



INTERNATIONAL TEST COMMISSION

**Policy on the use of
Psychometric Tests
in Ireland**

Developed by The Psychological Society of Ireland

April 2006



The Psychological Society of Ireland has been a member of The Council of the International Test Commission (ITC) since 2003. It formally endorses the guidelines on test use as developed by the ITC and has agreed to abide by these.

The European Federation of Professional Psychologists Associations' Task Force on Tests and Testing also endorsed the Guidelines at its July 1999 meeting in Rome.

The Guidelines were officially published at the General Meeting of the ITC on 24 July, 2000 in Stockholm. The Guidelines are copyright of the ITC, 1999. The ITC is a non-stock corporation incorporated in the USA.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Psychological Society of Ireland wishes to acknowledge the work of the ITC in the preparation of the guidelines that underlie this policy. PSI is grateful to the ITC for permission to reproduce the guidelines in policy form.

See the ITC website (from which copies of the International Guidelines can be obtained):

<http://www.intestcom.org>

The Society wishes to express its gratitude to the PSI Working Party on Psychometrics whose work stimulated the need for a policy in this important area.

Introduction and Background

Introduction

One of the objectives of the Psychological Society of Ireland is to advise members on best practice in their professional work. The Society also has a strong interest in the application of psychology in Irish society in general. An area that is increasingly coming under scrutiny is the use of psychometrics. The issue is becoming more important as a result of local and international developments.

In Ireland, there is an accepted need to standardise to some extent the levels of training that PSI members receive in the area of psychometric use. This needs to occur at graduate and post graduate level and in terms of Continuing Professional Development. Outside the profession, there is growing awareness of the need to regulate the use of psychometrics within professions who have no formal psychological qualifications but whose qualifications entitle the holders to legitimately use psychometric tests. Specific guidance on the standards required by test users are being considered by the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) and it is intended that these will be circulated by PSI once agreed and finalised.

A rights issue is also emerging along with the possibility of litigation issues for those exposed to tests and for test users.

Aim and objectives

The differences between assessment and testing are acknowledged. For the purposes of this policy document, testing is considered to be a specific, standardised procedure that may form part of a broader assessment process.

This policy is designed to guide the work of professionals in psychological and educational testing (e.g. psychologists, psychometricians, guidance counsellors, test publishers and test developers) through the use of appropriate guidelines.

The main objective is the production of a set of guidelines that relate to the competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities and other personal characteristics) needed by test users. These competencies are specified in terms of assessable performance criteria. These criteria provide the basis for developing specifications of the evidence of competence that would be expected from someone seeking qualification as a test user. Such competencies need to cover such issues as:

- professional and ethical standards in testing,
- rights of the test taker and other parties involved in the testing process,
- choice and evaluation of alternative tests,
- test administration, scoring and interpretation,
- report writing and feedback.

This policy has indirect implications for:

- standards for test construction,
- standards for user-documentation - e.g., technical and user manuals,
- standards for regulating the supply and availability of tests and information about tests.

Development of the Policy

The policy should be considered as providing benchmarks against which practice can be referenced and compared. By using this policy as a benchmark or the basis from which to develop locally applicable documents (e.g. standards, codes of practice, statements on test taker rights), a high level of consistency within professions and across national boundaries will be promoted. These are key objectives of the International Test Commission (ITC) whose guidelines for test use are the basis for this policy document.

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This policy is to be seen as supportive rather than constraining. It aims to ensure that best practice, as promoted by PSI, embodies universal key principles of good test use, without attempting to impose uniformity on legitimate differences in function and practice between professions.

The policy differentiates three main aspects of competence:

1. Professional and ethical standards of good practice that affect the way in which the process of testing is carried out and the way in which test users interact with others involved in the process.
2. The knowledge, understanding and skills to carry out the testing process
3. The knowledge and understanding of tests and test use that are necessary to inform and underpin the process of testing.

Although these three components differ, they are inextricably inter-twined in practice.

The policy starts from a *key purpose* which can be characterised as the ‘mission statement’ for test users. It provides the focus from which the policy statements are developed. Each statement defines an aspect of test user competence that contributes to the key purpose.

