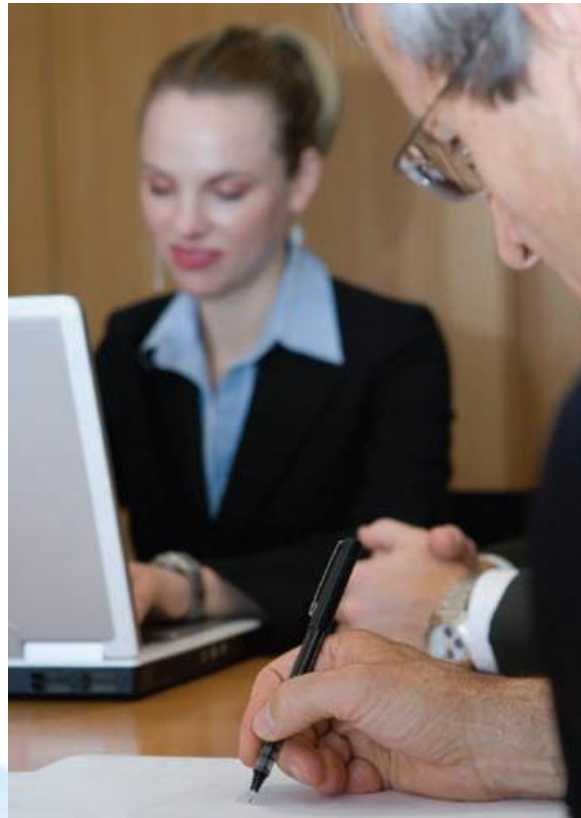


User's guide to applying psychometric assessments within your organisation



This guide will help line managers and HR professionals to understand how assessments work and to appreciate the important role these can play in assessing individuals fairly and objectively for recruitment, personal development, team development and re-structuring. It contains useful hints and tips to help you make the best use of these powerful tools.

We have a related guide for candidates to help them prepare for psychometric assessments; please contact us via info@informedassessment.co.uk to receive this.

What are psychometric exercises and how do they work?

The term 'psychometric' literally means "measurement of the mind".

Psychometric assessments are standardised exercises which compare the responses from the participant taking the exercise with those derived from lots of other people with similar backgrounds to themselves.

The results show how close or far apart the individual's results are from the majority of other responses previously obtained, in carefully controlled conditions, by the exercise publisher.

They can provide important information on job-relevant competencies, skills and behaviours. Over many years psychometric assessments have been refined and developed to make them ever more accurate and objective as measurement tools.

The most commonly used psychometric exercises for recruitment, assessment, development and re-structuring include:

- Personality questionnaires
- Motivation and values questionnaires
- Ability tests
- Managerial / situational judgment tests.

The key of course is, as with any measurement tool, to pick an exercise appropriate to the required task.

In recruitment, psychometric exercises are often used for screening out candidates, to save time and money later in the process, before or in conjunction with the interviewing stage.

Sometimes psychometric assessments are used alongside, or shortly after, the final interview stage, if an organisation cannot decide between two or more candidates or if an organisation wants to know more about their final chosen candidate(s).

They can help organisations "benchmark" internal candidates against external candidates, or those who might have very different educational backgrounds or indeed speak different languages across international sample groups.

Organisations can use assessments to pull together high-performing teams which have a balance of complementary skills. The assessments can also help team

members gain insights into the team’s overall strengths and “blind-spots”. Assessments can help individuals understand themselves better and can be used for personal development planning, career coaching and counselling.

More about personality questionnaires.....

What are they?

Personality questionnaires explore an individual’s style – their typical approach to different tasks and situations.

What can personality questionnaires be used for?

Personality questionnaires are mostly used for recruitment, coaching, personal and team development.

They can also be used to profile a whole team, and to help the team see its collective strengths and blind-spots.

What do personality questionnaires look like?

They come in two main formats:

- Those which give lots of statements about working life and ask whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements in turn. An example might be: *“I enjoy leading meetings”*
- Those which give blocks of statements, and you have to pick ONE statement which is most like you, and ONE which is least like you.

