

Occupational Testing Policy

NAME:

DATE:

COURSE LOCATION/DATE:



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1. PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

Psychological tests provide powerful and reliable assistance in assessing, developing and counselling people at school, provided that they are properly chosen, administered, scored, and interpreted. Proper choice of test includes choosing an appropriate and psychometrically sound and validated test, which measures the required skill or attribute previously identified from a careful job analysis, at an appropriate level of difficulty, and reflecting the type of content found in the job.

By implementing assessment procedures systematically and objectively, the process itself will help identify students who need support.

Psychometric tests are used to

- provide a standardised method for assessing and diagnosing individuals
- provide such information more efficiently than most other methods of assessment (eg. interviews and observation)
- provide access to the measurement of qualities that are difficult to assess through other means

2. PREPARATION OF CANDIDATES

2.1. General preparation

Candidates should also be provided with some general information as to how to prepare for the assessment, particularly if it is a lengthy one, for example, to wear comfortable clothes, and a checklist for what they need to bring with them to the testing session. They should also be notified as to whether they may be required to complete any other post-test questionnaires or forms on the day. In advance of the test day, it should be ascertained whether provision needs to be made for any candidates who may need special requirements/ equipment/ accommodations.

2.2. Informing candidates

Candidates must be made aware of the purpose of testing, which tests will be administered, what they are intended to measure, and how they are relevant to the process. Their use should be explained in terms of educational, personal and social development. Candidates should also be clearly informed as to how the test information will be used, who will have

access to their results, and the procedures for dealing with inquiries or complaints. (See also the section on Legal Issues in Section 7, below).

Describe in the box below what documents you'll use to prepare candidates for, and inform them about, the testing process.

1. Letters of invitation to candidates, such as on P.3-6 of 'Templates for Test Administration, Scoring & Feedback), describing:
 - a) the testing process;
 - b) what to expect on the day;
 - c) how to prepare for the day, including sample test items;
 - d) the candidate's rights and security/confidentiality provisions;
 - e) availability of accommodations should candidates require them;
 - f) how the test results will be used and by whom.

2.3. Familiarisation with the test materials

The testing situation can be stressful to many candidates and may cause them to under-perform. In particular, those who have less educational experience, who are unfamiliar with testing, who are older, or who are from an ethnic minority, for example, may be more likely to find it difficult to perform at their best. In order to reduce the possibility of bias from such differentials, practice items should be provided at the beginning of the tests, and familiarisation material may also be issued to candidates in advance of the test session.

Practice questions with suggested answers and explanations/worked examples at the level and difficulty of the real test questions help to ensure that all candidates are familiar with the structure and format of the testing session itself and the layout and completion of the test booklets or answer sheets. The test instructions should also give an indication of the time candidates should spend on the questions. Practice items can increase the effectiveness of tests by allowing for a more accurate assessment of a candidate's abilities.

Describe below how you will familiarise candidates with the test materials, and take into account any issues that may disadvantage particular candidates.

1. Sample test items sent with letter of invitation.
2. Completion of Informed Consent Form on the day.
3. Sensitivity to candidates' demographic profiles and experience of test.
4. General briefing on the testing process to put candidates at ease.
5. Briefing candidates regarding the test materials.
6. Observation of completion of sample items, especially novice candidates.
7. Pacing and timing of administration instructions.

3. TEST ADMINISTRATION

3.1. Test administrators

Tests should only be administered, scored and interpreted by appropriately trained and certified personnel.

What certification will you require that ensure personnel involved in test administration have relevant, up-to-date training?

1. Qualifications/level required by Test Publisher to purchase and use the test.
2. BPS Assistant Test User with RQTU registration.
3. BPS Test User Occupational (TUA and/or TUP) with RQTU registration.
4. Chartered Educational Psychologist.

3.2. Good administration practice

The purpose of a psychometric test is to obtain a measurement of a person's performance in some relevant cognitive or personality domain. To enable an accurate interpretation of this measure, or score, it is essential that it has been obtained under standardised conditions. Good administration practice entails ensuring that the instructions given to candidates are exactly the same every time the test is administered.

