

**The British
Psychological Society**
Promoting excellence in psychology

Psychological testing: A test user's guide

www.psychtesting.org.uk



**The British
Psychological Society**
Psychological Testing Centre

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Introduction

This guide is about using psychological tests and the principles of good test use.

This guide is designed to answer seven questions in two main areas.

Questions about tests:

1. What are psychological tests?
2. What should I look for in a psychological test?
3. Where can I find out more about particular tests and test suppliers?

Questions about test use:

4. What knowledge and skills do I need to qualify as competent in the use of psychological tests?
5. How do I obtain a BPS Qualification in Test Use?
6. How do I maintain my competence and keep up-to-date on matters relating to psychological testing?
7. How do I ensure that I follow good practice?

Questions about test use:

- The need for people to be competent test users and to use technically sound tests.
- The services provided by the BPS to test users.
- Defining standards of competence in test use.
- The BPS Test Reviews and Test Registration process.
- The Psychological Testing Centre's (PTC) website (www.psychtesting.org.uk) which provides information on tests and testing for test users, test takers and test developers.

Section 1: Questions about tests

What is a psychological test?

Psychological tests are used in all walks of life to assess ability, personality and behaviour. A test can be used as part of the selection process for job interviews, to assess children in schools, to assess people with mental health issues or offenders in prisons.

It is very difficult to define 'tests' in a way that everyone would agree upon. In their guidelines on test use, the International Test Commission describes the areas covered by tests and testing as follows:

1. Testing includes a wide range of procedures for use in psychological, occupational and educational assessment.
2. Testing may include procedures for the measurement of both normal and abnormal or dysfunctional behaviours.
3. Testing procedures are normally designed to be administered under carefully controlled or standardised conditions that embody systematic scoring protocols.
4. These procedures provide measures of performance and involve the drawing of inferences from samples of behaviour.
5. They also include procedures that may result in the qualitative classification or ordering of people (e.g. in terms of type).

Any procedure used for 'testing', in the above sense, should be regarded as a 'test', regardless of its mode of administration; regardless of whether it was developed by a professional test developer; and regardless of whether it involves sets of questions, or requires the performance of tasks or operations (e.g. work samples, psycho-motor tracking tests, interview data).

Tests are designed for a purpose and the use of a particular test will vary according to the objectives of assessment. Some broad distinctions between different categories of tests can be made as follows.

Categories of test

In general, all tests fall into two broad categories. There are those designed to assess personal qualities, such as personality, beliefs, learning styles, and interests; abnormal phenomena such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, etc., and to measure motivation or 'drive'. These are known as **measures of typical performance**. These are usually administered without a time limit and the questions have no 'right' and 'wrong' answers.

Second, there are those designed to measure performance. These are called tests of ability, aptitude or attainment and are known as **measures of maximum performance**. Such tests either consist of questions with right answers, or tasks that can be performed more or less well. This distinction between typical and maximum performance can be applied to tests used in educational testing, for clinical assessment and diagnosis, and for testing in the workplace.

Measures of typical performance

Measures of typical performance are designed to reflect a person's normal behaviour, whether in their job, in education or in forensic settings. Examples of typical performance measures would be: measures of **Personality**, measures of **Vocational Interests**, of **Cognitive Styles** and measures of **Motivation** and **Drive**. Tests of typical performance are usually administered without any time limit on their completion. Measures of typical performance may be designed to assess differences between people within normal ranges of functioning or may be specifically designed to help understand types or degrees of dysfunction.

Personality Inventories. Personality concerns the way we characteristically respond to other people and situations: How we relate to other people, how we tackle problems, our emotionality and responsiveness to stress, and so on.

Personality inventories are good examples of tests that assess disposition. Dispositions describe our preferred or typical ways of acting or thinking.

Test items of these traits do not have right and wrong answers. Rather, they attempt to measure how much or how little we possess of a specified trait or set of traits (e.g. *gregariousness, empathy, decisiveness*). Most instruments designed to measure dispositions are administered without a time limit and stress the need for people to answer honestly and openly. But, in some situations, such openness may be difficult to achieve (for example, if it is perceived that one's chances of being selected for a job depend on the results).

Such problems are less likely to arise when personality and other measures of disposition are used in situations where one can be sure that it is in the test taker's best interests to co-operate and be honest (e.g. in clinical assessment or vocational guidance).

Interest Inventories. While interests are also related to personality, measures of interests focus more on what sort of activities we find attractive and which we would rather avoid. Interest inventories are designed to assess in a systematic manner people's likes and dislikes for different types of work or leisure activity. Satisfaction at work requires not only possessing the necessary skills to do the job competently but also having sufficient interest in it. Like tests of personality, these are not tests in the sense of having right and wrong answers.