Together with the key purpose, the *scope statement* describes to whom the policy statements apply, the forms of assessment to which they relate, and the assessment contexts.

This document contains:

1. Key purpose and scope statements.
2. Specifications of test user competencies in relation to ethical test use.
3. Specifications of test user competencies in relation to good practice in the use of tests.

The Policy Statements

Key purpose

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.

Scope of the Policy

Any attempt to provide a precise definition of a ‘test’ or of ‘testing’ as a process, is likely to fail as it will tend to exclude some procedures that should be included and include others that should be excluded. For the purpose of this policy, the terms ‘test’ and ‘testing’ should be interpreted broadly. Whether an assessment procedure is labelled a ‘test’ or not is immaterial. This policy will be relevant for many assessment procedures that are not called ‘tests’ or that seek to avoid the designation ‘test’. Rather than provide a single definition, the following statements attempt to map out the domain covered by the policy.

1. Testing includes a wide range of procedures for use in psychological, occupational, educational and guidance 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. These procedures, when executed by appropriately qualified professionals, may also include procedures that 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).

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. This evidence should be accessible to the test user and available for independent scrutiny and evaluation. Where important evidence is contained in technical reports that are difficult to access, fully referenced synopses should be provided by the test distributor.

The test use policy statements as presented here should be considered as applying to all such procedures, whether or not they are labelled as ‘psychological tests’ or ‘educational tests’ and whether or not they are adequately supported by accessible technical evidence.

Many of these policy statements will apply also to other assessment procedures that lie outside the domain of ‘tests’. They may be relevant for any assessment procedure that is used in situations where the assessment of people has a serious and meaningful intent and which, if misused, may result in personal loss or psychological distress (for example, job selection interviews, job performance appraisals, diagnostic assessment of learning support needs).

The policy does not apply to the use of materials that may have a superficial resemblance to tests, but which all participants recognise are intended to be used only for purposes of amusement or entertainment (e.g., life-style inventories in magazines or newspapers).

Who is the Policy for?

This policy applies to the use of tests in professional practice. As such they are directed primarily towards:

1. The purchasers and holders of test materials;
2. Those responsible for selecting tests and determining the use to which tests will be put;
3. Those who administer, score or interpret tests;
4. Those who provide advice to others on the basis of test results (e.g., professional psychologists, recruitment consultants, educational and career counsellors, trainers, succession planners);
5. Those concerned with the process of reporting test results and providing feedback to people who have been tested.

The policy will be of relevance to others involved in the use of tests as defined above. These include:

1. the developers of tests,
2. the suppliers of tests,
3. those involved in the training of test users,
4. those who take tests and their relevant others (e.g., parents, spouses, partners),
5. professional bodies and other associations with an interest in the use of psychological and educational testing, and
6. policy makers and legislators.

While aimed primarily at professional practice, most aspects of the good practice embodied in the policy will also be of relevance to those who use tests solely for research purposes.

Contextual factors

Test Users are minded to consider and reflect on the following influences in test use:

1. social, political, institutional, linguistic, and cultural differences in and between assessment settings;
2. relevant legal statutes and practices (including Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation);
3. existing national guidelines and performance standards set by professional psychological societies and other relevant professional bodies;
4. differences relating to individual versus group assessment;
5. differences related to the test setting (educational, clinical, work-related and other assessment);
6. who the primary recipients of the test results are (e.g., the test-takers, their parents or guardian, the test-developer, an employer or other third party);
7. differences relating to the use of test results (e.g., for decision-making, as in selection screening, or for providing information to support guidance or counselling);
8. and variations in the degree to which the situation provides opportunity for the accuracy of interpretations to be checked in the light of subsequent information and amended if needed.

Knowledge, Understanding, and Skill

Knowledge, understanding and skill underpin all the test user competencies. The nature of their content and level of detail are likely to vary between countries, areas of application and as a function of the level of competence required to use a test.

Each test user should be competent and maintain competence in the following areas:

Relevant declarative knowledge.

This includes:

1. knowledge of basic psychometric principles and procedures, and the technical requirements of tests (e.g., reliability, validity, standardisation);
2. knowledge of tests and measurement sufficient to enable the proper understanding of test results;

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3. knowledge and understanding of relevant theories and models of ability, of personality or other psychological constructs, or of psychopathology, as necessary to properly inform the choice of tests and the interpretation of test results; and
4. knowledge of the tests and the test suppliers relevant to one's area of practice.

