

Putting it to the test

A report from JIM BOYLE, Chair, Educational Testing Sub-Group, Steering Committee on Test Standards

THE BPS Steering Committee on Test Standards (SCTS) has already developed and introduced standards for testing in occupational settings – the Level A and Level B Certificates of Competence in Occupational Testing – to encourage responsible test use by psychologists and nonpsychologists alike. Next month, at the Society’s Annual Conference in London, the SCTS will launch the Level A Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing. It is envisaged that the Certificate will help to raise standards of test use and promote a wider knowledge of psychology among test users in education.

There are 71 core competences, which must all be demonstrated to achieve the Certificate. These cover psychometrics, general theories of testing and psychological attributes, test administration, reporting and feedback. They are arranged in seven units:

1. Defining the assessment needs
2. The basic principles of scaling and standardisation
3. The importance of reliability and validity
4. Deciding whether a particular test should or should not be used as part of an assessment process
5. Administering tests to one or more children/young people and dealing with scoring procedures
6. Making appropriate use of test results
7. Maintaining security and confidentiality.

The competences were drawn up by a working party that included representatives from the Division of Educational and Child Psychology, the Scottish Division of Educational Psychology, educational psychology training programmes, the Association of Educational Psychologists, and major test publishers, as well as those involved in developing the Level A occupational testing competences. There was also consultation with the DfES, the Scottish Executive Education Department, and Ofsted. The Level A Certificate does not imply that the holder can use all types of assessment. A more advanced level is being developed for tests that require a more detailed knowledge of test construction, underlying theory and interpretation, such as individual tests of cognitive abilities (e.g. the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) or personality tests (e.g. the 16PF Adolescent Personality Questionnaire). Qualified educational psychologists will be able to apply for a ‘Statement of Competence’ without undergoing a formal assessment, by means of a time-limited ‘grandparenting’ scheme. Although educational psychologists will not require the Certificate or Statement in order to carry out tests, as they are qualified to practise by virtue of successfully completing a postgraduate training course in educational psychology, it is hoped that the competences will be incorporated in the core curriculum for the new educational psychology doctoral programmes, which

are due to commence in 2005. A plan has been prepared to market the Level A competences to a wide range of test users in education, such as special educational needs coordinators.

□ *For more information and for details about how to apply to become an assessor, see www.psychtesting.org.uk/public/whatsnew.asp.*

March 2004

154

The Psychologist Vol 17 No 3