Interest inventories have an obvious application in educational and vocational guidance and in staff development assessment situations in work, where people may need help in sorting out what they do or do not want to do. They provide a means of exploring new options with people, of suggesting areas of work that they would not have otherwise considered. As with personality assessment, assessing interests may provide a useful positive way by opening new doors for people in a career guidance context.

Both personality and interest assessment inventories are essentially different *in kind* from ability tests, even though the same psychometric principles apply (the need for reliability, validity and standardisation). Such inventories are the

means of providing a more qualitative description of people. Most of the available personality and interest tests are self-report or self-description instruments. That is, they are like a highly structured, written interview that has been standardised and subjected to psychometric analysis. If properly used, they can provide valuable sources of data about personality and interests to supplement information obtained from other sources (symptom checklists, performance analysis, references, interviews, and the like).

Measures of Cognitive Style. Cognitive style describes how people think and how they perceive and remember information. Cognitive style has similarities to personality. For example some people tend to focus on the detail while others look at the broad picture and miss the detail. People with similar cognitive styles tend to feel more positive about each other.

Measures of Drive, Motivation and Need. Measures of motivation and need focus on the factors which drive us to action (such as the need for success) or cause us to refrain from action (such as the fear of failure). Many personality and interest measures also provide – either directly or indirectly – measures of need.

People's levels of drive or motivation can be thought of as having both state and trait components. Some people are characteristically more driven than others: some people always seem to be on the go, seeking more and more work or responsibility, while others are the opposite. This is the trait component.

At the same time, any individual will vary in their level of drive from time to time. Some days they will feel they have more get-up-and-go than on other days. This is the state component.

Needs motivate us in that they tend to establish our priorities and our goals. Interest measures also provide some indication of motivation. Generally, people strive hardest at those things that interest them most.

Measures of maximum performance

Measures of maximum performance measure how well people can do things, how much they know, how great their potential is, and so on. Many of these measure general, rather abstract, characteristics (e.g. *intellectual ability, verbal fluency, working memory, numerical reasoning*) while others may seem more concrete and functional (*clerical speed and accuracy, spelling, programming aptitude*). The distinguishing feature about such tests is that they tend to contain questions, problems or tasks for which there are right and wrong (or good and bad) answers or solutions.

Maximum performance tests can focus on what people know or can do (attainment tests) or what they are capable of knowing or doing (tests of ability). Tests of attainment are used to assess knowledge and skills acquired through education and instruction. Examples include tests of literacy, mathematics knowledge, foreign language proficiency or mastery in a craft. Such tests tend to be narrowly defined in content and targeted at the achievement of specific standards.

Tests of ability assess broader areas of what a person can do. While scores on such tests are influenced by education and training, they are not designed to assess specific areas of knowledge or skill. Examples of such tests are measures of verbal reasoning (the ability to comprehend, interpret and draw conclusions from oral or written language), spatial reasoning (the ability to understand and interpret spatial relations between objects) and working memory (the ability to retain information while using it to perform a task)

There are also performance tests which measure abilities such as motor skill, hand eye co-ordination and ability to replicate patterns and shapes.

Tests of maximum performance are usually timed. In some cases the time limitation is very strict and the emphasis is placed on how quickly a person can respond to the items. Tests that contain relatively easy items, but with a strict time limit are called **speed tests**. In other cases, the time limit is designed to allow most people to complete all the test items, and the focus is on how many they are able to get right. If the score you get is mainly affected by your ability to answer the questions rather than your speed the test is a **power test**.

Aptitude

The term 'Aptitude Test' is often used very generally to refer to any instrument that may be used to assess how well an individual is likely to perform in a specific training programme or job. Attainment tests, ability tests and personality tests are all used to predict future performance, and so the term 'aptitude' has more to do with prediction than with a specific category of test.

Psychological dysfunction

Tests of psychological dysfunction are among the most complex form of psychological test in dealing with areas that are both sensitive and difficult to diagnose. They are also among the most diverse group of tests in covering a number of conditions and symptoms, and their use requires both general clinical expertise as well as specific knowledge of a particular test. They include assessments of neuropsychological damage resulting from physical trauma or from pathological conditions.

Areas of application

In addition to these categories of tests, broad distinctions can also be made in terms of the settings in which psychological tests are most frequently used.

These are:

1. Occupational settings in which tests are used in careers guidance, to help select personnel, to assess their training and development needs, and in promotion.
2. Educational settings in which tests are used to diagnose learning difficulties, assess levels of educational attainment, learning and instructional needs, and for entry into secondary and tertiary levels of education.

3. Health-related and Forensic settings in which tests are used to identify and assess emotional and behavioural conditions and disorders, assess personality and evaluate risk.