Instrumental knowledge and skills

These include:

1. knowledge and skills relating to specific assessment procedures or instruments, including the use of computer-based assessment procedures;
2. specialised knowledge of and practitioner skills associated with using those tests that are within one's repertoire of assessment tools; and
3. knowledge and understanding of the construct or constructs underlying test scores, where this is important if valid inferences are to be drawn from the test results.

Each test user should be competent and maintain competence in the following:

General personal task-related skills

This includes:

1. the performance of relevant activities such as test administration, reporting, and the provision of feedback to test takers and other clients;
2. oral and written communication skills sufficient for the proper preparation of test takers, test administration, the reporting of test results, and for interaction with relevant others (e.g., parents, or organisational policy makers); and
3. interpersonal skills sufficient for the proper preparation of test takers, the administration of tests, and the provision of feedback of test results.

Contextual knowledge and skills

This includes:

1. knowing when and when not to use tests;
2. knowing how to integrate testing with other less formal components of the assessment situation (e.g., biographical data, unstructured interview and references etc.); and
3. knowledge of current professional, legal, and ethical issues relating to the use of tests, and of their practical implications for test use.

Task management skills

This includes:

1. knowledge of codes of conduct and good practice relating to the use of tests, test data, the provision of feedback, the production and storage of reports, the storage of and responsibility for test materials and test data; and
2. knowledge of the social, cultural, and political context in which the test is being used, and the ways in which such factors might affect the results, their interpretation and the use to which they are put.

Contingency management skills

This includes:

1. knowing how to deal with problems, difficulties, and breakdowns in routine;
2. knowing how to deal with a test taker's questions during test administration etc.; and
3. knowing how to deal with situations in which there is the potential for test misuse or for misunderstanding the interpretation of test scores.

1 Take responsibility for ethical test use

Competent test users should:

1.1 Act in a professional and ethical manner

- 1.1.1 Promote and maintain professional and ethical standards (e.g. appropriate supervision and CPD).
- 1.1.2 Have a working understanding of current professional and ethical issues and debates relating to the use of tests in their field of application.
- 1.1.3 Implement an explicit policy on testing and test use.¹
- 1.1.4 Ensure that people who work for or with them adhere to appropriate professional and ethical standards of behaviour.
- 1.1.5 Conduct communications with due concern for the sensitivities of the test taker and other relevant parties.
- 1.1.6 Represent tests and testing in a positive and balanced manner in communications with and through the media.
- 1.1.7 Avoid situations in which they may have or be seen to have a vested interest in the outcome of the assessment, or where the assessment might damage the relationship with their client.

1.2 Ensure they have the competence to use tests

- 1.2.1 Work within the limits of scientific principle and substantiated experience.
- 1.2.2 Set and maintain high personal standards of competence.
- 1.2.3 Know the limits of their own competence and operate within those limits.
- 1.2.4 Keep up with relevant changes and advances relating to the tests they use, and to test development, including changes in legislation and policy, which may impact on tests and test use.

1.3 Take responsibility for their use of tests

- 1.3.1 Only offer testing services and only use tests for which they are qualified.
- 1.3.2 Accept responsibility for the choice of tests used, and for the recommendations made.
- 1.3.3 Provide clear and adequate information to participants in the testing process about the ethical principles and legal regulations governing psychological testing.
- 1.3.4 Ensure that the nature of the contract between test-taker and tester is clear and understood.²
- 1.3.5 Be alert to any unintended consequences of test use (e.g. test-retest effect).
- 1.3.6 Endeavour to avoid doing harm or causing distress to those involved in the testing process.

1.4 Ensure that test materials are kept securely

- 1.4.1 Ensure secure storage of and control access to test materials
- 1.4.2 Respect copyright law and agreements that exist with respect to a test including any prohibitions on the copying or transmission of materials in electronic or other forms to other people, whether qualified or otherwise.
- 1.4.3 Protect the integrity of the test by not coaching individuals on actual test materials or other practice materials that might unfairly influence their test performance.
- 1.4.4 Ensure that test techniques are not described publicly in such a way that their usefulness is impaired³

¹ An example policy outline is attached as Appendix A.

