Aptitude Tests

Many employers regularly use tests in the selection process. Mostly these tests are administered online as part of the application process, although some organisations still use tests at the Assessment Centre stage.

Ability tests are usually timed against the clock and normally take the form of multiple choice questions. They are often designed so that only a few people will finish them. Your score is a comparative measure of how you performed in relation to other students who have taken the tests. They are administered under exam conditions, although you should be given some practice examples to do prior to the main test and may even be sent a practice booklet in advance of your test session. You may or may not be told how you scored.

Why do employers use this type of assessment?

All employers aim to select someone who has the skills, abilities and personal qualities to do their job well. Some selection methods are better than others at gathering different types of evidence about your suitability. Psychometric tests offer insight into whether you have the specific abilities and personal qualities required to do the job.

Tests are often used in conjunction with other selection methods, either as part of an assessment centre or at the same time as the initial interview. In this case, it is your overall performance which is important and the test scores do not usually carry more weight than any other element of the process. Tests are sometimes used prior to a first interview, however, and a fixed minimum score will generally be required in order to proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

The main types of psychometric assessment used in the selection process are identified below:

Verbal Reasoning Tests

Verbal reasoning tests are used to find out how well a candidate can identify logic within a passage of text. Candidates are typically provided with a passage, or several passages, of text based information and are required to evaluate whether or not a set of statements pertaining to the passage are:

True - The statement is true following the logic of the information or opinions contained in the passage,

False - The statement is false following the logic of the information or opinions contained in the passage or,

Cannot Say - You are not able to determine whether the statement is true or false without further information.

Numerical Reasoning Tests

Most numerical tests are very similar, usually following a multiple choice format where you have select an answer from a number of possible solutions.

The questions are based around the interpretation of data from table, graphs and charts, and then using basic arithmetical techniques (percentages; fractions; ratios; additions, subtractions etc) to arrive at the correct answer.

For both online and written tests, calculators are normally allowed and you are usually provided with scrap paper to do your rough working.

Diagrammatic Tests

These tests are designed to assess your logical reasoning ability. They usually comprise of around 30 multiple choice questions and are administered under exam conditions.

The questions typically involve a series of shapes or diagrammatic figures in a sequence or pattern. Your task is to analyse the sequence and determine which of the 'answer shapes or figures' would come next.

Situational Judgement Tests

Situational Judgement Tests usually consist of a series of work based scenarios relevant to the job position you have applied for. Scenarios may range from ethical dilemmas to difficulties with colleagues or clients. Employers use these tests to help determine if candidates possess the qualities required to be successful in the job role applied for. In each of the scenarios one or more of the competences from the original job description, and/or person specification, is likely to be tested.

Occupational Personality Questionnaires

These are not in fact tests as such but questionnaires designed to give the employer an inventory or profile of your values and the way in which you react in given situations. This could include how you relate to others, your values and motivations or your style of working. Employers use them to assess whether you have the right type of personality for the job and company.

They are usually untimed and there are no right or wrong answers. You can't really prepare for them, just answer the questions honestly. They usually check you are being consistent by asking similar questions in different ways so don't get caught out or try to guess what they are looking for. After all, it's not in your interest to end up in a job that doesn't suit you!

You will often get the chance to discuss the resulting personality profile with the employer and the outcome may be followed up in a subsequent interview.

You may come across other tests depending on the types of job you are applying for, such as **Computer Programming** or **Mechanical Engineering**.

Preparing for Tests

PsychometricTests section on Careers Service website

Start by looking at the section of our website which covers tests (**www.hw.ac.uk/careers/tests.php**).

If you are a student with a current Heriot-Watt email address you are able to request a practice online test. This test has two sections – verbal and numerical – you need to complete both to get feedback. (The whole test takes about 50 minutes.)   To sit the test:

1. Go to the above website
2. Register for the test
3. Wait for the activation email and proceed as instructed

There are also links from our website to other useful web sites, together with tips on how to prepare.

How to Maximise Your Performance

Preparation

- Consult the practice materials and reference books held in the Careers Advisory Service and familiarise yourself with what the tests involve. Ask about the practice sessions we run.

- Brush up on you arithmetic – percentages, ratios, square roots, etc. (you may not be allowed to use a calculator in the tests).

- Do crosswords and practice number puzzles.

- Get a good nights sleep – tiredness can adversely affect performance.

- Arrive in good time. Let the employer know in advance if you have a disability which might make taking the test difficult.

At the Test Session

- Listen carefully to the instructions given

- Ask questions if you don't understand what you've to do

- Read each question carefully before answering

- Work as quickly and accurately as you can.

- Miss out those you find too difficult

- Don't double or triple check each answer. Go back at the end if you have time

Further Information

The following publications may be borrowed from the Careers Advisory Service for a period of 2 - 3 days. A refundable deposit of £10 will be required.

How to Pass Technical Selection Tests – Mike Bryson and Sanjay Modha

How to Pass Graduate Psychometric Tests – Mike Bryson

Succeed at Psychometric Testing – Hodder Arnold

The Ultimate Psychometric Test Book – Mike Bryson

The Advanced Numeracy Test Workbook – Mike Bryson

How to Pass Advanced Numeracy Tests – Mike Bryson

How to Pass Numeracy Tests – Tolley & Thomas

How to Pass Verbal Reasoning Tests – Tolley & Thomas

Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions – Martin John Tate

Sample Tests

As well as taking advantage of our Online Practice Test facility (see below), you can try some other example aptitude tests on the following web sites:

SHL Direct - Excellent examples of Verbal, Numerical and Logical Reasoning tests. **(www.shldirect.com)**

Assessment Day - Popular online resource offering free practice aptitude tests for anyone wishing to improve speed, accuracy and confidence. **(www.assessmentday.co.uk)**

Graduate Jobs Numeracy Tests - Numeracy tests for graduate job applicants. The tests contain charts, graphs and data interpretation questions and are selected from a large pool of questions. **(www.topemployers.co.uk/graduate-jobs-numeracy-game.html)**

Psychometrix - 3 sample numerical reasoning tests. **(www.psychometrixltd.com)**

Cubiks - Verbal and Numerical Reasoning practice tests. **(http://practicetests.cubiks.com/linkpage.htm)**

Psychometric Success - provides free advice and practice tests to help students pass numerical, verbal, abstract, spatial and mechanical reasoning tests. **(www.psychometric-success.com/downloads/download-practice-tests.htm)**

WikiJob - Aptitude Tests - A comprehensive aptitude test information HUB for students and graduates in the UK **(www.wikijob.co.uk/wiki/aptitude-tests)**