In each of these three main settings, one can further divide the areas of application into more specific domains or areas of knowledge. Test users who are skilled and competent in the use of tests in one domain may often need a great deal of further training to use tests in other domains – even within the same general setting (i.e. health related, educational or occupational). This is not so much because the tests may be more difficult to use, but because the proper interpretation of any test depends on the user's knowledge of the area of application as well as their knowledge of the test.

In all three settings, tests are used for three principal reasons:

1. They provide a standardised method for assessing and/or diagnosing individuals.
2. They provide such information more efficiently than most other methods of assessment (e.g. interviews or observation).
3. They provide access to the measurement of qualities that are difficult to assess through other means.

Psychological tests measure qualities that are less tangible than physical measurements such as height, length, mass or speed. Even when there is observable evidence of a condition such as a reading problem or behavioural disorder, the extent and causes of such problems may not be clear from the physical evidence available. So, in contrast to the manifest, observable features of physical measures (i.e. they can be experienced directly by our senses), psychological tests often measure qualities that are hidden, covert or latent (i.e. they cannot be directly or so easily experienced through our senses). As such, psychological tests may provide the only reliable and efficient means of assessment.

What should I look for in a psychological test?

The introduction to the ITC Guidelines on Test Use states that:

'Tests should be supported by evidence of reliability and validity for their intended purpose. Evidence should be provided to support the inferences that may be drawn from the scores on the test.'

Reliability

Reliability is concerned with how accurate or precise a test score is. When a test is administered, the outcome is an observed score on the quality measured by the test. However, all measurement procedures, physical as well as psychological, are subject to some degree of error. In order to know how much weight to place on the observed score, you need to know how accurate the test is as a measuring device. Measures of test reliability allow us to estimate that accuracy. This is a key characteristic of psychometric testing and what makes it so much more valuable

than other forms of measurement: For a psychometric test, we can quantify the degree of accuracy of the scores we obtain.

Being able to quantify measurement error has important consequences for how we use tests. For example, if you are carrying out an in-depth individual assessment of a person, on the basis of which you will be making some important decision, then you need a high degree of accuracy in your measurement. On the other hand, if you are using a test to sort people into one of two groups, and you are not concerned too much about making a few errors in this process, then the reliability of the test can be less. In general, reliability can be increased by making tests longer, and is decreased by shortening them. However, for a given test length, reliability will depend a lot on how well the test has been designed and developed.

Reliability is one of the most important topics in training in test use.

Test users need to get to grips with the concept of reliability, with understanding how it can be measured and understanding what its implications are.

Validity

Validity is concerned with what the test score actually measures. It is insufficient to merely state that a test is a measure of, say, mechanical aptitude, tolerance of stress, or proficiency in mathematics. Statements like these must be supported by research that demonstrates a test score is a meaningful measure of the quality or qualities the test was designed to assess.

Like reliability, understanding the concept of validity is critical to competent test use. A test is not simply either valid or not. Test manuals will contain reports of research relating to various aspects of what the test is designed to measure. These studies will never prove the tests validity once and for all because validity is contextual. A test can be valid for one application but completely irrelevant for another. The studies reported in the test manual should support the claims that are made about the tests and its use, and provide the basis on which the test user can make inferences about people's behaviour and predictions about the future performance.

Interpretation

Scores (e.g. 16 out of 25 items correct) obtained on tests are typically converted into a 'standard' form to facilitate their interpretation. This may be carried out by using tables of 'norms' or by reference to criterion scores.

Norms provide information about the distribution of scores in some population (for example, 'UK working adults') and scores can be converted into numbers that show how a person has performed relative to this population. Instead of saying the person got 16 out of 25 correct, we might say they performed at a level equivalent to the top 30 per cent of the UK working adult population. Norms are important because the latter type of statement is more meaningful and useful than the former.

To be able to use norms and interpret these transformed scores, a test user must understand the process by which these scores are arrived at and what they represent. Many tests of disposition and interest generate several scores

rather than one single score. Accurate interpretation of these scores depends on understanding the pattern of relationships between them. The process of converting obtained scores into normed scores is sometime carried out by hand (using tables provided in the test manual). Increasingly, though, these operations are carried out using computer programs. It is important, however, that the test user understands what these transformations are doing and why. The test manual should explain how the scores are transformed, what data the transformations are based on, and how the transformed scores should be interpreted.

Normative interpretations of scores simply tell us how a person has performed relative to other people. A much more powerful approach is to use the relationship between test scores and criterion measures. These are external measures of interest, such as educational outcome, job success, categories of mental dysfunction, etc. Criterion measures provide another means of aiding the interpretation of scores. To take a very simple example, if we know (from our validation research) that the failure rate in a training course is 50 per cent for people who score less than 10 on a test, 35 per cent for those who score between 10 and 15, and only 20 per cent for those who score 16 or above, then we can criterion-reference the score by converting the scores into predicted training outcomes. In effect we can classify the people on the basis of their test scores in terms of risk of training failure.