An example block of statements might be:

Pick ONE Most like	Pick ONE least like	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I look forward to the future with optimism
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am a creative problem-solver
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am competitive in everything I do

More about motivation and values questionnaires.....

What are they?

Motivation and values questionnaires explore factors such as what individuals believe in and what gives them energy at work; and what type of tasks, situations, organisational context and reward factors make them put in either more or less effort.

What can motivation questionnaires be used for?

Because they explore an individual’s motivators, de-motivators and values, the impact on an individual’s drive and what satisfaction they might get out of a role, they can be particularly useful in coaching, counselling, careers guidance and career management support.

They are also used in a range of recruitment applications, including sales roles, to ensure the role / organisation will give the individual what they are looking for, as well as to help the relevant line manager get the best out of the individual.

They are also useful for exploring retention and staff turnover issues.

What do motivation questionnaires look like?

An example statement might be:

Pick ONE:	Makes me work a lot less hard	Makes me work a little less hard	Has no effect on my efforts	Motivates me to work a bit harder	Motivates me to work a lot harder
Having to follow detailed procedures and processes at work....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

More about ability tests.....

What are they?

Ability tests measure a wide range of specific abilities and come in different levels of difficulty.

Such tests are used for exploring an individual's cognitive abilities; and how quickly and accurately they will be able to process, interpret, understand or analyse information.

What can ability tests be used for?

Tests are widely used in recruitment but can also be helpful in development contexts and for identifying training needs.

For supervisory, graduate, managerial and professional roles, these tests often include verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning and inductive reasoning:

- Verbal reasoning tests look at a person's ability to derive the correct inference or conclusion from verbally presented information
- Numerical reasoning tests look at a person's ability to derive the correct conclusion from numerically presented information found typically in the form of graphs, charts and tables of figures
- Inductive reasoning tests look at a person's ability to solve problems in a logical and systematic way. These tests often involve symbolic material and shapes-based questions.

For administrative and clerical roles, these tests can include clerical checking, basic word usage and numerical calculation skills.

For skilled, craft and technician roles, these tests can include understanding instructions, mechanical reasoning, spatial awareness and fault finding.

They are normally timed and have right and wrong answers.

What do ability tests look like?

Here are some examples of verbal, numerical and inductive questions from a graduate and managerial test series, published by SHL:

http://www.ort.shlsolutions.com - Verbal Reasoning Test - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Minutes Remaining **00** Test Progress

shl
PEOPLE PERFORMANCE

Question 1
Conflicts of interest are common for middle managers during periods of organisational change.

True
 False
 Cannot Say

Remember to base your answers **only** on the information given in the passage.

Help **Next**

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Done Internet

Text Passage:
In many organisations, middle management positions can be difficult, especially during periods of significant change. While trying to do their best to implement changes imposed by senior management, they may realise that promoting the interests of the organisation often conflicts with their own best interests, and those of their colleagues and subordinates. Such realisations can sometimes result in high levels of additional stress for those managers. No effective solution to this problem has been found and, if the way in which most organisations operate does not change in some relevant way soon, it is likely that we will see an increase in absenteeism and turnover amongst middle managers.

http://www.ort.shlsolutions.com - Numerical Reasoning Test - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Minutes Remaining **00** Test Progress

shl
PEOPLE PERFORMANCE

Question 1
Which mine can produce the greatest amount of units of electricity before it runs out of coal?

