4</sup>. For example, sent an email, fact-checked something or changed software settings.

These unmet needs have devastating consequences for individuals, communities and the economy. People at the lowest literacy and numeracy levels earn less income, have poorer health and are more likely to be unemployed.

Since we were set up by volunteers in 1980, we have been a leading campaigning and lobbying force on adult literacy issues. We have been involved in national policy, tutor training and teaching resources, research and campaigns to support people with these unmet needs.

We also provide literacy tuition and online learning courses through our Learn with NALA distance learning and eLearning platform.

NALA currently has thirty-one staff organised in three teams led by a Chief Executive Officer. NALA's core areas of work can be summarised:

- **Advocacy, research and policy**
- Learner provision and support including our **Learn with NALA** eLearning and Tutoring service
- Practitioner provision and support
- Literacy awareness training and outreach
- **Plain English service**

Our core funding comes from SOLAS to support the implementation of the following two national strategies:

1. **Adult Literacy for Life**
2. **Future FET (Further Education and Training): Transforming Learning**

Additional income comes from **NALA's Plain English Service**, membership fees, donations, royalties, sponsorship and European Union (EU) projects.

Further information can be found in:

- **Annual Report and Financial Statements**
- **Strategic Plan 2024-2030**
- **NALA 1980-2020 – A Living History**

## 2. About Learn with NALA

NALA has a long, successful track record in delivering literacy, numeracy and digital literacy programmes to adult learners at levels 1-4 through distance, blended and online provision (NALA 2022).

Since 2000, NALA has responded to identified gaps in adult literacy provision in Ireland by providing educational opportunities and resources to adult literacy learners and practitioners.

NALA's adult literacy provision involves personalised, confidential one-to-one distance learning tuition to learners and self-directed, flexible eLearning opportunities with recognition of prior learning (RPL) and national certification options.

The goals of NALA provision are:

1. **Participation:** Increase the level of participation of adult literacy learners in learning opportunities by helping learners to overcome barriers to learning. These barriers include work and caring commitments, travel as well as confidence and stigma around returning to education.
2. **Personalised:** Meet adult literacy learners where they are at with learning designed to suit their goals and to increase their confidence. Learn with NALA provision is aligned with NALA's Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work (NALA, 2012) and The Wealth Model in Adult Literacy (NALA, 2018).
3. **Pathways:** Provide certified learning opportunities and support learners in their onward learning journey to local adult literacy services and other progression options when they are ready to do so.

NALA has been offering 1-1 over the phone tuition and supports to adults with unmet literacy needs through its Tutoring Service (formerly Distance Learning Service) since 2000.

Learn with NALA (LWN), NALA's eLearning website, was launched in March 2020. It replaced the previous eLearning website, Write On, which was launched in 2008. LWN

offers online learning opportunities, free of charge, to adult learners who wish to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

LWN offers programmes at Level 1, Level 2, Preparing for Level 3 and Level 3. Level 2 has been available as an accredited programme since 2008, and Level 3 has been available as an accredited programme since 2010.

The currently accredited awards include:

- Level 2 Major Award in General Learning (12 minor awards available)
- Level 3 Major Award in General Learning (14 minor awards available)
- Level 3 Major Award in ICT (14 minor awards available)
- Level 3 Major Award in Employability Skills (14 minor awards available).

Currently, the Level 1 programme and the Preparing for Level 3 programme are offered as non-accredited programmes. Learners are issued a NALA Certificate of Achievement for completing these non-accredited programmes. NALA's Level 1 programme was validated by QQI in 2025. The accredited programme is scheduled to be launched in Q3 2026.

Learners engage with the LWN directly or through LWN "Registered Centres" located throughout Ireland who use LWN as blended learning tool. These centres go through a robust training and registration process to become a registered centre.

Between 2000 and 2022, NALA supported 5,050 learners with 42,637<sup>5</sup> one-to-one personalised over-the-phone tuition sessions and 14,428 learners to achieve 48,327 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) minor awards in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy at level 2 and 3<sup>6</sup>. NALA is one of the largest providers in Ireland delivering **27% of all QQI certification at level 2 in Ireland since 2008** (NALA 2024). In 2025, NALA was awarded an UNESCO International Literacy Prize for Learn with NALA.