Fairness and bias

Tests are intended to discriminate between people – to show up differences where these are real. What they should not do is discriminate unfairly. That is, show differences where none exist, or fail to show differences that do exist.

It is possible that factors such as sex, ethnicity or social class may act to obscure, mask or bias a person's true score on a test. If this is the case, the observed test score may not be an accurate or valid reflection of the quality assessed through the test. This has been a concern of test designers for a considerable time, and an entire body of psychometric research has been devoted to developing methods for evaluating whether a test score is biased against different population subgroups. Test manuals should state whether the test has been evaluated for potential bias, what methods have been used to carry out such an evaluation and the results obtained.

Training in test use will help to clarify the important distinction between test bias and test score differences. Two people (or two groups of people) may get different scores on a test either because there is a real difference between them or because the test has a bias that causes the scores of one to be greater than the scores of the other. It is bias that we need to remove or minimise in the design of tests, not differences.

Where to find such evidence

Training in test use will provide the test user with the knowledge and skills needed to understand the information in the test manual, and to know when important information is missing. What should be found in a test manual is clear evidence

of the psychometric properties of the test showing how extensive the research supporting the test is (e.g. on how many people and in how many settings the information was collected), how strong the research evidence is (i.e. the extent to which the test has been shown to be reliable, valid and free from bias), and support for the interpretations that can be given to scores.

So, the key things to look for are evidence that it is a reliable measurement instrument and that it measures what it says it measures. You also need to be provided with advice on how to interpret the results of the test and guidance on what sort of conclusions you might draw from them.

The test supplier should provide the user with this information in the user and technical manuals. Sometimes these manuals are provided separately, sometimes combined in a single volume. The test manuals should describe the history of the test. This history should include any relevant theory supporting the test, the steps taken to construct the test, details of research and summaries of the results of such research. The manuals should also state whether the test was designed for a broad, general range of uses, or whether it was designed for use with specific groups of individuals (e.g. ages, occupations, types of condition, as an aid to specific diagnoses or decisions).

With a statement of what the test is supposed to measure, we can then look for numerical evidence of how successful the test construction process has been.

The BPS Test Registration and Test Reviews process

The BPS operates a *Test Registration and Test Reviews process*, which is designed to help test users to identify an appropriate test suitable for their needs.

Test publishers and test distributors in the UK submit their tests for registration and review on a voluntary basis. Tests reviews are a full review of a test, reviewed independently by two reviewers and two editors against the European Federation of Psychologists Association (EFPA) *Review Model for the Description and Evaluation of Psychological Tests*.

Those tests that are awarded Registered Test status have met a certain standard in terms of the key EFPA criteria, including the quality of the test's technical and user documentation, the quality of the test materials, the test's validity, reliability, and the provision of norms or other information necessary for meaningful interpretation of scores.

Full reviews of tests are available free to members of the Register of Qualifications in Test Use (RQTU) and to Chartered and Graduate members of the BPS, and can be found on the Test Registration and Test Reviews section of the PTC website, **www.psychtesting.org.uk**.

The website also holds a *Directory of Test Publishers*, which lists test publishers who have submitted their tests for review by the BPS.

Section 2: Preparation for testing

What knowledge and skills do I need?

What do we mean by being competent in test use? The ITC has defined this as follows:

‘A competent test user will use tests appropriately, professionally, and in an ethical manner, paying due regard to the needs and rights of those involved in the testing process, the reasons for testing, and the broader context in which the testing takes place.’

‘This outcome will be achieved by ensuring that the test user has the necessary competencies to carry out the testing process, and the knowledge and understanding of tests and test use that inform and underpin this process.’ (*ITC Guidelines on Test Use, 2013*)

Determining competence depends on two things: evidence of someone’s performance in carrying out an activity, and standards against which to judge how well someone has performed the activity.

While there are common foundations of all testing in psychometric principles, good practice in test administration and so on, there are also great differences among the various domains where testing is used. For example, the knowledge and skills needed to use tests appropriately in the diagnosis of childhood learning disorders is very different from that needed to use test in the assessment of applicants for jobs – yet both rely on applying the same psychometric principles but in different contexts.

To provide test users with the necessary skills and knowledge and skills they need to administer tests, interpret their results, and give feedback to candidates correctly, the BPS has introduced qualifications in test use, which are detailed in Section 3.

How do I ensure that I follow good practice?