It is also important to ensure that the conditions under which they are asked to complete the test allow them to perform at the optimum level. Regardless of how valid and reliable a test may be in theory, poor administration can result in scores that don't truly reflect the candidates. Test session report forms should be used to record any unusual events that might have an impact on a candidate's performance. These forms should be referred to when scoring the tests to examine any potential impact on candidate performance from such 'unusual' events.

For testing sessions involving candidates with special requirements or accommodations, the necessary equipment or other provisions should be set up in advance of the session. The instructions for these formats (e.g. HAL/JAWS administrations for sign language candidates; large print versions of the tests; computers/laptops, etc.) must be appropriate to the mode of presentation. It is good practice for the administrator to familiarise him/her self with the candidates' specific requirements (including time allocations) in advance, so that the session can run as comfortably as possible for all candidates.

Describe how you will ensure that tests are administered under standard conditions and that accommodations are made for candidates where required

1. Familiarity with, and adherence to, the Test Publishers' administration instructions.
2. Pacing and timing of instructions and completion of sample test items.
3. Observation of candidates' behaviour on completing sample items.
4. Consistency of administration across candidates and groups.
5. Sensitive use of materials provided for accommodations.
6. Feedback from candidates on the perceived level of difficulty of the test(s).

4. INTERPRETING TEST SCORES

Test results should be scored in a consistent, objective measure using standardised scoring keys so as to ensure that there is no opportunity for unfair discrimination or bias in the scoring process.

Should test results be retained after initial use, it should be recognised that they may date quickly. Individuals' abilities are likely to change over time and, whereas some personal characteristics remain stable over long periods, others are more transient. Two years is probably the limit of usefulness for most data collected from all tests, but personality questionnaire data can be even more sensitive.

Uninterpreted raw scores are misleading and should not normally be given to candidates. Percentiles, T-scores or Standard Scores may be used as provided by the test publisher and conveyed numerically and/or in verbal equivalents as appropriate to the candidate as below.

<i>Percentile</i>	<i>T-scores</i>	<i>Standard Scores</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1 - 2	20 - 30	55 - 70	the lower range
2 - 16	30 - 40	70-85	below the average range
16 - 86	40 - 60	85 - 115	average; typical of most people
86 - 98	60 - 70	115 - 130	above average; good
98 - 99	70 - 80	130 - 145	well above average; excellent

Where appropriate information is provided by the test publisher, consideration should be given to the speed and accuracy of the candidate's work, the number of questions attempted, the number answered incorrectly, and the overall performance in relation to the comparison group. Comments on these may help the candidate's understanding of his/her results.

Describe below the sources of information you will use to accurately transform candidates' raw scores and interpret them for feedback and application.

1. Accuracy and degree of completion of the answer sheet.
2. Age and/or other demographics of the candidate.
3. Tables of score conversion appropriate to the candidate.
4. Calculation of composite scores.
5. Interpretation of scores and preparation for feedback and application.

5. FEEDBACK

Candidates are entitled, both legally and ethically, to receive feedback on their performances (see section on Legal Issues). Such feedback, sensitively given, can be of significant benefit to candidates and encourage them to take a positive view of even a negative outcome. However, giving feedback is a delicate process and must be conducted by people who are not only qualified in the use of tests but are also skilled in feedback processes.

5.1. Preparation

Before a test is administered, candidates should be informed about the arrangements for giving feedback, as well as the procedures for dealing with enquiries or complaints.

Before giving feedback, adequate time should be allowed for a thorough examination of the test/inventory results and session report forms. The norm groups need to be decided and simple explanations prepared.

The person giving the feedback should have a thorough understanding of the tests used, including their content, the skills and skill levels being tested, and how they relate to jobs.

How will candidates be informed about feedback arrangements?

1. In letters of invitation to candidates.
2. During the informed consent process.
3. At the test administration briefing.

5.2. Feedback interviews

When giving the candidate (and other authorised persons) feedback about the results of a test, it should be in a form that makes clear the implications of the results and in a style appropriate to their level of understand. (See also the *Test Administration* section, P4 above). Candidates generally prefer individual interviews for receiving feedback, compared to written reports, group meetings or programmed schemes. Individual interviews allow some discussion and monitoring of the candidate's reactions. For a suggested feedback interview structure see Appendix A.