Folen
 Dirme
 Ilt
 Ryken
 All Others

Help **Next**

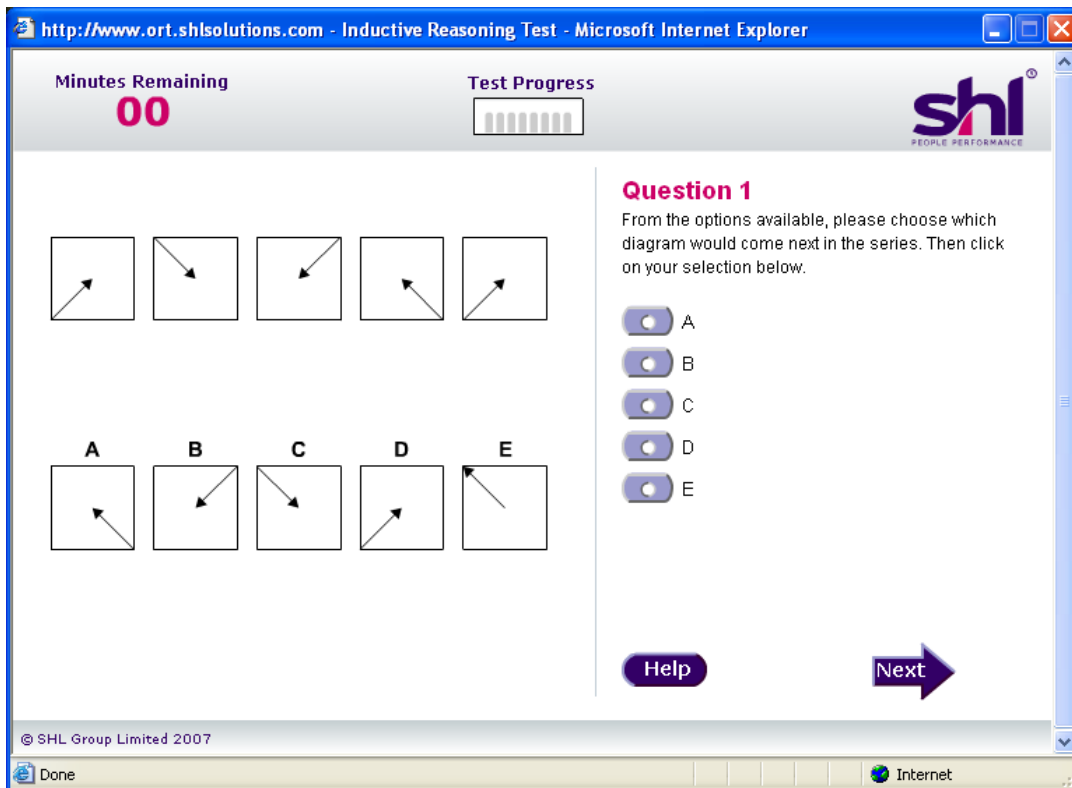
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Done Internet

Table:

World Fossil Fuel Regulation			
UK Coal Energy			
UK Mines	Extraction (000's tonnes) per year	Electricity production per kg (units)	Remaining coal (millions of tonnes)
Folen	46,324	17.0	68.27
Dirme	34,953	12.3	70.95
Ilt	74,036	14.2	62.73
Ryken	13,684	21.0	61.02
All Others	385,306	14.7	82.63

- 1 tonne = 1,000 kilograms
- An average UK household utilises 4.5 units of electricity per day
- One unit of electricity is sold for £0.08



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More about situational judgment tests.....

What are they?

Typically these exercises contain a selection of job-relevant situations or scenarios targeted at a specific level of role (Senior Management or Graduate etc.) or specific type of role (Customer Service or Administrative etc.).

The participant is then presented with a series of possible options or actions to the problem, and has to rate how effective or ineffective each proposed action might be.

The participant's choices of ratings are compared to those of an expert panel, previously collated, to see how similar to or far apart these are. The closer the participant's ratings are to those of the expert panel, the stronger they score.

What can situational judgment tests be used for?

They are used for both recruitment and development.

