

**THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**THE PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR PSYCHOLOGY**

**POLICY ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF PSYCHOMETRIC MEASURING DEVICES,  
INSTRUMENTS, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

**PREAMBLE**

Psychological testing and the evaluation of human functioning in South Africa are acts pertaining to the profession of psychology, which are outlined in the *Health Professions Act, Act 56 of 1974*, as amended by Act No. 29 of 2007, and in the *Regulations Defining the Scope of the Profession of Psychology* (R993, *Government Gazette*, 31433 (3), 16 September 2008). As indicated in paragraph 2(f) in the *Regulations Defining the Scope of the Profession of Psychology*, the acts pertaining to the profession of psychology include:

- (f) *the use of any psychological questionnaire, test, prescribed techniques, instrument, apparatus, device or similar method for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, personality make-up, personality functioning, temperament, psychophysiological functioning, psycho-pathology or personnel career selection, and for this purpose the board will publish a Board Notice listing the tests which are classified by the board for use by registered psychologists;*

Thus, in terms of paragraph 2(f) the Professional Board for Psychology must classify tests for use by registered psychologists<sup>1</sup> and annually publish a Board Notice in which these tests are listed. Procedures to classify tests as being psychological (or not) have been implemented since the mid-1970s by the Board. In the democratic South Africa, the Board established and mandated the Psychometrics Committee to:

- classify any device, instrument, questionnaire, apparatus, method, technique or test aimed at the evaluation of emotional, behavioural and cognitive processes or adjustment of personality of individuals or groups of persons, or for the determination of intellectual abilities, psychopathology, personality make-up, personality functioning, aptitude or interests by the usage and interpretation of questionnaires, tests projections or other techniques or any apparatus, whether of SA origin or imported, and to report thereon to the Professional Board;
- annually publish a list of psychological tests/psychometric instruments classified by the Professional Board;
- develop training guidelines/standards related to psychometrics and psychological assessment that can inform and be used in the accreditation of qualifications, universities and internship programmes, when setting the national Board examinations, and for continuing professional development purposes;
- develop guidelines for ethical practice related to test use and psychological assessment and how to assess whether a psychological test meets the required standards;
- develop minimum requirements/standards for psychological tests.

Classification entails verifying whether a test was psychological or not.

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<sup>1</sup> In the *Regulations Defining the Scope of the Profession of Psychology*, "registered psychologists" is used as an umbrella term that includes "a person registered under the Act as a psychologist, psychometrist, registered counsellor, psycho technician or in any other category of registration as may be established by the board".

## WHY DO WE CLASSIFY TESTS?

The use of a psychometric measuring device, test, questionnaire, technique or instrument that assesses intellectual or cognitive ability or functioning, aptitude, interest, personality make-up or personality functioning, is constituted as being a psychological act. According to the Health Professions Act, Act 56 of 1974, only registered psychologists are permitted to perform psychological acts which, in relation to evaluation, testing and assessment, are defined in Section 37 (2) (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) as being:

- "(a) the evaluation of behaviour or mental processes or personality adjustments or adjustments of individuals or groups of persons, through the interpretation of tests for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, interests, personality make-up or personality functioning, and the diagnosis of personality and emotional functions and mental functioning deficiencies according to a recognised scientific system for the classification of mental deficiencies;*
- (b) the use of any method or practice aimed at aiding persons or groups of persons in the adjustment of personality, emotional or behavioural problems or at the promotion of positive personality change, growth and development, and the identification and evaluation of personality dynamics and personality functioning according to psychological scientific methods;*
- (c) the evaluation of emotional, behavioural and cognitive processes or adjustment of personality of individuals or groups of persons by the usage and interpretation of questionnaires, tests, projections or other techniques or any apparatus, whether of South African origin or imported, for the determination of intellectual abilities aptitude, personality make-up, personality functioning, psychophysiological functioning or psychopathology;*
- (d) the exercising of control over prescribed questionnaires or tests or prescribed techniques, apparatus or instruments for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, personality make-up, personality functioning, psychophysiological functioning or psychopathology;*
- (e) the development of and control over the development of questionnaires, tests, techniques, apparatus or instruments for the determination of intellectual abilities, aptitude, personality make-up, personality functioning, psychophysiological functioning or psychopathology".*

## INFORMATION REQUIRED WHEN SUBMITTING A MEASURE FOR CLASSIFICATION

Before a test can be classified, information needs to be obtained regarding:

- a. the name of the test, name(s) of the test developer(s) and distributors, date when the test was published;
- b. the content domain(s) tapped by the test. This provides information on whether or not the test measures a psychological construct;
- c. the context in which the test is used (e.g., assessment/ screening of normal/dysfunctional behaviour);
- d. whether it is administered in a group context or individually;
- e. the nature of administration - standardised, dynamic or interactive, computerised;
- f. the nature of the scoring - objective, non-objective, computerised;
- g. the nature of the test interpretation - straightforward (cut-points), computer-generated, minor decision-making required, high level decision-making and psychological expertise required;
- h. the complexity of feedback and reporting - structured, semi-structured, requires high-level integrative skills and expertise.

Using the above information, a classification can be made regarding whether or not it is a psychological test and who may use it.