5.2.1. The feedback relationship

The level of rapport in a feedback discussion will depend partly on what has preceded it, for example, how well the test sessions were introduced, the conditions, the expectations that may have been encouraged, and so on. Since one of the main objectives of feedback is self-awareness it is important that the candidate should be encouraged to take an active and responsible part in the discussion. A counselling approach of shared exploration is likely to be most appropriate. The person giving the feedback should avoid being put in the position of 'expert' and rather develop the role of being a helpful and competent resource. Use 'we' and 'us' rather than 'I' in the discussion.

Feedback should be given in simple, jargon-free yet precise terms. It is essential that the participant is given the opportunity to express their attitudes to and experience of being assessed, and how they feel about the results. The more that the candidate him/her self can work on the data, the more able they will be to make new connections and insights and incorporate the data into their self-concept.

It is important that the person giving the feedback is aware of how it is being experienced and to communicate this empathy. The candidate needs to feel understood, not judged.

It is also important, however, that the administrator keeps an objective style and does not confuse their own feelings with what the candidate might be feeling in case this leads to a bias in their description of the results. They must also be sufficiently courageous in helping the candidate to confront all the data and the emerging overall picture.

Feedback involves needs, feelings, aspirations and losses. It may arouse a wide range of contradictory emotions and strong reactions in the candidate as he or she goes through the process of developing a more realistic self-image.

Describe how and to whom feedback interviews to candidates will be given, and list the key features of effective oral feedback, drawing also on **Appendix A, P.14**.

1. Overview:

- a) The purpose of testing.
- b) The aim of the interview.
- c) How the results will be used.
- d) Who will have access to the results.
- e) Security and confidentiality of the results.
- f) The degree of confidentiality of the discussion.
- g) Should notes be taken, how they will be kept, who will see them.
- h) The length of the interview, whether it may be extended or continued later.
- i) Co-operative atmosphere; have candidate share their views, give feedback.

2. The candidate's experience:

- a) How did candidate feel about taking the tests?
- b) How was it administered?
- c) What was their strategy on speed versus accuracy?
- d) How did they find the tests?
- e) How willing were they to try activities over a range of fields in the Interest Inventory?
- f) Which areas of performance did they feel more/less comfortable with.

3. Description of the instruments:

- a) Remind the candidate of the characteristics of the test or inventory.
- b) Discuss the nature and level of the skill the test is designed to assess.
- c) Explain the structure of the profile and the comparison group.

4. Results

- a) Discuss each set of results separately.
- b) Start and/or finish with a strong area, or alternate from strengths to development needs.
- c) Give information about speed, accuracy and overall performance.
- d) Discuss the number of questions attempted, the proportion correctly answered and their performance against the comparison group, expressed in relation to 'average' performance, and also as a percentile, if used.
- e) Explain what this means in terms of likely behaviour and the implications regarding potential ease or difficulty in handling tasks using this type of ability.

5. Conclusion

- a) Clarify and summarise key points coming out of the discussion.
- b) Draw links between the tests; e.g. ability, attainment, interest inventory, etc.
- c) After results feedback, overview areas of strength and development needs.
- d) Look at how results tie in with academic record.
- e) Agree or confirm what will happen next if any action is needed, according to the original purpose of the assessment.

5.3. Written feedback reports

It is even more important that written reports avoid jargon and make clear precise statements to avoid ambiguity or misinterpretation. There may be no opportunity to correct any misunderstandings that arise. A written report gives a more meaningful record of test performance than the results alone, and can be used by untrained staff. The format of a written report should be similar to that of the suggested feedback interview structure in Appendix A.

By whom will feedback reports be written and how will they be communicated to candidates?

1. BPS CCET Test User Educational with RQTU registration.
2. Chartered Educational Psychologist.

6. **BIAS, FAIRNESS and DISCRIMINATION**

In psychometric testing, **bias** is a statistical concept referring to the systematic errors in the predictive validity (or construct validity) of test scores of individuals that are associated with their group membership. **Fairness** is a non-statistical concept, referring to issues related to social justice, with moral, political, legal and philosophical ramifications. Bias and fairness are separate issues as biased tests can be used fairly and unbiased tests used unfairly. Assessment processes are intended to differentiate between the performance of candidates but not **discriminate** against any. Fair discrimination distinguishes between applicants on the basis of abilities and aptitudes that can be shown to be related to educational attainment. If, on the other hand, discrimination is not based on relevant standards, or the method of assessing is unreliable, then the discrimination may be unfair. If 'unfair discrimination' has the effect of, for instance, class streaming of members of a particular group, then it may also be discriminatory and possibly unlawful.