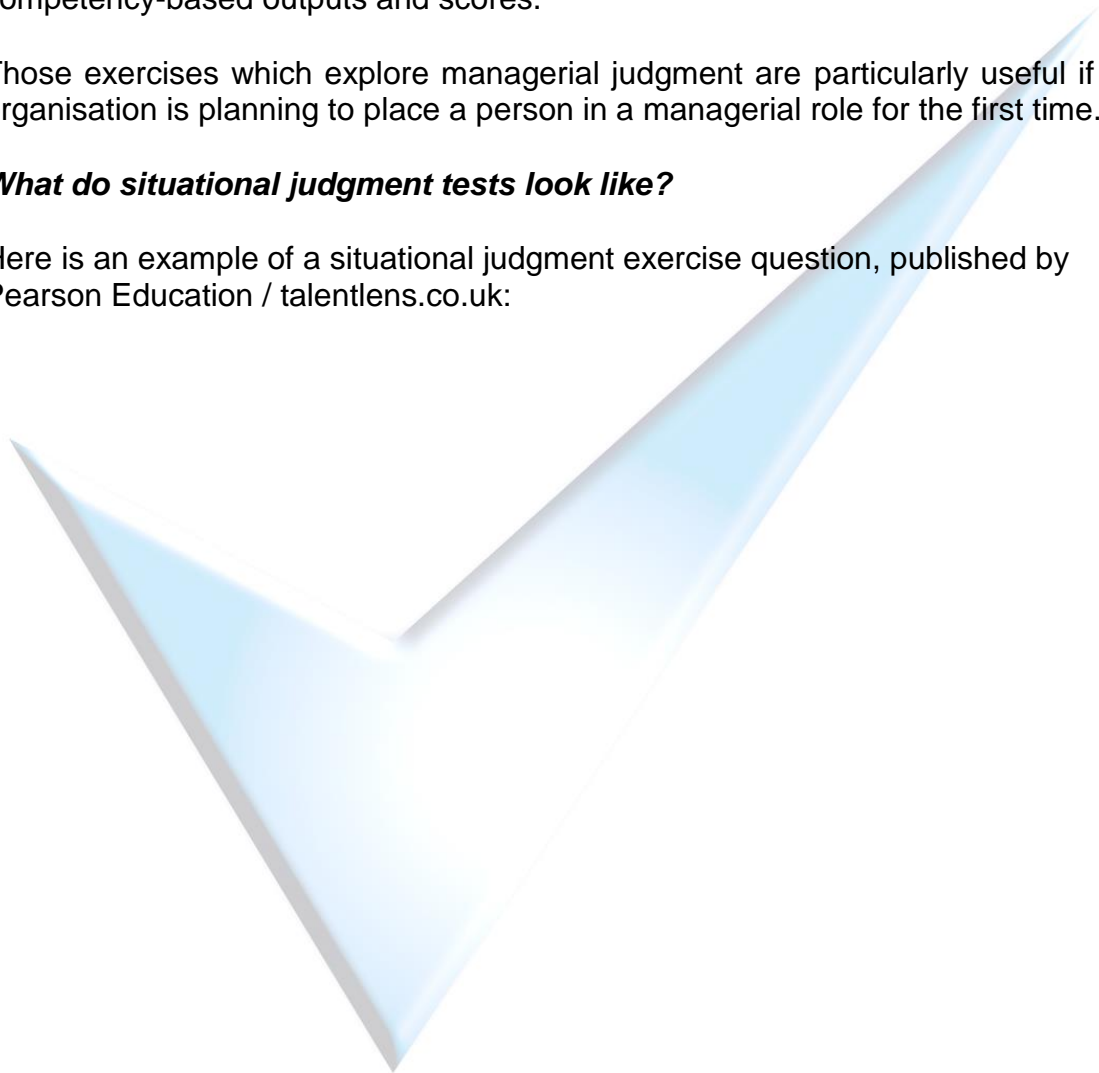
They are being increasingly used at the executive and managerial levels; as well as for roles likely to produce higher candidate responses levels such as graduate and customer-facing roles.

Some of the exercises are designed specifically for recruitment screening; others for later stages in the selection process or for development, based upon competency-based outputs and scores.

Those exercises which explore managerial judgment are particularly useful if an organisation is planning to place a person in a managerial role for the first time.

What do situational judgment tests look like?

Here is an example of a situational judgment exercise question, published by Pearson Education / talentlens.co.uk:



Situation 2
You take a call from a customer. He sounds angry.