² An example 'contract' between test user and test taker is attached as Appendix B.

³ Release of test protocols to members of the public under Freedom of Information is not advised as this may impair the usefulness of the test. The individual contents of a completed protocol can, and should be, discussed with the client/guardian and relevant information provided in report format.

1.5 Ensure that test results are treated confidentially.

- 1.5.1 Specify who will have access to results and define levels of confidentiality.
- 1.5.2 Explain levels of confidentiality to individuals before tests are administered.
- 1.5.3 Limit access to results to those with a right to know.
- 1.5.4 Obtain the relevant consents before releasing results to others.
- 1.5.5 Protect data kept on file so that only those who have a right of access can obtain them.
- 1.5.6 Establish clear guidelines as to how long test data are to be kept on file.
- 1.5.7 Remove names and other personal identifiers from databases of results that are archived, for research use, development of norms or other statistical purposes.

2 Follow good practice in the use of tests

2.1 Evaluate the potential utility of testing in an assessment situation

Competent test users will:

- 2.1.1 Produce a reasoned justification for the use of tests.
- 2.1.2 Ensure there has been a thorough analysis of the client's needs, reasons for referral, or of the diagnostic category, condition, or job for which assessment is being used.
- 2.1.3 Establish that the knowledge, skills, abilities, aptitudes or other characteristics, which the tests are intended to measure, are correlates of relevant behaviours in the context about which inferences are to be drawn.
- 2.1.4 Seek other relevant collateral sources of information.
- 2.1.5 Assess the advantages and disadvantages of using tests compared with other sources of information.
- 2.1.6 Ensure that full use is made of all available collateral sources of information.

2.2 Choose technically sound tests appropriate for the situation

Competent test users will:

- 2.2.1 Examine current information covering the range of potentially relevant tests (e.g., from specimen sets, independent reviews, expert advice), before selecting a test to use.
- 2.2.2 Determine that the test's technical and user documentation provides sufficient information to enable evaluation of the following:
 - a) scope or coverage and representativeness of test content, appropriateness of norm groups, difficulty level of content etc.;
 - b) accuracy of measurement and reliability demonstrated with respect to relevant populations;
 - c) validity (demonstrated with respect to relevant populations) and relevance for the required use;
 - d) freedom from systematic bias in relation to the intended test taker groups;
 - e) acceptability to those who will be involved in their use, including perceived fairness and relevance;
 - f) practicality, including time required, costs, and resource needs.
- 2.2.3 Avoid the use of tests that have inadequate or unclear supporting technical documentation;
- 2.2.4 Use tests only for those purposes where relevant and appropriate validity evidence is available.
- 2.2.5 Avoid judging a test solely on the basis of face value, test-user testimonials, or advice from those with a vested commercial interest.
- 2.2.6 Respond to requests from relevant interested parties (e.g. test takers, parents, managers) by providing sufficient information to allow them to understand why the test was chosen.

2.3 Give due consideration to issues of fairness in testing

When tests are to be used with individuals from different groups (e.g., groups differing in terms of gender, cultural background, education, ethnic origin, or age), competent test users will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that:

- 2.3.1 The tests are unbiased and appropriate for the various groups that will be tested.
- 2.3.2 The constructs being assessed are meaningful in each of the groups represented.
- 2.3.3 Evidence is available on possible group differences in performance on the test.
- 2.3.4 Evidence relating to differential item functioning (DIF) is available, where relevant.
- 2.3.5 There is validity evidence to support the intended use of the test in the various groups.
- 2.3.6 Effects of group differences not relevant to the main purpose (e.g., differences in motivation to answer, or reading ability) are minimised.
- 2.3.7 In all cases, Guidelines relating to the fair use of tests are interpreted in the context of local policy and legislation.

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When testing in more than one language (within or across countries), competent test users will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that:

- 2.3.8 Each language or dialect version has been developed using a rigorous methodology meeting the requirements of best practice.
- 2.3.9 The developers have been sensitive to issues of content, culture and language.
- 2.3.10 The test administrators can communicate clearly in the language in which the test is to be administered.
- 2.3.11 The test taker's level of proficiency in the language in which the test will be administered is determined systematically and the appropriate language version is administered or bilingual assessment is performed, if appropriate.

