

## A European Standard for Test Use

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There is little uniformity across Europe in terms of test user qualification standards or processes. In some countries people can obtain almost any instrument without any training or formal qualification, in others very high standards of competence are set and people are expected to demonstrate that they can meet these standards before publishers will supply them with materials.

As the mobility of test users increases and as the use of testing by multinational organizations operating across European borders increases, so it has become increasingly important to define some benchmark standards both for test quality and for competence in test use, especially in the work and organizational field. It is also important for publishers of tests, who operate globally, to be able to set comparable standards for supply in different countries. If they do not, there is the danger of 'grey markets' emerging where poorly qualified test users buy in one country and then use in another.

### The EFPA Test User Standard

The EFPA Test User Standard was developed to provide the basis for qualifications in test use. It is intended to provide a general European level 'benchmark' against which local national qualification systems can be compared or audited. The present Standard for test use was developed jointly by EFPA and EAWOP and focuses on qualification of users of tests operating in work and organizational settings.

National test user qualification systems have been developed in a number of European countries (e.g. UK, Sweden, Finland, Germany and Norway). The work of the joint EFPA-EAWOP European Working Group (EWG) sprang from the need for some higher level coordination of these projects and has attempted to address the complex task of defining a meaningful standard of competence in test use that can be used as a benchmark for a range of very different national approaches to test user qualification and certification.

The present version of this Standard is the result of a six-year programme of development and Europe-wide consultation.

### Development of the standard

In 2003 the Standing Committee on Tests and Testing of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) launched a project with the following aims:

- To define a standard for test user competence
- To contextualise these, initially, in relation to testing in the work and organizational field.
- To facilitate the recognition of national qualifications in that field that meet the standards
- To assist countries in developing such qualifications
- To audit new qualifications to see if they meet the EFPA standard.

This project was carried out in collaboration with EAWOP (the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychologists) and resulted in 2005 in a standard for test use, contextualised for testing in work and organizational settings. The standard was developed by a multinational working group of psychologists and a wider consultation group involving all the EFPA member associations. EFPA adopted the International Test Commission's (ITC) Test Use Guidelines as the model for its

approach<sup>1</sup>. This sets out three main units of competence, each with a number of elements, with each element defined in terms of detailed performance criteria. The following extract shows in outline how the ITC Guidelines structure is used for the EFPA standards. Three 'units of competence' are defined, each divided into a number of elements, with each element being defined by detail performance criteria. The Units and elements are:

1. Take responsibility for ethical test use
  - a. Act in a professional and ethical manner
  - b. Ensure one has the competence to use tests
2. Take responsibility for the use of tests
  - a. Ensure that test materials are kept securely
  - b. Ensure that test results are treated confidentially.
  - c. Follow good practice in the use of tests
  - d. Evaluate the potential utility of testing in an assessment situation
  - e. Choose technically sound tests appropriate for the situation
  - f. Give due consideration to issues of fairness in testing
  - g. Analyse and interpret results appropriately
  - h. Communicate the results clearly and accurately to relevant others
  - i. Review the appropriateness of the test and its use
3. Follow good practice in the administration of tests
  - a. Make necessary preparations for the testing session
  - b. Administer the tests properly
  - c. Score test results accurately

For each Unit, relevant aspects of the occupational context are defined. Within each Unit, each element is defined in terms of what performance is required of the competent test user and the more specific contexts to which the competence relates. In addition there is a specification of the knowledge and skills that underpin competence in relation to the Standard.

### Levels of competence

During 2005-2007 three levels of competence were defined in terms of differing profiles of elements of competence and different degrees and coverage of knowledge and understanding:

1. Test administration under well defined conditions. Competent to practice in a limited range of conditions, but only under supervision of the Level 2 or Level 3 user.
2. Test use of a limited number and range of instruments in well-defined conditions (such as assessment for job selection). Competent to practice independently within a limited range of conditions and competent to practice more broadly under the supervision of a Level 3 user.
3. Specialist use of tests for in-depth assessments and in providing guidance and advice to others on the use of tests. Competent to practice independently across a wide range of conditions within the relevant context (i.e. work and organizational assessment settings). While not all Level 3 users may be competent to design and develop tests, some may go on to develop expertise in these more advanced technical areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of the ITC Guidelines can be downloaded from [www.intestcom.org](http://www.intestcom.org)

This generic framework can be easily applied to test use in health or educational settings as well as to work and organizational ones. The EFPA project continued over the next 2 years (2007-2009) to consider practical issues of how to implement European accreditation of national qualifications in test use. EFPA conducted two pieces of empirical research to define the performance criteria and knowledge and skills requirements association with each of these roles.

### **Accreditation of national qualifications: The Eurotest Certificate**

From 2009 to 2011, EFPA developed a procedure for accrediting national test user qualifications, using the UK's occupational test user qualifications as a pilot example. Since 2011, EFPA has been working with a number of other countries to help facilitate the development of test user qualifications and accredit existing qualifications. In 2011 EFPA accredited the British Psychological Society to award the first 'Eurotest' certificates. Other countries are in the pipeline.

- We believe that the European Certificate is a worthy addition to a test user's professional qualifications, as it recognises a level of competence defined by the Standing Committee on Tests and Testing of EFPA, which draws its membership from 35 European Countries.
- We believe that, apart from its intrinsic value as an acknowledgement of competence, multinational test suppliers will be more likely to recognise the Eurotest as a basis for registration of test users across borders within Europe.
- We also expect that providers of occupational assessment services and those who seek such services are more likely to acknowledge or require a qualification based on a European standard. It is very difficult for multinational organisations whether clients or providers to know and understand all the varying bases for registration as a test user across Europe.

The Eurotest supports the implementation of the new ISO10667 standard for assessment by providing a benchmark standard for competence of test users in the provision of assessment services who are seeking to demonstrate compliance with the ISO standard.

In 2013, the EFPA standard was extended to cover the broader area of assessment. EFPA now has a standard defined for competence in assessment for each of the three levels of competence in each of the main setting for assessment: Health, education and work.

### **Summary**

EFPA has:

- Produced a standard for test use that is contextualised for application in a number of different test user settings.
- Defined a three-level model of competence relating to different test user roles as the basis for structuring qualifications in test use.
- Taken an evidence-based approach to the specification of knowledge and skills necessary for competent test use at each level and in each context.
- Established the EuroTest certificate for national Level 2 qualifications meeting the EFPA standard for test use in work and organizational settings to help establish a common European standard for competence in this area.