The International Test Commission (ITC) has produced international guidelines on test use (available from their website: www.intestcom.org) that have been endorsed by the BPS. These guidelines embody the same principles of good practice that the BPS has embedded within its test user qualifications and its *Code of Good Practice in Psychological Testing* (see Appendix C). These various codes are based on some very simple common-sense principles:

1. You should know the limits of your own competence.
2. You should be competent in what you do.
3. You should know the strengths and limitations of the tools you use.
4. You should treat all people involved in the testing process with respect.
5. You should ensure that you have their informed consent to the test conditions.

Testing involves more than just the test user. In addition to the test user, who administers scores and interprets the test, the process of testing generally involves the following parties:

1. The Developer who designs and develops the test.
2. The Supplier who publishes and provides access to the test. The supplier might also be the developer, but it is common for suppliers to publish tests developed by psychologists independent of the supplying organisation.
3. The Test Taker or Candidate, who is the person to whom the test is administered.
4. The Client, who is the person to whom the results from testing are reported. The client might also be the test taker, but in many instances the results for a test taker will be reported to a third party: for example, an employer, a teacher, or a parent or guardian.

It is also important to recognise that the functions of the test user may be distributed between a number of people. The person who administers the test may be different from the person who scores it. Yet another person may do the interpretation.

Each of these parties shares responsibilities for the process of testing. The developer and supplier share the responsibility for ensuring the quality of the test and for the adequacy of documentation provided for the use of the test. Test users have the responsibility of ensuring that they understand why a client wants to use psychological tests, that testing is a suitable means of achieving the client's goals, and that the use of the tests and test scores are fair to the candidate.

Clients and test takers

The responsibilities set out by the BPS most clearly focus on the developer, supplier and user. Guidelines defining the nature of the relationship between test taker and test user can be found in Appendix B. These emphasise the point that both test taker and test user have rights and responsibilities.

Organisations that employ testing, for whatever purposes, also have obligations and the BPS advocates the establishment of explicit organisational policies on testing (see Appendix A). These not only serve to place the function of the test user within a broader context, but also protect the test user from inappropriate demands that might otherwise be made by those in more powerful positions in the organisation.

The client has the responsibility of ensuring that those offering advice on testing and services in test use are competent to do so.

It is both the test user's and the client's responsibility to ensure that the purpose of testing has been clearly communicated to the test taker, that the test taker understands the procedures that will be used for testing, how the test information will be used and to whom it will be communicated. As such, it is also the test taker's responsibility to ensure that he or she understands why the tests are to be used and to raise any concerns that he or she has in advance of testing.

Testing as a social contract

In effect, testing is a social contract in which all parties should seek a common shared understanding of the process. At present, the only recourse that a client or a test taker has if they feel that a test has been used inappropriately is to raise the issue with an appropriate professional body such as the BPS or to seek legal advice. As stated earlier, the BPS believes that the best cure is prevention. To this end, the following set of simple questions provides a means by which each party can contribute to responsible use of psychological tests.

The purpose of testing is clearly stated and communicated to all parties involved in the testing process.

1. What is the purpose of testing? What are the outcomes that will be achieved through testing?
2. Why are these specific tests being considered or recommended? What evidence is there that these tests are relevant to the outcomes being sought? What evidence is there that these tests are appropriate for the people who are to be assessed?

The procedures for testing are clearly stated and communicated to all parties involved in the testing process.

1. Who will administer the tests? What evidence is there that they are competent to administer them?
2. When and where will the tests be administered? Is this a suitable environment for the administration of the tests?

How the test information will be used is clearly stated and communicated to all parties involved in the testing process.

1. Who will score the tests? Who will interpret the scores? What evidence is there that the scorer/interpreter is competent to score/interpret these tests?
2. How will the test score be communicated? What actions will be taken to ensure that the communication of test scores is accurate and meaningful?
3. How will the confidentiality of the test scores be protected? Who will have access to the test scores? Why are they being given access to the test scores?

Procedures for dealing with enquiries and complaints about the process of testing are clearly stated and communicated to all parties involved in the testing process.

1. Who will handle enquiries and complaints? Are they competent to handle enquiries or complaints?
2. What actions will be taken in response to an enquiry or complaint? Will these actions ensure that the enquirer

Section 3: The BPS Qualifications in Test Use

The BPS qualifications in test use have been developed for people who use psychological and psychometric tests as part of their work.

The qualifications are currently available in the following domains:

- Educational
- Forensic Contexts
- Occupational

Qualifications are available at three levels:

- Assistant Test User: Test Administration
- Test User, Ability / Test User, Personality
- Specialist in Test Use

Currently Assistant Test User and Test User qualifications are available in the educational, forensic and occupational domains. The Specialist in Test Use qualification is currently only available in the area of occupational testing.

Each BPS qualification in test use consists of a number of detailed competencies. Details of the competencies are available on the Psychological Testing Centre's website, www.psychtesting.org.uk.

