Assessment Methods:
Personality Questionnaires

Benefits of personality questionnaires

- Measure relatively stable behavioural tendencies and preferences within an occupational context which might be assumed or go unnoticed.

- Valid predictors of individual on the job performance (with a predictive validity of 0.60 when used in conjunction with a cognitive ability test).[1]

- Are reliable assessments for culturally and linguistically diverse groups[2]

- Easy to administer (via paper and pencil or computerised methods) to large numbers.

- Can be cost effective to administer.

- Help assess candidates' level of 'fit' for a role and/or organisational context.

What are personality questionnaires?

Personality Questionnaires are commonly used for selection and development purposes as they measure the personal characteristics or attributes that are relevant in the workplace. They assist organisations to assess the candidate's level of 'fit' with the role and organisation.

Contrary to popular belief, questionnaires designed for selection and development are not designed to uncover confidential information about individuals, reveal innermost secrets or diagnose individuals with mental illnesses but are instead designed to assess a candidate's preferred working style. Personality Questionnaires are most effective when used in combination with other types of Psychometric

Assessments and Capability-Based Assessment Methods to build a 'holistic' understanding of the individual's capability and attributes.

Personality Questionnaires are not tests as there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to the questionnaire items. The personality profile that is appropriate is dependent on the personal attributes and qualities that are required for a particular role.

Why use personality questionnaires?

Personality Questionnaires measure relatively stable behavioural tendencies and preferences within an organisational context. Generally individuals are provided with a statement and are asked the degree to which they agree or

disagree with it. Personality assessments can be useful to measure capabilities from the *Personal Attributes*, *Relationships*, *Results and People Management* capability groups in the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework.

Characteristics of personality questionnaires

Personality Questionnaires may be administered in hardcopy by pencil and paper or online via computer at an agency's or test provider's offices and/or from the individual's home. They are usually untimed and take approximately 30 to 90 minutes to complete. Questions are typically in "forced choice" format rather than free response, and there are no right or wrong answers (and hence are referred to as a questionnaire and not a test).

Individuals are encouraged to answer honestly about themselves, rather than how they think an employer might want them to respond. Although some candidates may alter their responses to appear like a more desirable candidate, many tests include in-built measures to detect "faking".

Using personality questionnaires appropriately

Consideration of the following issues will help to ensure that a Personality Questionnaire is used appropriately:

- Selection decisions should never be based purely on Personality Questionnaire results. Other Capability-Based Assessment Methods and Psychometric Tests should also be considered in making a final decision about a candidate. Ideally a candidate's personality profile should be validated via a behavioural based interview.

- Personality Questionnaires will require accredited individuals or registered psychologists to interpret results and provide feedback to candidates.

- Personality questionnaire results will give you information about the individual's potential fit for the role. The selection decision should also be based on the candidate's knowledge and their relevant experience, as assessed through review of the CV, the interview and any exercises designed to draw on those aspects. Be careful to take a broad view of "relevant experience", looking for comparable functions rather than experience in the specific content area.

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[1] Schmidt, F. & Hunter, J. (1998). The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and Theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings, *Psychological Bulletin*, *124 (2)*, 262-274
[2] Robertson, I. T. & Smith, M. (2001). Personnel selection. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 74*, 441-472