"I have just spent the best part of an hour navigating through your website trying to find my local leisure centre to book a squash court and after all that it has just rejected my credit card and I have wasted my time.

There is no problem with my card, I use it all the time on the Internet with no problems. You need to get your website sorted."

How appropriate is the following response to the situation?

2J.
Explain that thousands of transactions go through each day with no problems.

Totally unacceptable
 Not helpful
 OK, but not ideal
 Good thing to do

introduction
 previous next

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© Pearson Education Ltd: source <http://www.talentlens.co.uk/select/iris.aspx>

How are psychometric exercises administered?

Traditionally this was via a paper-and-pencil format with a qualified administrator introducing and explaining the test process and invigilating as the exercises are taken.

This still occurs, but online assessment is becoming more and more widespread.

Sometimes the exercises can be completed online remotely at a time and place of a participant's choosing (such as at home). On other occasions they might be invited to take the exercises on a PC at the client's premises, or possibly even at a recruitment consultant's premises.

Tests completed online in an uncontrolled setting such as at home can be followed up by a re-testing process to help guard against cheating.

What do the outputs look like?

Psychometric outputs come in many different formats, depending upon the particular exercise being used, the context of the assessment (recruitment, development etc) and who is using the information (a candidate, line manager, or experienced assessment user who has been trained in the product etc).

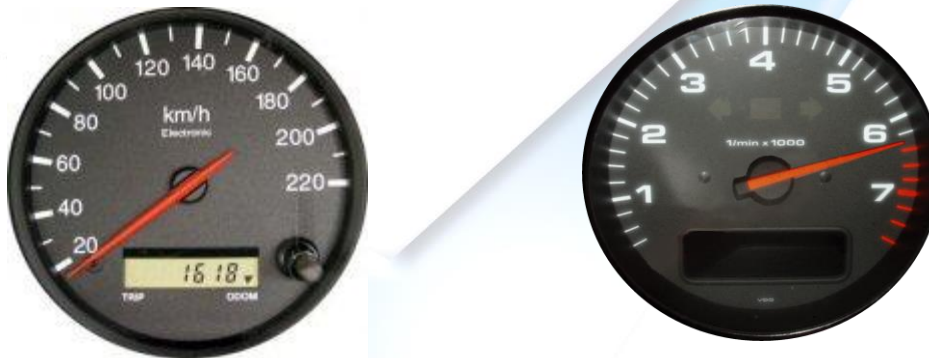
Please feel free to contact us on 0845 606 6798 or via info@informedassessment.co.uk to see some example outputs and reports.

How robust are the exercises – do they really work?

Well-designed, well-administered exercises provide very objective and accurate information on an individual's strengths and development areas.

There are many exercises and assessments available but high-quality exercises should perform well against two key technical measures which in particular underpin all measurement tools:

Reliability – this is a measure of consistency and of stable measurement. For example, a speedometer on a car with low reliability would show a speed that keeps changing for no reason.



Validity – this is a measure that the test is actually measuring what it purports to measure. For example, a rev counter in a car should be a valid measure of engine revs, but it would not be a valid measure of car speed – as the engine can be made to rev while not moving.

The test publisher or the Consultant using the assessments should be able to source clear reliability and validity evidence for the exercises. A good source of accessible, independent reviews can also be found at the British Psychological Society's website:

http://www.psychtesting.org.uk/test-registration-and-test-reviews/test-reviews-and-test-registration_home.cfm

We want to use (or have been using) psychometric assessments for recruitment. How can we apply assessments as fairly, accurately and objectively as possible?

