

Merit, recruitment and selection

A new approach to recruitment in the NSW Public Service

Key points

- The *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* enhances the application of the merit principle in NSW Public Service employment.
- Capability based assessments are a key feature of a new recruitment and selection framework.
- The Public Service Commission has developed a number of resources to assist Public Service agencies to understand and implement new recruitment practices.
- Key sections of the GSE Act, GSE Regulation, and GSE Rules are: Section 34 and 43 of the GSE Act, and Part 2 and Part 3 of the GSE Rules.

A new approach to recruitment in the NSW Public Service

In 2013, the Public Service Commission (PSC) completed a comprehensive review of recruitment practices across the public sector. The review found that the current approach:

- is reactive, focusing mainly on filling individual vacancies
- discourages external applicants from applying
- does not encourage mobility
- gives significant weight to a single interview
- lacks mechanisms to evaluate efficiency

To address the shortcomings identified, and based on an extensive research and literature

review into recruitment practices, a new principles based approach to recruitment has been developed.

The new recruitment and selection framework includes the use of capability-based workforce planning and market analysis to inform recruitment strategy; simplified application processes; robust capability based assessment methods; and the development and use of internal and external talent pools.

Merit

The [Government Sector Employment Act 2013](#) (GSE Act) enhances the application of the principle of merit as all employment decisions are to be based on a holistic assessment of an applicant's capabilities against the requirements of the role. In addition, the requirements for multiple capability based



assessments in the recruitment process will ensure a comprehensive assessment of applicant's capabilities from different perspectives.

[Part 3](#) of the *Government Sector Employment Rules 2014* (GSE Rules) establishes a new framework for merit based employment introducing new concepts of comparative assessment and suitability assessment.

Comparative assessment

Comparative assessment is the standard requirement for employment in the Public Service. It involves three capability based assessments including an interview and an opportunity for comparison against other applicants.

Suitability assessment

Suitability assessment is the minimum assessment required for employment in the Public Service, and is only available for use in limited circumstances, including for temporary employment that is known to be for less than 6 months. Suitability assessment involves two capability based assessments including an interview.

Comparative and suitability assessments both require capability based assessment against the role requirements.

Capability based assessments

Capability based assessments are a key feature of the new recruitment model and provide an opportunity to assess an applicant's capabilities as they relate to the role. The use of multiple assessments provides more holistic view of capability and greater reliability and validity in predicting on the job performance.

Examples of capability based assessments include, but are not limited to:

- structured behavioural interviews
- cognitive ability or skills testing
- role play exercises
- presentations
- work sample tests

To assist Public Service agencies in selecting and administering appropriate assessments, the PSC is establishing a panel of providers who are able to provide a suite of assessment products and services aligned to the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework.

Review of promotion decisions

The GSE Act enhances the principle of merit, and it continues to be the basis for all recruitment decisions, including promotion decisions.

Promotional appeals managed through the Industrial Relations Commission have progressively fallen into disuse over recent years; very few appeals have been lodged and almost none have been successful.

Under the GSE Act, the Industrial Relations Commission will no longer hear promotion appeals. Instead, [Part 4](#) of the GSE Rules sets out the requirements in relation to internal reviews of promotion decisions.

How will these changes improve an applicant's experience?

For applicants, this new approach brings a welcome change, with a quicker and easier application process including a one page covering letter, a short statement in response to two role related questions, and a resume.



This means no more lengthy responses to selection criteria for recruitment panel members to assess which will improve shortlisting times.

The assessment process will involve at least three different tools to assess an applicant's capabilities, moving away from the current process where significant weight is placed on a single interview. This gives applicants the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities from different perspectives and in different settings, rather than one opportunity during the interview.

To assist applicants seeking employment in the NSW Public Service, the PSC has developed a ['how to' guide for applicants applying for NSW Public Service roles](#) which is available on the PSC website.

How will these changes improve a hiring manager's experience?

Incorporating multiple capability based assessments into recruitment processes gives managers a more holistic assessment of applicants. It allows managers to select the assessment methods best suited to the requirements of the role, and use a range of assessment outcomes to make a decision. Removing the requirement to respond to selection criteria also means managers will spend less time reviewing written applications.

How will staff be trained on the new recruitment processes?

The PSC is developing a number of support materials to assist Public Service agencies to understand and implement the new recruitment model, including the application of the enhanced merit principle.

Recruitment and Selection Guide

The PSC has developed a [Recruitment and Selection Guide](#) which is available on the PSC website.

The Recruitment and Selection Guide describes best practice principles which will give managers and recruiters the knowledge to conduct 'fit for purpose' recruitment and selection processes.

Merit Assessment e-Learning program

The PSC has developed a [Merit Assessment e-Learning program](#) which is available on the PSC website.

This e-Learning package replaces the old merit selection training and online refresher training.

This new training is mandatory for hiring managers and is recommended for other panel members undertaking recruitment and assessment activities. It covers the key information a hiring manager needs to know before participating on an assessment panel.

Recruitment and Selection e-Learning program

A Recruitment and Selection e-Learning program is also being developed to provide training on best practice principles that will give managers and recruiters the knowledge to conduct 'fit for purpose' recruitment and selection processes, which will assist in the attraction, selection and retention of the best applicants possible. This program is recommended for recruiters and other HR staff, as well as managers who conduct high volumes of recruitment.



The Recruitment and Selection e-Learning program will be available on the PSC website in the coming months.

Transitional arrangements

[Schedule 4](#) of the *Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014* provides for a transition period of twelve months, to 23 February 2015, for Public Service agencies to fully implement the requirements of the recruitment processes under the GSE Act. This transitional period allows enough time for Public Service agencies to train staff and ensure that their processes are compliant with the new requirements.

Would you like more information?

To read the GSE Act and other supporting instruments, such as the GSE Regulation and GSE Rules, please see the [EmploymentPortal](#)

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