

The Scoring and Psychometric Properties Assessment for the first part of the assessment stage for selection for GP training – February 2008

Please note this description refers to the 2008 papers. The 2009 papers may differ slightly from those used in 2008.

The assessment consisted of two papers completed under invigilated conditions. The papers are designed to assess the essential competencies in the National Person Specification and based around clinical and professional scenarios.

The papers were designed and written by a team of experienced General Practitioners who are experts in the assessment and training of people for work in General Practice. There was a painstaking development process which included rigorous reviews, statistical trials and validation against required competencies. They were devised to identify the candidates most likely to be successful at the more intensive stage 3 assessments.

Paper 1: Clinical Problem Solving

The questions present clinical scenarios and require the exercise of judgement and problem solving skills to determine appropriate diagnosis and management of patients. The paper is not a test of knowledge, but rather the ability to apply it appropriately. The topics are taken from areas with which a Pre-Registration House Officer or Foundation Programme Year 2 doctor could be expected to be familiar. There are no questions requiring a specific knowledge of general practice.

Questions are presented in a variety of formats and the task is to choose the best of the given responses using clinical judgement. One point is awarded for each correct answer. Where more than one response is required for a question a point is awarded for each correct response chosen.

There were 96 questions in the 2008 paper. The maximum number of points attainable was 99. 75 minutes were allowed for this paper.

Paper 2: Professional Dilemmas

The questions present scenarios which a second year foundation doctor might meet. Each scenario encapsulates a professional dilemma and the appropriateness of different ways of dealing with it. The paper is designed to assess understanding of appropriate behaviour for a doctor in difficult situations and requires the application of competencies such as professional integrity, coping with pressure, and empathy and sensitivity. It does not require specific knowledge of general practice but does assume general familiarity with typical primary and secondary care procedures.

There were 50 questions in the paper with 105 minutes allowed for completion. Some questions required the ranking of 4 or 5 options others required the selection of 2 or 3 responses. Scoring was based on matching the keyed responses. There were between 10 and 20 points available for a question. Answers which exactly matched the keyed responses gained maximum points. Responses which differed slightly from the keyed response (e.g. reversed the order of two options) gained a high number of points and responses which had little in common with the keyed response received few or no points. One item was not scored due to poor psychometric performance. The maximum number of points available was 782.

Use of scores

Raw scores for each paper were allocated to four bands. A score in band 2 or above on each paper was required for shortlisting.

The tables below show the psychometric properties of the two papers and the allocation of scores to bands for those interested.

The following points are important to interpreting scores:

Candidates are compared to qualified doctors who will typically have similar experience. The standard has to be challenging for the papers to be effective.

Some deaneries received many more applicants than there were available positions. A higher score was required to be shortlisted in these deaneries than elsewhere.

The papers were designed to assess potential for work in General Practice. Candidates with low scores may find another speciality is more suited to their approach.

Table 1: Psychometric Properties of Papers (2008)

	Clinical Problem Solving	Professional Dilemmas
Mean Score	72.6	645
Standard Deviation	13.2	35
Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	0.91	0.82
Standard error of measurement	4.0	14.6
Minimum score attained	13	256
Maximum score attained.	98	714

Table 2: Allocation of scores to bands

Band	Approximate Percentage in Band	Score Range Clinical Problem Solving	Score Range Professional Dilemmas
Band 1	8%	13 – 53	256 – 597
Band 2	19%	54 – 66	598 – 629
Band 3	58%	67 – 85	630 – 682
Band 4	13%	86 – 98	683 – 714