In Ireland, under the Employment Equality Act, 1999, discrimination is now outlawed on 9 distinct grounds: gender, marital status, family status sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the traveller community. (see Legal Issues in) Two broad categories of discrimination are generally distinguished: direct and indirect. Direct discrimination occurs when a specific group is treated unfavourably directly on the basis of their race, sex, etc. This would generally not apply to psychometric testing unless a test was designed to specifically discriminate on such a group basis. Indirect discrimination occurs when an assessment has a disproportionately unfavourable effect to a sex, age, or ethnic group, etc.

Describe the procedures you will put in place to control for bias, fairness and discrimination in your use of tests.

1. Only use tests with candidates for whom formal testing is appropriate.
2. Only use tests when the required information is not available in another form.
3. Use tests with good psychometric properties, e.g. reliability, validity, low SEM.
4. Use tests with difficulty level and norms appropriate to the candidate.
5. Apply accommodations appropriate to the candidate and context.
6. Ensure interpretation, feedback and application of results if fair, supportive and has consequential validity.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY ISSUES

7.1. Test Results

Test results are to be treated with the strictest of confidentiality in accordance with Data Protection Act and GDPR. Files holding information regarding candidate test performance may only be accessed by those directly involved in the selection process and whose input is needed to interpret the test sufficiently.

7.2. Record keeping and confidentiality:

A record of the tests, when they were used, and why, should be kept in a test manual.

Any information obtained using a psychometric test belongs to the test taker. Whatever is done with it should be done only with that person's knowledge and permission.

In accordance with best practice, all results and decisions reached during as a result of an assessment must be dealt with in the strictest of confidence. No information regarding the test and scoring methods may be released without prior agreement.

To maintain the integrity of the process, those involved in carrying out an assessment and interpreting the results must sign an informed consent form which includes a confidentiality and ethical agreement. The legal guardians of minors must be included in this process.

Describe how you will ensure the security and confidentiality of test materials as well as candidates' test results and reports.

1. Develop over-arching testing policies and procedures which comply with legal requirements such as GDPR and employment law, as well as ethical requirements such as professional codes of conduct in testing.
2. Ensure test users are appropriately qualified, are familiar with codes of conduct in test use and are committed to best practice in testing.
3. Store test materials in safely with access restricted to qualified test users.
4. Ensure testing procedures protect test publishers' copyright requirements.
5. Use mode of testing (Open, Controlled, Supervised, Managed) necessary for safeguarding of test materials.
6. In paper-based administrations, ensure test materials are not photographed/ copied, and are collected and accounted for before candidates leave.
7. Assign dedicated storage for candidates' paper-based scores and test reports.
8. Develop secure procedures and password protected environment for storing candidates' scores and test reports electronically.
9. Develop policies and procedures for communicating test results to third parties and their use of same, which reflect the sensitive and confidential nature of this information and its protection under law.

8. LEGAL ISSUES

The legislative framework within which this policy has been set, is defined by the European Union Council Directive 95/46/EC. This Directive sets the requirements for personal data management throughout Europe and has been legally binding on all Member States since 24th October, 1998. Since 2018, GDPR is the new EU legislative framework relating to personal data privacy and protection. This legislation is important for all areas of personal data, not least the sort processed in the course of psychological testing and assessment. Such data includes not only the information about an individual's scores on a test but also the reports that might be generated from these scores, either by computer or by human test interpreters.

- **UK Data Protection Act (DPA), 1998**

In the UK, the 1998 Data Protection Act (DPA) represents the national legislation that enforces the Directive. It is supported by a detailed draft Code of Practice on 'The use of personal data in recruitment, selection and development', which will have mandatory status for data processing relating to data subjects within the UK when it has been confirmed. The DPA represents the EU directive in terms of eight key principles (see Appendix B).

