



Purchasing Department
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September 25, 2020

RFP ADDENDUM #1

Reference – Request for Proposal:
Title:

GMU-1687-21
Interactive Collaboration and
Content Sharing Tool
September 15, 2020
George Mason University

Dated:
For Delivery To:

The following changes are hereby incorporated into the aforementioned RFP:

Please make sure to sign and include this addendum and all other addendums issued under this RFP with your offer/proposal.

- **Answers to Questions submitted by the Question Submission Deadline on September 22, 2020:**

Answers to these questions shall be considered part of the RFP requirements and the offeror should include any changes that result from this addendum into their offer. Failure to consider the information provided below may result in your offer being scored lower:

1. **Question:** In your "Statement of Need" section on page 4 of the document, you indicate "While 90% of online courses leverage multimedia, barely half of students surveyed feel engaged in their courses."
 - Did students share with you additional details regarding why they do not feel engaged in courses in this survey you are citing?

Answer: This statistic was based on the Mason *Student Pulse* survey that went out to all UG and GR students who took an online class during the spring 2020 pivot to remote instruction. Faculty have not been explicitly surveyed, however, in a smaller-scale survey to faculty who received professional development in online development during this pivot, more than 50% of respondents were looking for ways to increase engagement within their online classroom.

2. **Question:** You cite student's feedback, but has George Mason surveyed instructors for their viewpoints on why they feel students are expressing this level of disengagement? Do you similarly have any information on the challenges instructors currently feel in delivering a more engaged course environment online, using Blackboard Learn or existing tools?

Answer: Not particularly – we have spoken with faculty and, like students, are looking for ways to consider more engagement within their online classes. Those who teach asynch courses have, specifically, cited that they don't feel any real ability to engage and are concerned about the quality of the overall student experience in their classes. It should be noted that, in most instances, this feedback has been in the context of the recent

shift to online instruction. It is not commonly heard from faculty who have gone through more robust design projects.

3. **Question:** What are the tools that you are currently utilizing to supplement delivery of online courses above and beyond the capabilities of the Blackboard Learn LMS? Are there specific limitations in these tools that you have found to be challenging?

Answer: We do not have an enterprise license for asynch collaboration and many faculty are leveraging tools they've found themselves (often the free versions). Currently, we have LMS integrations with Zoom and Bb Collaborate Ultra for more synch sessions and whiteboarding, Kaltura for DIY video, and, of course, discussion forums and such for more day-to-day assignments. The challenge is that we need tools that are specifically designed to support asynch collaboration and engagement across a wide range of disciplines.

4. **Question:** Relative to the scope/pricing, what is the anticipated volume of users George Mason is assuming will participate in a partnership, out of the total institutional enrollment of 38,000?

Answer: No idea, we're looking for an enterprise license to avoid nuisances of individual active users. If we project, and assume that 50% of classes will be online or hybrid, that may bring the number down considerably, but we have not done this level of a user audit.

5. **Question:** Can we assume the use of any solutions selected in this RFP process will be optional for instructors?

Answer: Yes. We will work with the vendor to create trainings, will work with faculty for pilots, and then look at expanding.

6. **Question:** For section A, Subsection C (page 4) we have a completed HECVAT. Can this simply be submitted to address all questions specific to data security, for the purposes of this RFP?

Answer: Yes, you may submit your HECVAT with your proposal and refer back to it throughout your proposal to address any Security related requirements or questions associated with the RFP. If your product is selected to move forward to the review and award phase you may be asked questions about this document directly from our Architectural Standards Review Board (ASRB) as part of Mason's system/software review process.

7. **Question:** For Section A, Subsection D (page 4) we have a completed VPAT. Can this simply be submitted to address all questions specific to accessibility, for the purposes of this RFP? As you are indicating that we should be prepared to provide it, we would like to do so now as our response to this section, if permissible and to your expectations.

Answer: Yes, you may submit your VPAT as part of your RFP response/proposal and refer back to it as evidence of your compliance to any Accessibility requirements or concerns listed in the RFP. If your product is selected to move forward to the review and award phase you may be asked questions about this document directly from our Architectural Standards Review Board (ASRB) as part of Mason's system/software review process

8. **Question:** Is there an incumbent vendor/solution/system?

Answer: No

9. **Question:** Whether companies from Outside USA can apply for this? (like, from India or Canada)
Answer: GMU is located in the State of Virginia in the United States of America (USA). Companies from outside of the USA may submit an offer but will need to address how they will meet the requirements of the RFP while operating outside of the USA. Your offer should take into consideration things such as time differences, language barriers, security concerns, coordinating meetings, etc. when developing your response to this RFP.
10. **Question:** Whether we need to come over there for meetings?
Answer: Mason does not have a preference for remote or in-person meetings but the contractor/offeror needs to clearly outline in their response/proposal how they will provide the solutions/services that meets the requirements outlined in the RFP as a company/firm located outside of the USA.
11. **Question:** Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside USA? (like, from India or Canada)
Answer: This RFP is not restricted to companies/organizations inside the USA. Companies from outside the USA may submit offers. Please make sure to clearly address in your response how you will provide the services and meets the requirements outlined in the RFP as a company located outside of the USA, especially in regards to data security (please refer to the Data Security Addendum attached to the RFP for Mason's data security requirements/contract terms).
12. **Question:** Can we submit the proposals via email?
Answer: Yes, you may submit proposal via email. Please refer to the RFP instructions on how to submit your proposal electronically (via email).
13. **Question:** Was this bid posted to the nationwide free bid notification website at www.mygovwatch.com
Answer: All GMU's formal solicitations are posted and available on the Commonwealth of Virginia's e-Procurement site, eVA, and on our fiscal website.
14. **Question:** Other than your own website, where was this bid posted?
Answer: Please see answer above and links to those sites below:
eVA: <https://eva.virginia.gov/>
GMU Fiscal website: <http://fiscal.gmu.edu/purchasing/do-business-with-mason/view-current-solicitation-opportunities/>
15. **Question:** Do you anticipate extending the bid due date?
Answer: No, there are currently no proposal due date extensions being proposed. No late proposals will be accepted.
16. **Question:** What additional details are you willing to provide, if any, beyond what is stated in bid documents concerning how you will identify the winning bid
Answer: All requirements and related documents and information are available in the RFP document, GMU-1687-21, including how GMU will conduct evaluations and scoring of offers. Please refer to the RFP document, GMU-1687-21 for all available information. Please note that this is a Request for Proposal (RFP) and not an Invitation for Bid (IFB).