When tests are to be used with people with disabilities, competent test users will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that:

- 2.3.12 Advice is sought from relevant experts on the potential effects of the various disabilities on test performance.
- 2.3.13 Potential test takers are consulted and their needs and wishes are given proper consideration.
- 2.3.14 Adequate arrangements are made when test takers include people with hearing, visual or motor impairments, or other disabilities (e.g., learning impairments, dyslexia.).
- 2.3.15 Use of alternative assessment procedures, rather than modifications to tests, is considered (e.g., other more suitable tests, or alternative structured forms of assessment).
- 2.3.16 Relevant professional advice is sought if the degree of modification required for use by those with disabilities is beyond the experience of the test user.
- 2.3.17 Modifications, when necessary, are tailored to the nature of the disability and are designed to minimize impact on score validity.
- 2.3.18 Information regarding the nature of any modifications made to a test or testing procedure is provided to those who interpret or act upon the test scores whenever the withholding of such information might otherwise result in biased interpretation or an unfair decision.

2.4 Make necessary preparations for the testing session

The competent test user will make all reasonable efforts to:

- 2.4.1 Provide relevant parties in a timely manner with clear information concerning the purpose of testing, ways in which they might best prepare for the test session, and the procedures to be followed.
- 2.4.2 Advise test takers of the linguistic or dialectic groups for which the test is considered appropriate.
- 2.4.3 Send test takers approved practice, sample, or preparation materials where these are available and where this is consistent with recommended practice for the tests concerned.
- 2.4.4 Explain clearly to test takers their rights and responsibilities⁴.
- 2.4.5 Gain the explicit consent of test takers or their legal guardians or representatives before any testing is done.
- 2.4.6 Explain, when testing is optional, the consequences of taking or not taking the test to relevant parties so that they can make an informed choice.
- 2.4.7 Make the necessary practical arrangements by ensuring that:
 - a) preparations conform to those stipulated in the publisher's manual;
 - b) locations and facilities for testing have been arranged well in advance, and the physical environment is accessible, safe, quiet, free from distractions and appropriate for the purpose;
 - c) sufficient materials are available and have been checked to ensure there are no marks left by previous users on question booklets or answer sheets;
 - d) staff who will be involved in the administration are competent;
 - e) appropriate arrangements have been made for the testing of people with disabilities⁵.
- 2.4.8 Anticipate likely problems and counteract them through thorough preparation of materials and instructions.

⁴ See Appendix A.

⁵ See Appendix B.

2.5 Administer the tests properly

The competent test user will:

- 2.5.1 Establish rapport by welcoming test-takers and briefing them in a positive fashion.
- 2.5.2 Act to reduce test-taker anxiety and avoid creating or reinforcing unnecessary anxiety.
- 2.5.3 Ensure potential sources of distraction (e.g., wristwatch alarms, mobile phones, pagers) are removed.
- 2.5.4 Ensure test-takers have the materials they require for taking the test before it begins.
- 2.5.5 Administer tests under appropriate supervised conditions.
- 2.5.6 Wherever possible, administer test instructions in the primary language of the test takers, even where the test content is designed to provide evidence of knowledge or skills in a non-primary language.
- 2.5.7 Adhere strictly to the directions and instructions as specified in the test manual while making reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.
- 2.5.8 Read instructions clearly and calmly.
- 2.5.9 Provide adequate time for examples to be completed.
- 2.5.10 Observe and record deviations from test procedures.
- 2.5.11 Monitor and record response times accurately where appropriate.
- 2.5.12 Ensure all materials are accounted for at the end of each testing session.
- 2.5.13 Administer tests by modes that permit adequate and appropriate levels of supervision and authentication of the identity of the test takers.
- 2.5.14 Ensure those assisting the administration have had proper training.
- 2.5.15 Ensure test takers are not left unattended or subjected to distracting activities during a supervised test session.
- 2.5.16 Provide appropriate assistance to test takers who show signs of undue distress or anxiety.

