

Assessment Methods: Psychometric Assessment

Benefits of using psychometric assessments

- Objectivity – good psychometric assessments are standardised on a large sample and provide normative data across a wide range of demographics and age groups. Well selected tests will allow candidates to demonstrate talents that may not be directly observable otherwise.
- Validity (Accuracy) – psychometric assessments are one of the best predictors of future individual job performance when used in combination with a behavioural interview. A comprehensive analysis of assessment methods and outcomes has shown that a combination of psychometric assessment and behavioural interviews methods afford the lowest application cost and highest predictive validity (0.63). This compares to other single assessment methods such as interviews (0.51), education (0.10) & reference checks (0.26).¹
- Cost – psychometric assessments are relatively low in cost compared to tailored work sample activities.
- Merit Order – the use of psychometric assessments can also assist in ranking candidates in merit order.
- Progressive culling tool – Psychometric assessments can be used in bulk recruitment campaigns to reduce candidate pool numbers before proceeding to more resource intensive assessments such as assessment centres or interviews.

¹ Frank Schmidt and John Hunter (1998) *The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and Theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings*, Psychological Bulletin, 124 (2), 262-274



What are psychometric assessments?

Psychometric assessments are a method of assessing candidates to inform selection and development decisions. They can be used as a type of capability-based assessment. There are many different types of psychometric assessments available, including cognitive ability and personality questionnaires.

Psychometric assessments are carefully developed for specific purposes, and their use should be consistent with that purpose. Assessments used to assist with selection and development are not designed to uncover confidential information about individuals, reveal innermost secrets or diagnose individuals with mental illnesses.

Numerous studies have shown that psychometric assessments when used appropriately are one of the most valid predictors of an individual's future job performance, job satisfaction and turnover. Nevertheless, psychometric assessments should never stand alone as the only method used in a selection and decision making process. The more assessment methods you use, the greater the chance you have of increasing your understanding of the individual's capabilities and making the best selection decision.

Agencies should ensure that they select and set cut-off score benchmarks for psychometric assessments that are appropriate for the capability level of the role. Agencies can either consult their in-house experts or seek advice from Assessment Services providers.

Common types of psychometric assessment

Common forms of psychometric assessments include Cognitive Ability Tests and Personality Questionnaires.

- **Cognitive ability tests** are deemed particularly useful when trying to predict an individual's future level of performance in a particular role. They can include:
 - **Verbal reasoning tests:** Measure basic vocabulary, verbal fluency and the ability to reason using words.
 - **Numerical reasoning tests:** Measure the ability to use numbers in a logical and efficient way.
 - **Abstract reasoning tests:** Assess the ability to understand new logical problems and use information outside the range of previous experience to solve them.
- **Personality questionnaires** are deemed particularly useful when trying to gauge a candidate's likely level of "fit" for a role, or within an agency. They measure relatively stable behavioural tendencies and work style preferences within an organisational context.

How does psychometric assessment work?

Psychometric assessment may be administered in hardcopy by pencil and paper, or online via computer at an agency's or test provider's offices and/or in the individual's home. They can be administered simultaneously to screen large numbers of candidates or individually in a face to face



setting. They may also form part of an Assessment Centre. Psychometric tests can be administered in an unsupervised environment to reduce candidate pool size, but candidates who progress to the next stage should always be re-tested in a supervised, controlled environment before being offered a role to confirm that the original test was completed by the candidate. People who administer, score and interpret psychometric assessments are accredited, trained, and skilled in this activity. If not available in-house, the services of an accredited provider should be obtained from the Assessment Services Panel

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Qualities of well-designed psychometric assessments?

Well-designed psychometric assessments are *Standardised*, meaning they are administered and scored in a consistent manner. Administration to large numbers of individuals allows for the development of *norms* which are used to compare individual performance with that of a general population, taking account of factors such as age and background.

Psychological assessments have two further Qualities: *validity*, meaning that the test actually measures what it claims to measure, and *reliability*, which refers to accuracy across different times and different people.

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