

HR & OD POLICIES

human resources and organisational development



Assessment Centres and Psychometric Testing Procedure

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	3
DEFINITION	3
Assessment & Development Centres	3
Psychometric Tests	3
SCOPE	4
RESPONSIBILITIES	5
WHEN SHOULD TESTS BE USED	5
CHOOSING PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS	6
TEST USERS	6
TEST TAKERS	7
GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF TESTS	7
TEST ADMINISTRATION	8
TEST SCORES & FEEDBACK	8
EQUALITY	8
CONFIDENTIALITY	9
STORAGE OF TEST MATERIALS AND DATA	9
COPYRIGHT	9

1. INTRODUCTION

Aberdeenshire Council uses assessment and development centres, including psychometric assessments to enhance the quality and quantity of information available to support decisions on recruitment, selection and development and as an aid to organisational change.

We are committed to the highest standards of practice in the use of all assessment tools and psychometric tests, in order to maximise the benefits of testing to the Council and individual candidates, and to promote fairness and equality of opportunity.

This document outlines best practice on the operation of assessment centres and psychometric testing.

2. DEFINITION

Psychometric tests are powerful tools used by organisations for the selection, development and management of people.

Assessment and development centres have gained wide recognition as a systematic and rigorous means of identifying behaviour for the purposes of recruitment, selection and development within the workplace.

Assessment & Development Centres

Consist of a number of key features. They are essentially, multiple assessment processes in which a group of participants take part in a variety of exercises observed by a team of trained assessors who evaluate each participant against a number of pre-determined, job-related behaviours. Decisions are then made by pooling shared data.

Psychometric Tests

Psychometric tests are complex tools designed to assess people and measure the differences between individuals. They are designed and developed in such a way they can be shown to measure what they claim with a reasonable degree of accuracy. They are objective, standardised instruments that achieve this precision by using well-controlled, uniform methods of administration and scoring.

Broadly speaking there are two forms of psychometric tests suitable for use in an occupational setting, these being :-

- Those designed to measure maximum performance, such as ability, aptitude or attainment e.g. Group Discussion, Written exercises, Verbal and Numerical Reasoning, skills assessments and situational judgement tests.

- Those designed to assess personal qualities such as personality, temperament, values and interests and preferred styles of working.

3. SCOPE

This policy must be used whenever managers are considering the use of assessment centres and psychometric tests for a recruitment, selection or development activity.

Within Aberdeenshire Council specific roles have been identified as requiring an Assessment Centre as an essential element of the recruitment and selection process:

- Posts at Service Manager P and above.
- Secondary Head Teacher Posts.
- Social Work Posts within a remit of Children and Families.

This list will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains relevant to organisational requirements.

Assessments can be arranged for posts outside this criteria in discussion with the Recruitment Team.

When testing is to be used in a recruitment scenario, it will be carried out once candidate shortlisting has taken place.

When testing is being considered, the Recruitment Team must be contacted as early as possible in the recruitment process to discuss:

- Whether it is appropriate to use testing and whether it will provide any additional relevant information
- How the relevance of the test is linked to the requirements of the role
- What test to use
- The time requirement in the process
- The availability of appropriately trained staff to administer tests and feedback results

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Recruitment Team within HR & OD is responsible for the design and delivery of assessment and development centres within Aberdeenshire Council and for ensuring that all psychometric tests used are in accordance with this policy. All assessment centres and procedures that involve the use of psychometric testing must be discussed and agreed with the Recruitment Team before implementation.

Overall responsibility for testing standards rests with the Head of Service – HR & OD with delegated responsibility to the Team Leader (Recruitment), who is appropriately qualified in psychometric assessment. The Team Leader (Recruitment) will keep the use of tests under review.

Suitably qualified staff in the Recruitment Team will take responsibility for the ordering and secure storage of materials, coordinating and recording of all assessment activities and interpretation of assessment tools, including feedback to recruitment panels, candidates, employees and line managers.

The administration, scoring and interpretation of tests is undertaken within the Council in accordance with the standards set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

Suitably qualified staff within the Recruitment Team will advise managers on the most appropriate test or battery of tests to be used for each job based on the requirements of the job description and person specification.

It is the responsibility of all test users to ensure that this policy is applied at all times. All deviations should be reported to the HR Manager who will take the appropriate action.

Test users are responsible for the way they personally use the tests.

The department wishing to use psychometric testing will be responsible for the cost of the tests that are administered.

5. WHEN SHOULD TESTS BE USED

Tests can be used to support decisions on selection, placement or promotion decisions; development; team building; counselling; and, organisational development purposes. Any additional uses must be referred to the Recruitment Team for discussion and approval on suitability.

Tests are best used in decision making in conjunction with other relevant information, tools and processes available. Use of a single test result alone should be avoided.

Consideration must be given to where tests results fit into the procedure being used.

6. CHOOSING PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS

A properly constructed psychometric test is accompanied by information on the test's technical properties. This is contained in the test's technical manual, which is provided by the test supplier. It includes statistical data indicating the test's validity and reliability; information relating to the procedures to be followed for the test's administration, scoring and interpretation; and norm tables containing the scores of individuals from comparable groups to those to which the test will be given.

