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Guidelines on the Use of Psychometric Tests

1.0 PURPOSE

“Our Strategy for 2020 – creating a global university” clearly articulates that the core strength of our university is our people. Attracting the best staff to work for Lancaster University, and within our international partnerships, will assist us in delivering our strategic priorities in research, teaching and engagement and in ensuring we provide a consistently excellent experience for our students. Investing in all our people across our academic and professional service communities will ensure we create a truly global and sustainable university. We will continue to create and maintain an environment that attracts and retains the best staff and has in place the conditions and structures to enable all of our staff to fulfill their career ambitions in a university that is not only 'right' for them, but also challenges them and supports their development. Our staff want to succeed and the University will work with them to achieve their objectives in a progressive, collaborative and healthy working environment.

The University will therefore use psychometric tests to enhance the quality and quantity of information available for selection. We will also use psychometric tests for development purposes. Lancaster University is committed to the highest standards of practice in the use of all psychometric tests, in order to maximise the benefit of testing to the organisation and the individual, and to promote fairness and equality of opportunity for all.

2.0 SCOPE

These guidelines must be used whenever managers are considering the use of psychometric tests for a recruitment, development or team building activity.

3.0 DEFINITION

Psychometric testing covers any kind of test, inventory or questionnaire intended to measure and/or differentiate between the abilities or characteristics of individuals in an employment context. This includes for example:-

- Tests of general intelligence;
- Personality questionnaires;
- Tests of special aptitude or ability e.g. computer aptitude, typing, numeracy, verbal reasoning;
- Interest inventories, often used for career development purposes.
- Assessment and Development Centres
Personality questionnaires are designed to identify particular characteristics or attributes, and usually produce a personality ‘profile’ of an individual. Generally they do not produce a ranked order of candidates. They must not be used as the sole or primary basis of selection. They are most appropriately used as a source of additional information in the overall selection process.

4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

HR is responsible for ensuring that all tests used in the University are in accordance with this guidance. Departments wishing to use psychometric tests should discuss their needs with their HR Partner before implementation. OED will provide advice if tests are being used for learning, development and team building purposes.

HR advises departments on the most appropriate test(s) to be used for each job based on the requirements of the job description and/or person specification.

Unless the test is being used as part of a learning & development programme (eg the LU Leadership and Development Programmes) the department wishing to use psychometric testing will normally be responsible for the cost of the tests that are administered.

5.0 USE OF TESTS

Tests may be used in the following situations
- Recruitment and selection (in conjunction with other relevant selection tools, such as interview)
- Coaching
- Careers guidance
- Team development
- Succession planning
- Personal development planning
- Organisational Development Programmes (as deemed appropriate)
- Assessment and Development Centres

Any additional uses should be referred to the Director of Human Resources for approval.

6.0 TEST CHOICE

All tests must be clearly relevant to the given purpose. Detailed job descriptions and employee specifications will be used to enable tests to be selected appropriately. Employee specifications will clearly state which criteria tests will be used to assess. In order to ensure equality of opportunity, it is essential that tests measure the specific skill
requirements of the post and are at the correct level of difficulty needed.

6.2 In development, the choice of test should be discussed with your HR Partner/Organisational Developer and decisions will be based on the set of circumstances and the particular development need at the time. Tests may also be incorporated, as appropriate, into programmes such as the Leadership Management development programmes.

7.0 TEST USERS

7.1 Only trained test users who hold the relevant qualifications may use, interpret and give feedback on psychometric tests. 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.

7.2 In general, the users of psychometric tests should ensure that:

- Obtain the informed consent of test user.
- 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.
- The level of confidentiality regarding the test results is fully explained.
- There are adequate arrangements for giving feedback to the test taker.
- How test outcome information will be stored and disposed of.

7.3 Briefing

All candidates or participants should be fully briefed and understand the requirements and purpose of the questionnaire to be undertaken. Where appropriate, tests should have a set of examples which candidates must do before the questionnaire commences. This allows candidates to become familiar with the approach and understand what is expected of them.

Completion of questionnaires will be voluntary, however when used as part of a selection process, refusal to complete will impact on the ability of the selection panel to make an informed decision on the candidate.

8.0 TEST RESULTS

Test results should always be interpreted by a properly trained person in the context of clearly defined criteria and incompliance with the requirements and good practice advice of the test publisher.
9.0 FEEDBACK

Feedback on the interpretation of the test scores will be available to the test taker and provided by a qualified person. Such feedback establishes the validity of their results.

10.0 EQUALITY

Testing people with disability related and other needs may require adjustments from standard test administration procedures. Test users should consider requests for reasonable adjustments and always contact the test publisher for advice before modifying test administration procedures.

11.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

The Data Protection Act requires that information collected during psychometric testing be accurate, up to date and stored confidentially.

Test results will never be used for any other purpose than intended and should be limited to those involved in the process eg. For recruitment purposes the panel would need to see a panel report.

Test results and written interpretation should be kept by test users in locked files for period of 12 months. Any written interpretation of results may be kept on personnel files and provided to the relevant individual.

12.0 COPYRIGHT

Test materials are covered by copyright and must not be reproduced without the express permission of the test publisher.

13.0 REVIEW

13.1 These guidelines do not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and will be kept under regular review and may be amended or withdrawn following appropriate consultation with the recognised trade unions to reflect changes in legislation or changing University requirements.

14.0 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- The British Psychological Society
- The Equality Act
• Data Protection Act