

Psychometric tests



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What are psychometric tests?

Psychometric tests are used as part of the overall recruitment process for a wide range of sectors and roles. They are thought to be a good indicator of a candidate's ability and are often used during the early stages of the assessment process to filter large numbers of applicants. Most tests are completed online, under timed conditions. There isn't usually an option of a retake and if you don't pass the test, you are unlikely to be able to proceed with your application.

Why are psychometric tests used?

Psychometric tests give everyone the same opportunity to do their best. They are used because they:

- Provide an unbiased account of each candidate's strengths and abilities
- Have a standardised design, giving all candidates the same assessment experience
- Identify candidates who have the skills and abilities that are essential for success in the role
- Give an insight into a candidate's personality and motivation, helping to identify those with the closest match to the company and the role

What are ability/aptitude tests?

Ability or aptitude tests look at how you process and reason with different kinds of information, including verbal and numerical, and they assess specific skills and abilities that are relevant to the role. Most use a multiple-choice or true/false format, with one right answer to each question.

These tests are likely to be timed, so it is important to work as quickly and accurately as possible. Unless you lose marks for a wrong answer (this is called negative marking and will be explained in the instructions if it is applicable) or you get stuck on a question, it is a good idea to make an 'educated guess' rather than missing it out. All tests will start with example questions and instructions. Make sure you understand the answers to these and ask for a repeat of the instructions if you are unclear.

Common types of tests are:

- **Verbal Reasoning** - assess how well you understand written information, reviewing

arguments and statements to pick out key messages

- **Numerical** - assess how well you interpret data, graphs, charts or statistics
- **Diagrammatic/Spatial Reasoning** - assess your ability to analyse and identify patterns and logical flow in shapes and symbols
- **Logical Reasoning** - assess how well you apply rules to basic information and follow through to arrive at an answer
- **Situational Judgement** - assess your response to a realistic situation that you could face in the workplace
- **Specific Entrance Test** - some professions such as Medicine, Dentistry and Law have specific entry tests as part of the admission criteria for Graduate Entry Programmes or the Bar Professional Training Course

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What are personality assessments?

Personality questionnaires provide information about how you are likely to behave in a given situation and can suggest how you might fit with the role and the organisation. The questionnaires are descriptive, showing how or why you may do things rather than your ability. Questions relate to different aspects of your personality, such as your working style, how you interact with other people and what motivates you. They are usually designed to reflect workplace behaviours, so try to focus on your university or work preferences, rather than your social life.

These assessments are usually untimed and there are no right or wrong answers. Employers are likely to use your results as a starting point for discussing your experiences and interests in the interview.

What are gamification/games based assessments?

Games-based assessments are on the increase and are generally used in the early stages of the application process, alongside other traditional psychometric testing. These behavioural assessments provide a data-driven and unbiased way to assess how a candidate fits the role.

- Gamification may seem an enjoyable way to undergo psychometric testing – but remember, you are being assessed! Stay focussed and take it seriously
- Don't worry if you're not a keen gamer – no previous gaming experience is required to perform well

What are virtual reality exercises?

The virtual reality exercise is a new development in the type of tests set at assessment centres. It is similar to a situational judgement test and uses virtual reality technology to create an immersive and interactive environment in which candidates experience simulated scenarios and attempt to solve problems or complete challenges.

What useful resources are available?

There are lots of free practice tests available online – here are just a few websites to check out:

- SHL: <https://www.shldirect.com/en/assessment-advice/assessment-advice/>
- Saville: <https://www.savilleassessment.com/practice-tests/>
- Human Metrics (Myers Briggs personality type questionnaire): <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>
- Talent Q Dimension: www.trytalentq.com
- Practice Aptitude Tests <https://www.practiceaptitudetests.com/>
- Business Psychologist Mark Parkinson's website has a comprehensive list of practice tests and questionnaires: http://markparkinson.co.uk/psychometric_links.htm

Top tips

- If you can choose when to take the test, select a time of day when you work best
- Take as many practice tests as possible to get familiar with the format and types of questions. You will find that your speed, accuracy and timings improve - key factors that affect your performance
- Read or listen carefully to all instructions including the time allowed to complete the test

- Make sure you will not be interrupted – it is important that you concentrate fully on what you're doing
- Don't rush, but work quickly – particularly if you're being timed
- You can skip questions you're unsure of, answer those you're more confident with and return to the difficult ones at the end of the test if you have some time left
- Make time to complete the assessment before the deadline – don't leave it until the last day
- Ensure that your technology is working, fully charged and that any software is up to date
- Ensure that you have everything you need before starting the assessment (calculator, note pad, pen etc)
- Ask for feedback on your ability test results. This could help you to identify your stronger and weaker areas and may help you to prepare for future tests
- Be aware that you may be asked to redo a similar test if your application is taken forward to ensure that you personally completed the online test - so don't ask someone else to take the test for you

Declaring a disability

If you have a disability which you feel might affect your performance, make sure the person who has invited you to take the test is aware at the earliest opportunity, so you can discuss any possible adjustments to the assessments to ensure you are not disadvantaged in any way.

For all assessments, it is a good idea to complete any practice tests available, to give you a clearer idea of how your disability might affect you.

How can I get further support?

You can receive peer to peer career support from our Career Coaches who can be found in our Career Studio in the Student Hub, Science Centre on Leek Road. The Career Studio is open Monday-Thursday 10am-6pm and Friday 10am-4.30pm. You can also receive career support via email at careers@staffs.ac.uk.

Other leaflets in this series:

Psychometric tests

Interview advice

Graduate job hunting

Available online at www.staffs.ac.uk or from the Career Studio