- **Irish Employment Equality Act, 1999**

Under this Act, discrimination is outlawed on nine distinct grounds – gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the traveller community.

- **Irish Freedom of Information Act (FOI), 1997**

The main objective of the Freedom of Information Act is to foster and develop a culture of openness, transparency and accountability in public organisations including schools.

Candidates have a right to access records that contain personal information about them, irrespective of when created; and for access to their own personnel records created since 21st April, 1995, effective from 22nd October, 2001.

It is the prerogative of the school to deal with the requests that are made for such information in a fair and diplomatic manner, while protecting the integrity of the tests used. The content of the methods of scoring and processing test results are confidential and should not be disclosed to any third party that is not qualified to deal with the interpretation of the test scores.

All information regarding the administration of the tests, all raw materials that the candidate used, the scoring of the tests, and any other details regarding the candidate (applications form, etc.) should be kept on file, in order that people can respond to the requests brought forward under FOI.

Other relevant legislation:

- Human Rights Act (1998)
- Employment Law Compliance Bill 2008
- Employment Equality Act 2004
- Employees (Provision of Information and Consultation) Act 2006

List key legislation safeguarding candidates against discrimination in test use, and the main principles of GDPR legislation (see Appendix B, P.17 below).

Legislation

- a) UK Data Protection Act (DPA), 1998.
- b) Human Rights Act (1998).
- c) Irish Employment Equality Act, 1999.
- d) Irish Freedom of Information Act (FOI), 1997.
- e) Employment Law Compliance Bill 2008.
- f) Employment Equality Act 2004.
- g) Employees (Provision of Information and Consultation) Act 2006.

GDPR

- a) Lawful, fair and transparent processing;
- b) Limitation of purpose, data and storage;
- c) Data subject rights;
- d) Consent;
- e) Personal data breaches;
- f) Privacy by Design;
- g) Data Protection Impact Assessment;
- h) Data transfers;
- i) Data Protection Officer;
- j) Awareness and training.

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APPENDIX A: FEEDBACK INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the interview:

Discuss the aim of the interview (e.g. neuro-cognitive screening; career guidance); why the tests were administered; how the results are likely to be used; who will have access to them.

The boundaries for the interview:

The degree of confidentiality of the discussion should be agreed. If notes are to be taken decide what will happen to them and who will see them.

The length of the interview must be understood, and whether it may be extended or continued at a later time. These considerations will depend on the purpose of the interview as well as the amount of information to be discussed.

The interviewer should try and create a co-operative atmosphere from the start, and the candidate should be encouraged to share his or her own views and feedback.

The candidate's experience:

To help elicit feedback from the candidate questions such as the following could be explored: How did they feel about taking the tests?; How was it administered?; What was their strategy on speed versus accuracy?; How did they find the tests?; How willing were they to try activities over a range of fields in the Interest Inventory? Which areas of performance did they feel more/less comfortable with?

RESULTS

Discuss each set of results separately. Perhaps start and/or finish with a strong area, or alternate from strengths to weaknesses.

Description of the instruments:

Remind the candidate of the characteristics of the test or inventory. Discuss the nature and level of the skill the test is designed to assess, the type of work where this skill is relevant and the comparison group chosen. For the Interest Inventory remind the candidate that it is a self-report which reflects their interests and preferences – not their abilities. Explain the structure of the profile and the comparison group.

The Scores:

Give information about speed, accuracy and overall performance. Discuss the number of questions attempted, the proportion correctly answered and their performance against the comparison group, expressed in relation to 'average' performance, and also as a percentile, if used. Explain what this means in terms of likely behaviour and the implications regarding potential ease or difficulty in handling tasks using this type of ability.

For the Interest Inventory, first describe their profile in terms of the broad categories or groupings of interest, then explain the results of the individual scales. Make sure that you discuss the pattern of the profile, as a whole, the areas of particular interest and also those areas which do **not** interest the candidate.