2.6 Score and analyse test results accurately

Competent test users will:

- 2.6.1 Follow carefully the standardised procedures for scoring.
- 2.6.2 Carry out appropriate raw score conversions to other relevant types of scale.
- 2.6.3 Choose scale types relevant to the intended use of the test scores.
- 2.6.4 Check score scale-conversions and other clerical procedures for accuracy.
- 2.6.5 Ensure that invalid conclusions are not drawn from comparisons of scores with norms that are not relevant to the people being tested or are outdated.
- 2.6.6 Compute, where appropriate, composite scores using standard formulae and equations.
- 2.6.7 Employ procedures to screen test results to recognise improbable or unreasonable scores.
- 2.6.8 Clearly and accurately label scales in reports, and provide clear identification of norms, scales types, and equations used.

2.7 Interpret results appropriately

Competent test users will:

- 2.7.1 Have a good professional understanding of the test's theoretical or conceptual basis, technical documentation and guidance on the use and interpretation of the scale scores.
- 2.7.2 Have a good understanding of the scales used, the characteristics of the norm or comparison groups, and the limitations of the scores.
- 2.7.3 Take steps to minimise the effects on test interpretation of any biases the test interpreter may have towards members of the test taker's cultural group.
- 2.7.4 Use appropriate norm or comparison groups where available.
- 2.7.5 Interpret results in the light of available information about the person being tested (including age, gender, schooling, culture and other factors) with due regard for the technical limitations of the test, the assessment context, and the needs of those with a legitimate interest in the outcome of the process.
- 2.7.6 Avoid over-generalising the results of one test to traits or human characteristics which are not measured by the test.
- 2.7.7 Consider each scale's reliability, error of measurement and other qualities which may have artificially lowered or raised results when interpreting scores.

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- 2.7.8 Give due consideration to the available evidence of validity, with respect to the construct being measured for members of the test takers' relevant demographic groups (e.g., cultural, age, social class, and gender groups).
- 2.7.9 Use passing scores (cut-scores) in test interpretation only when evidence of the validity for the pass scores is available and supports its use.
- 2.7.10 Be aware of negative social stereotyping that may pertain to members of the test taker's group (e.g., cultural group, age, social class, and gender) and avoid interpreting tests in a manner that perpetuates such stereotyping.
- 2.7.11 Take into account any individual or group variations from standard procedures in test administration.
- 2.7.12 Take into account any evidence of prior experience with the test where there are data available relating to the effect of such experience on test performance.

2.8 Communicate the results clearly and accurately to relevant others

Competent test users will:

- 2.8.1 Identify appropriate parties who may legitimately receive test results.
- 2.8.2 With the informed consent of the test takers, or their legal representatives, produce written or oral reports for relevant interested parties.
- 2.8.3 Ensure that the technical and linguistic levels of any reports are appropriate for the level of understanding of the recipients.
- 2.8.4 Make clear that the test data represent just one source of information and should always be considered in conjunction with other information.
- 2.8.5 Explain how the importance of the test results should be weighted in relation to other information about the people being assessed.
- 2.8.6 Use a form and structure for a report that is appropriate to the context of the assessment.
- 2.8.7 When appropriate, provide decision-makers with information on how results may be used to inform their decisions.
- 2.8.8 Explain and support the use of test results used to classify people into categories (e.g., for diagnostic purposes or for job selection).
- 2.8.9 Include within written reports a clear summary, and when relevant, specific recommendations.
- 2.8.10 Present oral feedback to test takers in a constructive and supportive manner.

2.9 Review the appropriateness of the test and its use

Competent test users will:

- 2.9.1 Monitor and periodically review changes over time in the populations of individuals being tested and any criterion measures being used.
- 2.9.2 Monitor tests for evidence of adverse impact.
- 2.9.3 Be aware of the need to re-evaluate the use of a test if changes are made to its form, content, or mode of administration.
- 2.9.4 Be aware of the need to re-evaluate the evidence of validity if the purpose for which a test is being used is changed.
- 2.9.5 Where possible, seek to validate tests for the use to which they are being put, or participate in formal validation studies.
- 2.9.6 Where possible, assist in updating information regarding the norms, reliability and validity of the test by providing relevant test data to the test developers, publishers or researchers.