For further contextual information see the following recent NALA reports:

- **Learning with NALA** (2024)
- **Leading the way in online learning** (2022)
- **Distance Literacy: filling the gaps in a time of recession** (2013)

### 3. About the tender

NALA invites expressions of interest from experienced and suitably qualified individuals to join a panel that may be contracted to externally authenticate results for all awards that are achieved through NALA's eLearning website [learnwithnala.ie](http://learnwithnala.ie).

#### Key information

External Authentication is a key process in the fair and consistent assessment of learners. This procedure provides the External Authenticator with a structure for carrying out their role and ensures that the process is done in a systematic coherent, professional and transparent manner.

In addition to this procedure the External Authenticator will also need to be familiar with the following documents:

- **NALA Assessment of Learners Policy and Procedures**
- **Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for External Authenticators (2015)**
- **Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (2015)**
- **QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (2013)**
- **NALA's Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work (2012)**
- **The Wealth Model in Adult Literacy: transformative learning in action (2018)**
- **NALA Plain English Guidelines**

NALA invites expressions of interest to join its External Authentication panel. External Authentication panel members will be contracted to complete external authentication for up to two QQI certification rounds per year.

The successful applicants will be expected to:

- Take part in training and briefings
- Collaborate with the Learn with NALA Coordinator on the evaluation of NALA QQI certification rounds.
- Complete external authentication for up to two QQI certification rounds per year for programmes leading to Level 1, 2 and 3 QQI Major and Minor awards in General Learning, Employability Skills and Information and Communications Technology.

- Complete and submit external authentication reports to NALA detailing the outcome of the external authentication process highlighting areas of good practice and recommendations for continuous improvement.
- Apply best practice standards to the external authentication process.



## 4. Submission requirements

### Expressions of interest must include:

- A cover letter outlining relevant External Authentication/QQI expertise and experience.
- An up-to-date Curriculum Vitae outlining relevant qualifications and experience including:
  - A minimum of two years' experience of External Authentication.
  - Technical and subject matter expertise for programmes leading to awards at Levels 1, 2 and 3, specifically in the areas of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. Have a minimum of two years' experience of working in this field.
  - Knowledge and experience of awards, assessment and standards.
  - Experience delivering programme assessment in the field.
  - Evidence of IT skills. External Authenticators will be accessing evidence through NALA's eLearning website.
  - Contact information for three recent references.
- A sample external authentication report completed for a provider with all identifying information redacted.

### Applicants must be:

- Willing to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI, as appropriate.
- Available to NALA at appropriate times.
- Independent of NALA.
- Inform NALA of any potential conflict of interest that may compromise their role.
- Agree to undertake appropriate training and to attend appropriate briefings.

### Submission deadline / details:

- Deadline for submission: **5pm, Friday 27 February 2026**
- Please email your expression of interest to: Jonah Mudehwe, Finance and Corporate Services Manager at [jmudehwe@nala.ie](mailto:jmudehwe@nala.ie)
- **For further information, please contact:** Nicole Mullen, Learn with NALA Coordinator at NALA, [nmullen@nala.ie](mailto:nmullen@nala.ie).

### Scoring and award criteria

Evaluation of and awarding of expressions of interest will be based on the most qualified

submission based on the following award criteria:

| <b>Award Criteria</b>                   | <b>Marks</b> |
|---|--------------|
| Relevant experience and qualifications  | 60           |
| Relevant technical skills               | 20           |
| Communication and report writing skills | 20           |

Applicants may be called to interview to inform the final selection process.

Applicants will be notified if they have been selected for inclusion on the panel. Members on the panel may be offered a contract to complete External Authentication at a daily rate of €320 for up to four certification rounds.

Being placed on the panel does not guarantee a contract.