- ✓ Use exercises which meet high-quality standards of reliability, validity and other technical criteria
- ✓ The exercises must be clearly relevant to the job and person specification criteria and be pitched at an appropriate level of difficulty
- ✓ Use comparison groups which are relevant and as up-to-date as possible; are appropriate to the role being assessed; and as balanced and representative as possible of the broader candidate population in terms of gender and ethnic group mix etc
- ✓ Make sure the candidate is thoroughly briefed about the need to undertake the assessments and is motivated and committed to doing the exercises properly – this is particularly the case if the candidate is being asked to take the exercises online and in an uncontrolled environment such as at home. If not briefed properly, candidates can tend to leave online assessments to the last minute, or do them late at night when they are tired, rush the exercises, miss preparation opportunities, or, worse still, be tempted to get their friends to help them. Consider re-assessing the individual later in the recruitment process in a fully controlled setting such as your offices
- ✓ Give the candidate time and scope to prepare and to practice for the assessment process – see the Appendix for some useful websites for candidates to explore

- ✓ If the candidate is taking the assessments in your premises, make sure that the environment is well-lit and is free from interruptions, noise and distractions. In good time before the candidate arrives, make sure that any online technology is working properly to avoid any potential disruptions to the assessment process itself
- ✓ Whether completing assessments online at home or in your offices, check beforehand if the candidate has any special requirements requiring adjustments to be made to the assessment process, and explore with the individual what specific adjustments should then be made
- ✓ Consider the assessment results in the context of what else you know about the individual; assessment results work best when combined with other well-designed exercises such as an interview or other sources of relevant evidence about the individual
- ✓ Do not place an inappropriate emphasis upon test results in particular - they are estimates of ability and the scores are not the be-all and end-all. As a general guideline, the more complex the level of analytical skill and problem solving required for a role, then the more important the test score(s) becomes
- ✓ If considering a candidate who achieves a lower test score for a role where more complex analytical / problem solving is required, you may want correspondingly greater confidence in their “technical” skills / knowledge, personality or motivation attributes, all of which would be obtained from other aspects of the recruitment process. You may also wish to use the interview process to see if this evidence corroborates the findings of the test(s)
- ✓ Relate the scores obtained to the job and person specification. Be very careful using tests as “cut-offs” – you will need to have clear evidence of why the cut-off was chosen at that level if challenged
- ✓ Offer feedback to the individuals on their assessment results. Whether successful or unsuccessful in their applications, they need to be taking away a good impression of your organisation
- ✓ Analyse all of the test results achieved and gather any candidate feedback about your assessment process. To avoid falling foul of employment law, you

should be on your guard for test results that show signs of any skew against, for example, particular ethnic or gender groups, particularly if you are then using the test scores in any kind of selection cut-off process. Make ongoing improvements or refinements to your test usage policy and processes in order to get the best out of your psychometric assessments and tests.

About Informed Assessment

In essence, we help our clients to arrive at informed, objective decisions about whom to appoint - and how to help those people to develop - through the use of fair and rigorous selection processes and assessment exercises and activities.

Informed Assessment specialises in:

- *Assessment for selection - using online psychometric assessment, face-to-face psychometric assessment and Assessment Centre techniques*
- *Assessment for development – helping individuals and teams to develop through facilitating Development Centres and team development programmes*
- *Associated training in such areas as recruitment and selection skills.*

For more information please contact us on 0845 606 6798 or via info@informedassessment.co.uk

Test taker's guide to some useful websites

There are some useful websites for test takers to check out on the internet. Also use Google and enter words like “psychometric”, “psychometrics” and “aptitude tests” to keep abreast of relevant new sites.

<http://www.shl.com>

Click on “try a test” (on the right of the screen) and follow the options.

<http://morrisby.com>

Click on “Practice questions” under “Individuals” for a sequence of practice tests covering different ability areas.

<http://psychometrics.co.uk>

This website has a comprehensive download giving verbal and numerical test practice questions. Click on “Practice psychometric tests”.

<http://www.aptitudeonline.co.uk>

This site provides graduate level verbal, numerical and diagrammatic test questions but you may need to pay a fee.

<http://psychometric-success.com>

This website also has plenty of information plus free, downloadable practice tests as well as test questions to buy.

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/psychotests.htm>

This is a University site so the exercises are of graduate level.

http://www.savilleconsulting.com/products/aptitude_preparationguides.aspx

There are several downloadable guides available on preparing for verbal, numerical and diagrammatic tests.