Careers and Employability Service
Psychometric Tests

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What are Psychometrics?

Psychometric tests are designed to measure your intellectual capabilities for thinking and reasoning. They are often used during the preliminary screening stage of the application process, to sift large amounts of candidates. Most tests are now completed online, are timed and you will not be able to retake them.

Your objective during the tests will be to answer as many questions as accurately as possible within the time allowed.

Aptitude/Ability Tests
Ability tests assess your overall ability, while aptitude tests assess specific individual capabilities. The most commonly used tests assess verbal and numerical reasoning skills; others will also assess your diagrammatic/spatial reasoning or logical processing. Each organisation selects the tests to ensure your suitability for advertised role, and sometimes tests are customised for the organisation.

- *Verbal Reasoning* tests usually consist of a piece of text with questions, which test comprehension and reasoning skills.
- *Numerical Reasoning* tests present questions which test your understanding and use of number, including skills such as percentage and ratio.
- *Diagrammatic Reasoning* tests present abstract information in the form of shapes and symbols and test your ability to analyse and deduce patterns and logical flow.
- *Critical Reasoning* tests are high level analytical tests, most commonly used in law, but also by other organisations. One example is the Watson-Glaser Test.

Personality Assessments
These aim to measure whether your personal attributes are suitable for a particular work environment. They assess individual behaviour, attitudes or opinions as well as motivation, values and interests. The best way to approach this type of assessment is to answer the questions as straightforwardly as possible, following the guidance given.

For Career Planning:
Personality assessments can also be used for career planning as well as preparing for interviews. Behavioural and personality assessments can be a useful way to identify your strengths and the types of careers that might interest you.

Situational Judgement Tests
These tests assess your judgement in solving work-related problems and are usually designed for the specific employer. Each question involves a realistic work scenario in which you may be given a range of actions to evaluate, or asked to formulate an action based on the information given.

Specific Entrance Tests
There are a number of specific tests (e.g. GAMSAT, UKCAT and BCAT) which you may be required to take for entry to certain professional training or university courses such as Medicine and the Bar, or to study in the United States.

Please see the resources **section at the end of this handout for practise tests on all of the above topics.**

Why are Psychometric Tests Used?

During the selection process, a variety of methods can be used to give organisations a thorough assessment of your suitability for the post. These include application forms/CVs, covering letters, interviews, assessment centres, presentations and psychometric tests.

Organisations use tests as a sifting process for applicants and there is a 'pass mark' to achieve before you can proceed to the next stage of the application process. The 'pass mark' may vary depending on different graduate entry routes with the same employer.

Psychometric tests are used because they:

- Are objective and fair
- Are believed to predict success in the role
- May provide useful information about an applicant's personality, motivation or capability
- Are useful for assessing training and development needs

How to Prepare

Once you are invited to take tests, you may have a limited time in which to complete them. Try to find out what kinds of tests the organisations you are applying to use, so that you can focus your preparation effectively.

Contact the organisation if you need to delay taking the tests due to a serious commitment such as exams, they may be willing to reschedule. See also the **declaring a disability** section below.

You are able to access free tests on the Careers Service website or you can purchase practise tests online. It is **not** possible to look at the actual tests used by organisations.

Practice will build confidence and familiarity, and should develop core skills (eg with percentage calculations, reading and analysis), as well as speed. Aim to achieve a level of competence so that you can feel well prepared. If the job is worth it, so are the preparation and the tests.

How to Build Your Skills

- Go to the website for a list of sites offering free practice tests.
- Puzzles including word games and diagrammatic puzzles can help you develop an analytical frame of mind. The Careers Service carries a large number of practice **books and e-books** which allows you to work at your own pace.
- Book a place on the psychometric tests workshop through MyCareer.
- Practice basic maths skills such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, ratios and percentages.
- The **practiceaptitudetests.com** website has some useful video explanations of topics such as

calculating ratios and percentages.
- To develop your critical and verbal reasoning skills try reading quality newspapers, technical reports and business journals, or organisational reports, especially the financial analysis sections.
- Practice extracting the main points from paragraphs of information, analysing and summarising their meaning. We also have books to assist with this preparation.

Declaring a Disability

- If you have dyslexia or another disability, you can notify the employer in advance and reasonable adjustments should be made in order to minimise the impact of the disability. (For example, extra time, large print materials or Braille, or other accommodations can be made).
- Often there will be a very short deadline to complete tests and if the deadline expires before you have managed to talk to the employer there may be delays reinstating your application.
- You may find it helpful to attend our workshop on disability disclosure – ask at the Careers Centre for more information.
- The GraduatesFirst tests on our website can be adjusted for time, up to 25% by you on registration. If you need longer, ask in the Careers Centre.