Levels of qualification

Assistant Test User: Test Administration qualification

Holders of the Assistant Test User: Test Administration qualification will be competent in administering and scoring specific tests and will have an awareness of broader issues related to testing, such as test security and confidentiality. Anybody wishing to undertake a Test User qualification, must hold the Assistant Test User qualification or do it as part of their Test User qualification training. The qualifications available at this level are:

- Assistant Test User: Educational Test Administration
- Assistant Test User: Forensic Contexts Test Administration
- Assistant Test User: Occupational Test Administration

Test User qualification

Holders of the Test User qualification are able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the psychometric principles underlying test construction, knowledge of the types of tests that are available, when it is appropriate to use them, and to be able to administer, score and interpret tests in order to provide accurate and meaningful feedback to others. Publishers generally classify their test materials in terms of the competence level required for their use. Part of a test user's training involves getting to know the range of relevant products on the market, how they are classified and how they may be used. The qualifications available at this level are:

- Test User: Educational, Ability/Attainment (CCET)
- Test User: Forensic Contexts
- Test User: Occupational, Ability
- Test User: Occupational, Personality

Educational testing. The Test User: Educational, Ability/Attainment (CCET) qualification is generic, covering a range of ability and attainment tests and giving test users access to tests from many suppliers on successful completion of this qualification.

Occupational testing. Qualifications in both ability and personality testing are available within the Test User level in the Occupational domain. The qualification in ability testing (Test User: Occupational, Ability) is generic, covering a range of ability and aptitude tests that may be used in occupational settings and giving test users access to a range of occupational ability tests on successful completion of this qualification.

Personality qualifications are based around specific instruments or ‘families’ of instruments (a family of instruments will typically all be based upon a common model of personality so that knowledge and skills can be transferred to different instruments in the same family). Because of this, occupational test users can build up a number of qualifications at the Test User: Occupational, Personality level.

Forensic testing. In the forensic context domain, competence in testing should be seen as a holistic approach including core underlying elements such as competence in risk assessment, personality assessment and in the application of outputs to theory. Forensic context test users should not expect the qualification process to be incremental, but rather one in which the test user learns to assess various aspects of the forensic service user’s functioning, so that they can better understand the whole person and make recommendations from this perspective.

How to gain a BPS qualification in Test Use and join the Register of Qualifications in Test Use (RQTU)

If you wish to gain a BPS qualification in test use, you should:

1. Identify the level of training to which you wish to be trained. Please see *The BPS Qualifications in Test Use* leaflet for a description of the competencies and fees associated with each qualification.
2. Find a training course provider¹, by visiting the Directory of Providers: Assessment/Training on the PTC website, www.psychtesting.org.uk.

¹ Training courses and assessment of competence are overseen by BPS Verified Assessors, who are Chartered psychologists who themselves hold the relevant qualifications and who have expertise in testing and assessment. All training and assessment materials have been verified by the BPS against very detailed guidelines on assessment for the qualifications and all Verified Assessors are subject to monitoring and quality checks by the BPS through its verification scheme.

3. Contact the training provider and arrange to undertake relevant training. (Please check with the provider that the course and the assessment you wish to undertake will lead to a BPS qualification).
4. On successful assessment of your competence following completion of the training course, your trainer/Assessor will ask you to fill in and sign a consent form. Your Assessor will then send an electronic affirmation of your competence in the qualification(s) to the BPS.
5. The BPS will send you an invoice, and you pay a fee to have your qualification(s) registered and an annual fee for your entry on the BPS Register of Qualifications in Test Use (RQTU). See *The BPS Qualifications in Test Use* leaflet for details of the fee for each qualification.
6. The BPS issues you your certificate in the qualification you have gained, enters you onto the RQTU and allows you access to the RQTU member benefits.
7. Each year, you affirm your continued competence in test use

It is important to note that the BPS's Qualifications in Test Use do not constitute a qualification in psychology and do not confer any 'psychologist' status on their holder.

Registering with test publishers and suppliers

Holders of the BPS qualifications in test use will need to register with a publisher in order to be able to purchase tests. Publishers will register those people who successfully complete their own training courses and those with appropriate British Psychological Society Qualifications and current entry on the Register of Qualifications in Test Use (RQTU). In some cases, membership of the RQTU will be deemed to provide only partial qualification for registration and some additional training will be required.

Holders of the BPS Test User qualification are deemed by the BPS to be competent to use most attainment and group ability and aptitude tests and a limited range of interest measures. A list of some of the tests available to RQTU members can be found on the Psychological Testing Centre (PTC) website, www.psychtesting.org.uk.

All the major test suppliers now recognise the BPS's Test User qualification as evidence of competence and use it as a basis for the registration of test purchasers. It is important to note that the BPS does not set or define the conditions of supply for publishers. For registering as a purchaser of personality tests, you will need to have the appropriate BPS Test User: Occupational, Personality qualification. Please note that you should also clarify the terms and conditions of registration with the publisher of each of the instruments you want to use.