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Members attention is drawn to the following relevant Irish legislation:

Data Protection Acts 1988 & Amendment Act 2003

Freedom of Information Act 1997 & Amendment Act 2003

Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, *Govt Information Sales Office, 1999*

Appendix A: Guidelines for developing contracts between parties involved in the testing process.

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 them;
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 scores;
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;
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:

1. treat others with courtesy and respect during the testing process;
2. 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;
3. 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;
4. follow the instructions of the test administrator;
5. be aware of the consequences of not taking a test if they choose not to take it, and be prepared to accept those consequences;
6. ensure that, if required to pay for any the testing service(s), payment is made by the agreed date.

Appendix B: Points to consider when making arrangements for testing people with disabilities or impairments

Considerable care and expertise is needed when the mode of administration of a test has to be changed to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. As always, national law and best practice need to be considered, and the individual's rights to privacy must be respected. In seeking information regarding types and levels of disability, inquiries should only seek information relating to each person's ability to undertake the activities required to complete the test. Particular care needs to be exercised in relation to employment testing.

There is no simple rule of thumb that can be used to ensure that a test is administered fairly for people with all types of disability. However it is not enough to assume that competency in test use automatically lends itself to expertise in test use with individuals with disabilities. Each professional must work within their competencies. In working with people with disabilities it is a matter of professional judgement as to whether it is better to use some alternative form of assessment, or to modify the test or its mode of administration. In practice, it is rarely possible to norm modified tests on sufficient samples of people with equivalent disability in order to ensure comparability of the test with the standardised version. However, where data exist on, for example, the effects of changing time limits, use of Braille or audiotape spoken versions of tests, such data should guide the user in making the necessary accommodations. While full standardization of a modified version may not be possible, pilot testing on small samples of individuals should be carried out whenever practical.

Given the dearth of information about the performance of people with disabilities on tests (whether modified or not), it is often more appropriate for test result to be used in a more qualitative manner. They can be used to give an indication of the characteristic being assessed (ability, motivation, personality, etc.), which can be supplemented and supported by information gathered using other methods.

For individual assessment, the assessor can usually tailor the assessment procedures to the capabilities of the person who is being assessed. However, particular issues arise in group testing (e.g., for selection into employment). Here there may be practical difficulties involved in varying the mode of administration for particular individuals within a group administration setting. Furthermore, all parties may see differences in treatment as being unfair. For example if more time is given for test completion, those with the disability may be conscious that they are being treated 'differently', and those without the disability may feel that the extra time provides an unfair advantage.

Advice on special needs can usually be obtained from relevant disability organisations as well as the individual test takers. It is generally helpful (where the law permits) to ask the individual directly in a non-threatening and supportive way if there are any considerations that need to be taken into account. In many cases such consultation will enable suitable modifications to be made to the test taking environment without requiring changes to the test itself.

The following protocol provides a general guide to the process of deciding whether to modify testing and how to carry out the modification. Essentially, disability may contribute no variance to test scores, contribute construct relevant variance or construct irrelevant variance. In the first case, no modifications are necessary. In the final case, modifications should be aimed at removing the irrelevant source of variance (by suitable modification of the test conditions or substitution of a more suitable test). For the second case (construct relevant variance), however, modification to the test will affect the relevance of the test scores.

1. Is the disability likely to have an effect upon test performance? Many people have disabilities that would not affect test performance. In such cases, it would be inappropriate to make accommodations for them.
2. If the disability is likely to affect test performance, then is the effect on performance incidental to the construct being measured? For example, a person with an arthritic hand may have trouble with a speeded test which involves writing. If the ability to perform manual tasks rapidly is part of the construct being measured, then the test should not be changed. However,

if the purpose is to assess visual checking speed, then an alternative mode of response would be appropriate.

3. When the particular disability is incidental to the construct being measured but is likely to affect the individual's performance on the test, then modification of the procedure may be considered.
4. Users should always consult the test manual and the publisher for guidance on modification and for information regarding alternative formats and procedures.
5. Users should also consult relevant disability organisations for advice and guidance on the possible implications of a specific disability, relevant literature or documentation, and the sort of adaptations or accommodations that may prove helpful.
6. Any modifications made to the test or test administration procedures should be carefully documented along with the rationale behind the modification.