The Test Session

Many aptitude tests are designed with more questions than you can answer in the time allowed. You will usually be told how long the test will take and how many questions there are to answer. Work as quickly and accurately as you can.

If you are taking the tests unsupervised on-line from home or campus; it is still important to follow the guidance. Don't ask someone else to take the tests for you, as you may be asked to re-sit them at the Assessment Centre.

Make sure you understand any advance instructions you have been given. If you are taking an online test but do not understand the instructions, you may be able to contact the company for clarification. If this is not an option, take a screen shot and come to a drop-in session at the Careers Service.

Once you start a test you are unlikely to be able to restart the test at a later point.

Starting the test:
- Allow enough time and make you sure you have pencil and paper.
- Concentration is key. As for any exam, try you ensure you are not tired, hungry or thirsty as you may be required to stay seated for an hour or more.
- Switch your phone to silent or off. A watch will help you to manage the time during the test.
- Follow the instructions carefully.
- Most tests tend not to be negatively marked for wrong answers. If this is the case, you could make an educated guess if you are not sure of an answer.

If at a Test Centre:
- Arrive in good time, you may not be admitted if you are late.
- If allowed, have a drink to hand.
- Ask the test administrator for clarification if you do not understand anything.

During the test:
- Mark or change answers clearly in the correct manner as outlined in the instructions.
- Keep up the pace, do not spend too long on one question; move on if you are stuck. Consider an educated guess.
- Be organised in your notes and rough workings so that you know which question you are working on/have missed out.
- Check your answers if you finish early.
- If required to go straight on from one test to another, just take a minute to stand up or stretch and perhaps take a drink before starting the second test.

Tips for numeracy tests
- Be comfortable with ratios, percentages and other calculations. You may want to practise on **BBC Bitesize.**
- Read the question and background information carefully and pay attention to the detail.
- Understand common numeracy and business terms, such as Gross, Net, Median and Mean. Doing lots of practice will help identify these.
- Keep your draft workings tidy. Label results and cross out errors, you may be using the same calculations in more than one question.
- Use rational guesses to reduce the number of calculations required – but with care. If you can confidently rule out several answers, this will increase your chance of guessing the correct answer.

Tips for verbal reasoning tests
- Don't deduce information; you may not have all the information needed to give a definite answer.
- Don't rely on your existing pre-conceptions or knowledge, base your answers only on the text provided.
- Misreading and not paying attention to details may result in multiple wrong answers from the same piece of text.

Tips for Situational Judgement Tests
- Different employers' tests vary a great deal; make sure you read the instructions before answering the questions carefully. Look closely at the situation, the possible answers and what you are being asked to do.
- Familiarise yourself with the employer's values, their mission statement and the work setting.
- Keep in mind the competencies being sought for the role applied for, as well as the tasks involved in the job by re-examining the job description and personal specification.
- Use the information provided rather than making assumptions about the scenario.
- Don't linger too long on each question.

After the test
- If you have not done well, remember there may be a number of reasons for this including lack of experience, misunderstanding, answering questions too slowly, or feeling tired and unable to concentrate.
- Many candidates fail tests on the first few attempts, it may not mean you cannot do the job, it means you need to practise.
- Ask for feedback, try to recollect the types of questions you found particularly hard and refocus your preparation.
- Try practise tests online and using textbooks.
- You may have to wait a period of time before reapplying to the same organisation, but previous failures are not likely to influence an organisation's decision or your career path once you are successful.

Resources

http://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/application-support/psychometrics.page?

Free Tests for University of Southampton students (Practice Tests tab from above link)
These provide a good range of practice tests and assessments. These tests have been provided by major test publishers that are commonly used by graduate recruiters.

Please see the 'Further Reading' tab on the above link for information and free sample tests on:
- **Mechanical Comprehension Tests**
- **Critical Reasoning**
- **Postgraduate Study**
- **Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary**
- **Rational and Creative Thinking**

Books
- The Careers and Employability Service holds many books in the centre and on-line e-books with detailed examples, explanations and practice questions for you to borrow or access through Webcat.
- There are also books and e-books to help with University entrance tests including **Medicine and Dentistry**.
- **The catalogues for both can be accessed from the e-books web page**
  http://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/ebooks.page