17. **Question:** What is the scope of the potential number of users broken down by students, faculty, and staff?
Answer: Would largely depend on how licensing works; we'd be looking at 12 staff licenses across ID and related teams; projections on future online need is unknown.
18. **Question:** How can we go about putting an NDA in place in order to share sensitive information and documentation?
Answer: If you are providing proprietary or sensitive information in your proposal you can follow the instructions in the RFP in Section XIII. Proposal Preparation, 2.f. which addresses the requirements for redacting or keeping certain information held confidential in your proposal (please note that your entire proposal may not be marked confidential and/or proprietary and that pricing may not be held confidential). Mason will not sign an NDA with a vendor to have them submit an offer/proposal. If you require an NDA in order to provide your security or accessibility documents (such as your SOC report, HECVAT or VPAT) please state as such in your proposal and notate which documents/information you are not willing to provide without an NDA. You should still be able to address any security or accessibility concerns in the RFP in writing without providing those documents (for example, you can confirm that you do have a SOC 2, Type II that you can provide with a signed NDA and/or that your product/system/firm meets the listed security, accessibility, etc. requirements).
19. **Question:** How should security documentation such as SOC2, Full Sigs, be submitted as supplemental artifacts?
Answer: We are requesting that all proposal documents in response to this RFP (including any security documents) be submitted via e-mail. If you are concerned about submitting your security documentation via email, with your proposal, you can state in your proposal/offer that you have the required documentation but would require an NDA before releasing it to GMU and that it has to be mailed (not e-mailed). If your firm/product is selected by the evaluation committee to move to the ASRB review and Negotiation phase of the RFP we can negotiate an NDA (if required) and obtain these documents at that time. You should still be able to address any security or accessibility concerns in the RFP in writing without providing those documents (for example, you can confirm that you do have a SOC 2, Type II that you can provide with a signed NDA and/or that your product/system/firm meets the listed security, accessibility, etc. requirements).
20. **Question:** Is a hard copy required? If so, where should that be submitted and by when?
Answer: We are requesting electronic copies of all proposal documents (please refer to the RFP Proposal Submission Requirements).
21. **Question:** What software other than Blackboard are faculty and staff currently using to support their online courses?
Answer: This is largely up to individual faculty and their departments, but some examples include Piazza, Hypothesis and VoiceThread. There are no incumbent enterprise-wide tools.
22. **Question:** How are the online courses delivered - asynchronously, synchronously, or blended/hybrid?
Answer: All of the above
23. **Question:** Would face-to-face courses also implement this collaboration software?
Answer: Potentially yes, as Mason shifts to more hybrid-style courses.
24. **Question:** What internal team would be responsible for supporting and administering the platform?

Answer: The Office of Digital Learning (instructional designers, user facing) and Academic Technology (ITS, tech issues) would be the primary staff departments.

25. **Question:** What capacity does your internal team have to support on-prem solutions or integrations?

Answer: Looking for cloud-based solutions that are compatible with multiple browsers and operating systems.

26. **Question:** Approximately how many Facility & Staff will be accessing the system?

Answer: Current adoption of similar tools is quite small at Mason since there are no enterprise-wide tools available (likely about 20-30 regular faculty users and three staff). We are not able to predict future use by individual faculty, but do have 15 staff who would need licenses in addition to the faculty. We would expect adoption to be in small batches with early adopters. The Digital Learning team will be working on expanding the application of the selected tool.

27. **Question:** Does George Mason desire multi-channel communication capability as part of the platform?

Answer: Would need more detail, but the primary benefit is supporting engagement and collaboration in asynch classes. We have tools for synch meetings and have no plans to really change those tools.

28. **Question:** Could the university please provide some sizing parameters for the content that this system will need to manage?

Answer: Current adoption of similar tools is quite small at Mason since there are no enterprise-wide tools available (likely about 20-30 regular faculty users and three staff). We are not able to predict future use by individual faculty, but do have 15 staff who would need licenses in addition to the faculty. We would expect adoption to be in small batches with early adopters. The Digital Learning team will be working on expanding the application of the selected tool.

29. **Question:** Does the university have any data retention requirements associated with content posted to the platform?

Answer: Mason does not currently have university-wide requirements for data retention; however, individual courses in Blackboard are retained for 4 years. Individual faculty will likely want longer-term options.

Please sign and include this addendum as part of your offer.

In Compliance With this RFP And To All The Conditions Imposed Therein And Hereby Incorporated By Reference, The Undersigned Offers And Agrees To Furnish The Goods/Services required by this RFP at the prices indicated in the pricing schedule, and the undersigned hereby certifies that all information provided below and in any schedule hereto is true, correct, and complete.

Name and Address of Firm:

Date: _____

By: _____

Title: _____

Fed ID No: _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Sincerely,
Katherine Sirotin
Assistant Director, Purchasing (VCO, CUPO)
Purchasing Department
George Mason University