Each publisher can set their own conditions, but most now treat the Test User: Ability Qualification as sufficient evidence for purchase of ability tests and the Test User: Occupational, Personality qualification as sufficient evidence for purchase of occupational personality tests. A list of test publishers can be found in the Directories section of the PTC website, www.psychtesting.org.uk.

For the latest information on terms and conditions of registration for purchasing tests relating to clinical testing, please consult the relevant publishers.

How do I maintain my competence in testing?

Each member of the RQTU is required to maintain their competence in testing at the level of each BPS qualification that they hold. Maintaining competence is about continuing to practice and continuing to update oneself in terms of knowledge, understanding and skill.

In order to demonstrate their continued competence in each BPS testing qualification that they hold, all members of the RQTU are required:

1. to maintain a personal record of the activities that they have carried out that contribute to their Maintenance of Competence (MoC), and
2. to provide BPS with an annual affirmation that:
 - i. they have maintained this record
 - ii. they have carried out an appropriate level of testing-related activities in at least 12 of the last 24 months, in order to have maintained the required level of competence relevant to each BPS qualification that they hold.

The Psychological Testing Centre website, www.psychtesting.org.uk, provides access to a wealth of information about tests and testing in order to help RQTU members maintain their competence. For example, members can download free test reviews and keep up-to-date on the latest information about issues and debates in testing. There is news about events (conferences, workshops) and access through structured links to test publishers, research institutions and professional societies with interests in testing. In addition, all RQTU members are sent a quarterly edition of *Assessment and Development Matters* (ADM).

The Register of Qualifications in Test Use (RQTU)

If someone wants to check whether you are a current test user, they will expect to find you on the Register.

1. Having a BPS qualification Certificate indicates that you were competent at the time of its award.
2. Being on the RQTU indicates that you are a current practitioner and that you have maintained your competence since you obtained your qualification in test use.

As with any professional register, the BPS will reserve the right to remove the name of anyone from the Register if it is found that they have operated in a way that is contrary to relevant codes of good practice (see Appendix C for the *Code of Good Practice in Psychological Testing*).

Further information

The British Psychological Society's Psychological Testing Centre operates a website designed for test users, test takers and other involved in or interested in

testing: **www.psychtesting.org.uk**.

Further information on all the issues discussed in this booklet can be found there.

Please note that the contents of this guide and its appendices are subject to update and revision. The most up-to-date version will be found on the Psychological Testing Centre's website (**www.psychtesting.org.uk**).

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The BPS does not operate any form of accreditation or approval service with respect to publishers and distributors or to tests themselves. It is, therefore, unable to offer advice on the choice, use or origin of tests.

The BPS would be pleased to receive comments about this guide to help us inform others about the fair and valid use of psychological tests. Any comments and enquiries should be forwarded to the above address.

Appendix A: ITC Guidelines for an outline policy on testing

The following guidelines relate to the need for organisations to consider their policy on testing in a systematic manner and to ensure that everyone involved is clear as to what the policy is. The need for an explicit policy on testing is not confined to large organisations. Small and medium-sized enterprises that use testing, as well as large ones, should pay regard to testing policy in the same way as they do to health and safety, equal opportunities, disability and other areas relating to good practice in the management, treatment and care of personnel.

While the following considerations or requirements may need to be adapted for use by individual test users operating as sole professional practitioners, it remains important that they have a clear understanding of their own policy and can communicate it to others.

A policy on testing is produced in order to:

- ensure personal and organisational aims are met;
- ensure that potential misuse is avoided;
- demonstrate commitment to good practice;
- ensure test use is appropriate for its purpose;
- ensure tests do not discriminate unfairly;
- ensure evaluations are based on comprehensive, relevant information;
- ensure tests are only used by qualified staff.

A policy on testing will need to cover most if not all the following issues:

- proper test use;
- security of materials and scores;
- who can administer tests, score and interpret tests;
- qualification requirements for those who will use the tests;
- test user training;
- test taker preparation;
- access to materials and security;
- access to test results and test score confidentiality issues;
- feedback of results to test takers;
- responsibility to test takers before, during and after test session;
- responsibilities and accountability of each individual user.

Any policy needs to be regularly reviewed and updated as advances in testing, or changes in practice occur. Relevant parties need to have access to and be informed about the policy on testing. Responsibility for any organisation's testing policy should reside with a qualified test user who has the authority to ensure implementation of and adherence to the policy.

Appendix B: ITC Guidelines for developing contracts between parties involved in the testing process²

Contracts between the test user and test takers should be consistent with good practice, legislation and the test user's policy on testing. The following is provided as an example of the sort of matters such a contract might cover.

The details will vary as a function of the assessment context (e.g. occupational, educational, clinical, forensic) and local or national regulations and laws.

Contracts between test user, test takers and other parties are often implicit and unspoken (at least in part). Making clear the expectations, roles and responsibilities of all parties can help to avoid misunderstanding, harm, and litigation.

For their part, the test user will endeavour to:

1. inform test takers of their rights regarding how their test scores will be used and their rights of access to them³;
2. give adequate prior warning of any financial charges that may be entailed by the testing process, who will be responsible for their payment, and when payment will be due;
3. treat test takers with courtesy, respect and impartiality regardless of race, gender, age, disability, etc.;
4. use tests of proven quality, appropriate for the test takers, and appropriate for the assessment purpose;
5. inform test takers prior to testing about the purpose of the assessment, the nature of the test, to whom test results will be reported and the planned use of the results;
6. give advance notice of when the test will be administered, and when results will be available, and whether or not test takers or others may obtain copies of the test, their completed answer sheets, or their scores⁴;
7. have a trained person administer the test and have the results interpreted by a qualified person;
8. ensure test takers know if a test is optional and, when it is, the consequences of taking or not taking the test;

² From the *International Test Commission Guidelines on Test Use* (2013).

³ Legislation varies between countries on this issue. For example, the current UK Data Protection Act 1998 provides rights of access to data stored on computer different from those for data written on paper.

⁴ While tests and answer sheets are not normally passed on to others, there is some variation between countries in practice relating to what test takers or others are permitted to have. However, there is much greater variation in the expectations of test takers concerning what information they will be given. It is important that contracts make clear what they will not be given as well as what they will.

9. ensure test takers understand the conditions, if any, under which they may re-take tests, have tests re-scored, or have their scores cancelled;
10. ensure test takers know that they will have their results explained to them as soon as possible after taking the test in easily understood terms;
11. ensure test takers understand that their results are confidential to the extent allowed by law and best practice;
12. inform test takers who will have access to their results, and the conditions which scores will be released;
13. ensure that test takers are aware of the procedures for making complaints or notifying problems.

The test user will inform test-takers that they are expected to:

14. treat others with courtesy and respect during the testing process;
15. ask questions prior to testing if uncertain about why the test is to be administered, how it will be administered, what they will be required to do and what will be done with the results;
16. inform an appropriate person about any condition that they believe might invalidate the test results or which they would wish to have taken into consideration;
17. follow the instructions of the test administrator;
18. be aware of the consequences of not taking a test if they choose not to take it, and be prepared to accept those consequences;
19. ensure that, if required to pay for any the testing service(s), payment is made by the agreed date.

Appendix C: British Psychological Society *Code of Good Practice for Psychological Testing*

Responsibility for competence

People who use psychological tests are expected by the British Psychological Society to:

1. Ensure that they meet all the standards of competence for the British Psychological Society (BPS) qualification(s) in test use which they hold.
2. Maintain their level of competence in the qualification standards and develop and enhance their competence as test users in order to comply with the BPS Maintenance of Competence requirements.
3. Monitor the limits of their competence in psychometric testing.
4. Only offer services which lie within their competence and encourage others to do the same.
5. Ensure that they have undertaken any mandatory training and that they have the specific knowledge and skills required for each of the instruments they use.
6. Abide by local and national regulations and restrictions relating to the use of psychological tests and the storage and use of test data.

Procedures and techniques

People who use psychological tests are expected by the British Psychological Society to:

7. Use tests, in conjunction with other assessment methods, only when their use can be supported by the available technical information.
8. Administer, score and interpret tests in accordance with the instructions provided by the test distributor and to the standards defined by the British Psychological Society.
9. Store test materials securely and ensure that no unqualified or unauthorised person has access to the test material, nor has the means to access computer-based or online materials.
10. Keep test results securely, in a form suitable for developing norms, validation, and monitoring for bias.

Client welfare

People who use psychological tests are expected by the British Psychological Society to:

11. Obtain the informed consent of potential test takers, making sure that they understand why the tests will be used, what will be done with their results, how the results will be stored, and who will be provided with access to the results.

- 12.** Ensure that all test takers are well informed and well prepared for the test session, and that all have had access to practice or familiarisation materials where appropriate.
- 13.** Give due consideration to factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability and special needs, educational background and level of ability in using and interpreting the results of tests.
- 14.** Provide the test taker and other authorised persons with feedback about the results in a form, which makes clear the implications of the results, is clear and in a style appropriate to their level of understanding.
- 15.** Ensure test results are stored securely, are not accessible to unauthorised or unqualified persons and are not used for any purposes other than those agreed with the test taker.

For further information on the work of the Society and to download a copy of our annual report, please visit our website or contact us at:

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