Psychometric tests are to be used within the Council only if:

- They can be shown to be relevant, appropriate and effective to the circumstances to which they are to be applied
- They are accompanied by a technical manual that gives details on the background of the test, information on its psychometric properties and instructions for its use, and contains norm tables
- They can be shown to be valid (measure those things that the supplier claims that they measure) and reliable (consistently measure those things)
- Their use does not disadvantage certain groups, does not unfairly discriminate and is not otherwise unlawful
- The norm tables or comparison groups provided give a fair and relevant comparison with the individual being tested and are up to date.

All psychometric assessments used must be clearly relevant to the given purpose. Job profiles, organisational behaviours and competencies should be considered when considering the most appropriate tools to use.

7. TEST USERS

Knowledge and experience are required to use psychometric tests effectively. Whilst test administration can be carried out by people trained in administration only, and the mechanisms of scoring can also be delegated, test choice, feedback and interpretation will be carried out by suitably qualified assessors only. Such assessors will be registered and licensed with the relevant publisher and the BPS.

A register of test users and their registration with BPS will be maintained by the Recruitment Team.

Consequently only trained test users who hold the relevant qualifications may use and interpret psychometric instruments. This ensures the competent and responsible use of

tests, including the choice, application and administration of the tests, and the interpretation and feeding back of the results.

The HR Manager (who is responsible for the management of psychometric testing, will ensure that:

- Anyone involved in administering, scoring or interpreting a test is adequately trained and holds the relevant qualification in accordance with the test supplier's requirements
- No unsupervised access to tests is allowed to anyone who is not trained or qualified.

8. TEST TAKERS

Informed consent of the potential test taker must be obtained to ensure they understand why the tests are being used, what will be done with the results and who will be provided with access to them.

9. GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF TESTS

The suppliers of tests provide detailed instructions for their use in the technical manual that accompanies the test. All tests should be used as per the instructions from the test suppliers. In general, the users of psychometric tests should ensure that:

- The purpose of the testing is clear to all parties involved prior to the use of the test, and there is an undertaking that the test results will not be used for any purpose other than those communicated at the outset
- The procedure for taking the test is explained in advance to anyone taking it
- The level of confidentiality regarding the test results is fully explained to anyone taking the test
- There are adequate arrangements for giving feedback to the test taker
- Anyone taking the test is informed of its purpose, who has access to the results and how test materials will be stored and disposed of
- The results of a single test should not be relied upon as the sole basis for a decision if the tests are being used to make recruitment and selection decisions.

10. TEST ADMINISTRATION

The objectivity and standards of the results of psychometric tests rely on standard circumstances for their completion. The arrangements for anyone taking a test should follow uniform procedures specified by the test supplier to maintain the objectivity of the test. Only competent and qualified staff should administer psychometric tests and they should ensure that:

- Every person completing a test receives the same standard instructions specified by the suppliers of the test
- The test takers complete the test by themselves without help from others
- The test is completed in a suitable environment in which the test taker is physically comfortable, with, for example, adequate light and a comfortable temperature
- Any person completing the test can avoid disturbance, distractions or interruption from others
- Test takers have sufficient time to complete the test, unless it is a timed test, in which case they understand what the time limit is.

11. TEST SCORES & FEEDBACK

Test scores should always be interpreted by properly trained individuals in the context of clearly defined criteria.

Meaningful interpretation of personality based assessments will normally be provided in a face-to-face feedback session with the test-taker to ensure validity of the test results.

Appropriate feedback on ability style assessments will be available on request from the test-taker.

12. EQUALITY

The Council is committed to selection on merit and only measures which are clearly relevant to job demands and free of extraneous bias should be used. All assessments for selection and promotion will be monitored to ensure they do not unfairly exclude or disadvantage any section of the population.

Whenever a disability prevents a suitably qualified individual from undergoing standard selection procedures, appropriate alternative arrangements for assessing must be found.

Test users should always contact the test publisher for advice before making any changes to the test administration procedures.

13. CONFIDENTIALITY

Disclosure of test results and interpretation will be limited to those who genuinely need to know, i.e. the assessor and those making the selection decision or line manager when the results are used for development purposes

Where test data is held and directly linked to an individual, the principles of the Data Protection Act (1984) will apply and test takers will have the right to review their data at any time. Test takers will be informed about their rights of access.

14. STORAGE OF TEST MATERIALS AND DATA

All test materials will be stored in a secure, lockable filing cabinet or a secure IT based storage system, accessible only to authorised test users (assessors). This will ensure that potential test candidates are not provided with prior access to materials, apart from those specifically designed to help them prepare.

All data on test results will be kept in a secured, lockable filing cabinet or secure IT based storage system, only accessible to authorised personnel. This will prevent unauthorised use of results or uninformed use by individuals not trained to interpret test results.

All test results will be confidentially destroyed after 6 months.

15. COPYRIGHT

Copyright legislation forbids the reproduction of psychometric test materials. It is an infringement of copyright to copy test materials without the express permission of the test's publisher.

Title of Procedure

Index of Documents

Procedure

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes
16-10-2015		Creation of all documents