### **Prohibited Practices**

A tenderer shall be excluded who:

- is bankrupt or being wound up, whose affairs are being administered by the court, who has entered into an arrangement with creditors or who has suspended business activities;
- is the subject of proceedings for declaration of bankruptcy or insolvency, for an order for compulsory winding up or a court liquidation, or who has a liquidator or receiver appointed over its assets, or for composition with creditors or any other similar proceedings;
- has been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct;
- has not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions; and/or
- has not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of taxes.

### **Eligible Tenderers**

Any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest, for example, where the tenderer has competing interests or loyalties, must be fully disclosed in writing and brought to the attention of all concerned.

## Notification of Award

NALA shall notify acceptance of the tender to the successful tenderer as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event within one month of the closing date for receipt of tenders as set out in this document.

## Confidentiality

All the information contained in this document is confidential to NALA and is given on the basis that this confidentiality will be strictly observed by all proposed tenderers and will not be disclosed to any other party without the prior consent of NALA.

## General tendering information, terms and conditions

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Costs</b>                  | NALA will not be liable in respect of any costs incurred by any tenderer in the preparation of tenders in response to this invitation to tender or any associated cost.   |
| <b>Tax clearance</b>          | The successful tenderer must be in possession of a valid tax clearance certificate from the Irish Revenue Commissioners for duration of the contract. Such a valid tax clearance certificate from the Irish Revenue Commissioners must be produced by a successful tenderer before execution of the contract. A valid tax clearance certificate means a tax clearance certificate issued by the Irish Revenue Commissioners. Tenderers not resident in Ireland must make application to the Irish Revenue Commissioners for such a certificate if their tender is to be considered. |
| <b>Company registration</b>   | The successful tenderer, if a company, registered and/or carrying on business in Ireland, must comply with all obligations and requirements under the companies Acts 1963 to 2014, including the filing of up-to-date annual returns and a certificate to this effect must be provided by an officer of the tenderer with the tender documentation.   |
| <b>Copyright</b>              | This document and its appendices remain the property of the National Adult Literacy Agency.   |
| <b>Ethical Considerations</b> | The successful tenderer may be asked to demonstrate, if requested, that they, their parent company and, or their supplier companies, respect, protect and promote the protection of the   |

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|   | environment, maintenance of persons' health and safety, non-discrimination and protection of internationally recognised human rights in accordance with NALA's vision and mission.   |
| <b>False or misleading information</b>      | Tenderers who intentionally or carelessly supply false or misleading information will be disqualified from this tendering procedure on the discovery of such information.  |
| <b>Compliance of law</b>                    | Tenderers should be able to provide on demand evidence of compliance with all laws applicable to the provision of the services that are subject to the invitation to tender, and in particular should be able to produce evidence that they have particular regard for statutory terms relating to minimum pay and any legally binding or sectoral agreements if applicable.   |
| <b>Termination</b>                          | The contract shall contain provisions reserving to NALA the right to terminate any contract awarded if it is not satisfied with the performance by the successful tenderer of the contract. The satisfaction or dissatisfaction of NALA shall be evaluated in the context of the tenderer's proposal set out in part three of this document.   |
| <b>Requirements of invitation to tender</b> | Tenders not conforming to the requirements of this invitation to tender will not be considered and will be returned to the tenderer.   |
| <b>Subject to contract</b>                  | This invitation to tender is not intended to, and does not, create or evidence any legal or binding relationship, obligation or commitment of any nature between NALA and any tenderer. No such legally binding obligation or commitment shall come into being unless and until a formal legal contract is duly executed and delivered by NALA and the successful tenderer.  |
| <b>Disclaimer</b>                           | This document is for information only and does not constitute, and shall not be interpreted as, an offer for sale, prospectus, or the basis of a contract. Candidates are recommended to read the documents thoroughly. NALA reserves the right to discontinue the procurement process at any time. No liability will be accepted for candidates' costs in connection with the procurement procedure, irrespective of the outcome, whether or not the procedure is cancelled or postponed. |

## About NALA

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice. We also provide online learning courses and a tutoring service to adults. We lobby for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

### National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

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### Websites:

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**Company Registration Number:** 342807

**Registered Charity Number:** 20020965

**CHY (Charity) Number:** 8506



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