For guidance, explain what the results mean in terms of their own most and least preferred occupational groups, and also how their interest compare with a specific named group of other people (the norm group). However, it is the *pattern of their own interests that matters as much as, if not more than, the level of amount of interest in comparison with others.*

Explore for reasons that may help to explain a relatively flat or undifferentiated interest profile. This may arise for a number of reasons including response style, confusion of skill with interest, mood state, a cautious personal style, or specific interest not covered by the questionnaire. Where a number of interest scales are liked equally strongly, this may suggest that variety of work activity will be important, or alternatively, that other factors such as ability will be of more significance in identifying a suitable subject, course or occupational direction.

As you feed back the scores, make sure that you give the candidate plenty of opportunity to express how they feel about the assessment.

CONCLUSION

Clarify and summarise key points coming out of the discussion. Draw out the links between the tests, such as between the ability, attainment tests and interest inventory profile results.

When all the results have been fed back, and hopefully agreed, take an overview of the areas of strength and areas for development. How does this tie in with their academic record? Agree or confirm what will happen next if any action is needed, according to the original purpose of the assessment.

APPENDIX B: GDPR DATA PROTECTION PRINCIPLES

European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a set of rules about how companies should process the personal data of data subjects. GDPR lays out responsibilities for organisations to ensure the privacy and protection of personal data, provides data subjects with certain rights, and assigns powers to regulators to ask for demonstrations of accountability or even impose fines in cases where an organisation is not complying with GDPR requirements. Understanding GDPR requirements can sometimes be a daunting task, so understand the key requirements through this easy-to-follow GDPR summary.

1) Lawful, fair and transparent processing

The companies that process personal data are asked to process the personal data in a lawful, fair and transparent manner. Now, what does this mean? Let us understand this:

- *Lawful* means all processing should be based on a legitimate purpose.
- *Fair* means companies take responsibility and do not process data for any purpose other than the legitimate purposes.
- *Transparent* means that companies must inform data subjects about the processing activities on their personal data.

2) Limitation of purpose, data and storage

The companies are expected to limit the processing, collect only that data which is necessary, and not keep personal data once the processing purpose is completed. This would effectively bring the following requirements:

- forbid processing of personal data outside the legitimate purpose for which the personal data was collected
- mandate that no personal data, other than what is necessary, be requested
- ask that personal data should be deleted once the legitimate purpose for which it was collected is fulfilled.
-

3) Data subject rights

The data subjects have been assigned the right to ask the company what information it has about them, and what the company does with this information. In addition, a data subject has the right to ask for correction, object to processing, lodge a complaint, or even ask for the deletion or transfer of his or her personal data.

4) Consent

As and when the company has the intent to process personal data beyond the legitimate purpose for which that data was collected, a clear and explicit consent must be asked from the data subject. Once collected, this consent must be documented, and the data subject is allowed to withdraw his consent at any moment.

Also, for the processing of children's data, GDPR requires explicit consent of the parents (or guardian) if the child's age is under 16.

5) Personal data breaches

The organisations must maintain a Personal Data Breach Register and, based on severity, the regulator and data subject should be informed within 72 hours of identifying the breach.

6) Privacy by Design

Companies should incorporate organisational and technical mechanisms to protect personal data in the design of new systems and processes; that is, privacy and protection aspects should be ensured by default.

7) Data Protection Impact Assessment

To estimate the impact of changes or new actions, a Data Protection Impact Assessment should be conducted when initiating a new project, change, or product. The Data Protection Impact Assessment is a procedure that needs to be carried out when a significant change is

introduced in the processing of personal data. This change could be a new process, or a change to an existing process that alters the way personal data is being processed.

8) Data transfers

The controller of personal data has the accountability to ensure that personal data is protected and GDPR requirements respected, even if processing is being done by a third party. This means controllers have the obligation to ensure the protection and privacy of personal data when that data is being transferred outside the company, to a third party and / or other entity within the same company.

9) Data Protection Officer

When there is significant processing of personal data in an organisation, the organisation should assign a Data Protection Officer. When assigned, the Data Protection Officer would have the responsibility of advising the company about compliance with EU GDPR requirements.

10) Awareness and training

Organisations must create awareness among employees about key GDPR requirements, and conduct regular trainings to ensure that employees remain aware of their responsibilities with regard to the protection of personal data and identification of personal data breaches as soon as possible.

NOTES: