

TEST REVIEW PROCESS FOR ASSESSMENT STANDARDS SOUTH AFRICA (ASSA)

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Assessment Standards South Africa (ASSA) test review process is a voluntary process whereby tests submitted for review are evaluated using the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) test evaluation framework that has been adapted for the South African context. Advice and guidance obtained from the British Psychological Society as well as stakeholder feedback from sessions held at the SIOPSA and the PsySSA conferences in 2017 and 2018 has been instrumental in helping ASSA to formulate this process.

This is an independent ASSA process that is not linked to the Health Professions Council of South Africa's (HPCSA) test classification process. Tests that are deemed to measure psychological constructs as per the ASSA review process should still be submitted to the HPCSA for classification to be placed on the HPCSA list of classified tests.

The aim of the ASSA test review process is to evaluate tests against the minimum criteria for tests to comply with in terms of scientifically acceptable psychometric standards. The rationale behind establishing minimum compliance is in line with Section 8 of the Employment Equity Act of 1998 (EEA).

Section 8 of the EEA specifies that:

Psychological testing and other similar assessments of an employee are prohibited unless the test or assessment being used:

- (a) has been scientifically shown to be valid and reliable;*
- (b) can be fairly applied to employees;*
- (c) is not biased against any employee or group.*

It should be noted that Section 8 (b) of the act pertaining to fairness is contextual and must be evaluated in the context where the test is used. Section 8 (b) and (c) cannot be evaluated without an in-depth understanding of the test application, purpose and target audience. In this regard, we refer to SIOP's (2018)¹ policy regarding the measurement of fairness and bias in psychometric assessments.

However, not all tests are used in the workplace, and while the EEA requirements are legislated for the workplace, the same psychometric and legal requirements apply equally to tests from other disciplines (e.g., educational, clinical, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, ecometrics, etc). The ASSA review process is therefore open to all types of tests, psychological or not, that can be evaluated in terms of their reliability, validity, appropriateness for use with individuals and the presence/absence of bias against any particular group of individuals.

The outcome of the review process will either be a) that there is sufficient evidence that the test meets minimum criteria or b) that the test does not meet the minimum criteria. When there is sufficient evidence of meeting the criteria set out, an ASSA certificate of compliance will be issued for the test.

As part of the review process, additional indications of the quality of the evidence available for the test will be provided in the review report as Inadequate, Adequate, Good, or Excellent respectively for each of the specified crucial content areas. The final review report for tests that are certified will be available to the public to purchase.

ASSA will only publish the names of tests that have been reviewed and met the minimum criteria. If they did not meet the criteria, the developer does not receive a certificate and the assessment is not published on the list of certified tests.

¹ Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). (2018). *Principles for the validation and use of personnel selection procedures* (5th ed.). Bowling Green, OH: SIOP.

1.1 CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

- **Classification:** Deciding whether a test measures a psychological construct or not. This is a function of the HPCSA.
- **Review:** A process whereby scientific evidence is assessed against specific criteria to determine to what extent a test meets the minimum standard of compliance.
- **Certification:** Provision of a certificate at the end of the review process that serves as evidence that the instrument meets the minimum criteria set out in the ASSA standards. This is the service that ASSA provides.
- **Psychological tests** will be defined according to the Health Professions Act, Act 56 of 1974 which refers to 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; [Par. (d) added by s. 34 (b) of Act 89 of 1997.] as a Psychological Act. Measures of these constructs are deemed psychological tests.
- **Other similar assessments** are those used for the evaluation of some aspect of people not covered by the HPCSA definition above, and that can be evaluated in terms of their reliability, validity, appropriateness for use with individuals and the presence (or not) of bias against any particular group of individuals.

1.2 FORMS REQUIRED

The review process will depend on an efficient and well-run administrative system and clear and transparent guidelines and criteria for review ratings. As far as possible, this process should be online. It should be as easy as possible for test developers/publishers to provide the necessary information. The test review information and application pack for test publishers/distributors will consist of the following documents:

Appendix A: Application form and terms and conditions (includes non-disclosure agreement to be signed by ASSA representative)

Appendix B: Factual information form for submission into the test review process covering ASSA sections relating to: *a) description; b) classification – content domains, areas of use, etc; c) measurement and scoring; and d) supply conditions.*

Appendix C: An ASSA review checklist form can assist those submitting tests to ensure that they do submit all the required materials and attend to the specific ASSA-related domains of evidence to be reviewed.

Appendix D: Schedule of fees for test reviews with bank details and email for proof of payment.

Appendix E: Editorial Panel review update pro forma - ASSA.

Appendix F: Appeal form.

Appendix G: Example of ASSA review form with criteria against which tests will be evaluated.

Appendix H: Example of review certificate.

2 STAFF, STRUCTURE, RESPONSIBILITIES & FLOW

2.1 PERSONS REQUIRED TO MANAGE THE PROCESSES

In order for the evaluation process to be sustainable, the following people are needed:

- **1 x Senior editor** responsible for overall management of the review process via the consultant editors.
- **Consultant-editors** (4-5) working in parallel and responsible for managing the review process for a particular test and obtaining within the set timelines two properly completed review reports from the appointed reviewers and integrating the reviews into a single review document. When not being used as consultant editor, these individuals may also act as reviewers. They need to be accredited or trained according to accepted standards of the ASSA review process.
- **Pool of reviewers** (at least 8-10) – trained according to accepted standards of the ASSA review process (these can be local or international reviewers). They have to commit to review deadlines and to review reports submitted by Trainee reviewers if assigned.
- **Pool of trainee reviewers** in training and working with at least one appointed reviewer to gain review experience – eventually to become independent (accredited) reviewers. They need to be trained according to accepted standards of the ASSA review process before being considered.
- **1 x administrative person** (the only person formally and permanently appointed – even if on a part-time basis)

The Senior Editor and Administrator report to the ASSA Board, which has ultimate oversight of the test review process.

2.2 POSITION REQUIREMENTS

Position	Full-time (remuneration)	Minimum qualification or training	Duration of appointment
Senior editor	Part-time (with some remuneration or CPD credit* per integrated final report)	Masters or Doctorate with specific interest and experience in psychometrics and research. Demonstrated research and writing skills evidenced either by peer reviewed publications or research reports or test manual publications. Trained (or accredited) on the ASSA review guidelines.	3-year term renewable for 1 further term of 3 years

Position	Full-time (remuneration)	Minimum qualification or training	Duration of appointment
Consultant editors	Part-time (CPD credit per completed review and possible publication) with completed report submitted to the senior editor.	Masters or Doctorate with specific interest and experience in psychometrics and research. Chosen for their particular subject-matter expertise related to the particular test submitted for review. Demonstrated research and writing skills evidenced either by peer reviewed publications or research reports or test manual publications. Trained (or accredited) on the ASSA review guidelines.	3-year term renewable for 1 further term of 3 years
Reviewers	Part-time (CPD credit per completed review, and possible publication) submitted to the responsible consultant editor.	Registered psychology professional with specific interest and experience in psychometrics and research. Trained (or accredited) on the ASSA review guidelines. Assigned to review tests in line with their particular subject matter expertise related to the particular test submitted for review.	Appointed ad hoc per test to be reviewed.
Trainee Reviewers	Part-time (some CPD credit for successfully completing formal training and participating as trainee reviewer in the review process)	Registered psychology professional with specific interest in psychometrics and research. Trained on the ASSA review guidelines.	Appointed ad hoc per test review to work with a particular reviewer. Required to actively participate in the review and provide (and be provided with) feedback to and from the reviewer responsible for the specific review. A supervision report will be completed by the reviewer supervising the trainee reviewer.
Administrative	Remunerated position (market related hourly tariff)	Psychometrist, strong administrative skills and management of the review process according to set timelines.	Permanent appointment after an appropriate advertising and selection process.

2.3 TRAINING

The Senior Editor and all Consultant Editors, Reviewers, and Trainee Reviewers will be required to attend training in the ASSA review model before the first review process commences. The training will include specific training on the criteria used for evaluation, but will also cover how to deal with anomalies in the process, and the steps in the overall process. Ideally the training should include a competence test. Subsequent training could be done online or through specific courses. There will also be an induction process whereby all personnel will be introduced to the ideology underlying the review process, and the ASSA stance with regard to dealing with reviews.

2.4 APPOINTMENTS PROCEDURE

1. All appointments will be advertised in accordance with South African Labor Law requirements.
2. Applicants to apply and submit full CV that will be verified by the ASSA Board.
3. All applicants must be willing to sign an NDA and contract work agreement with ASSA.
4. Applicants to declare personal interest in the assessment industry, financially directly or indirectly as developer, designer, agent or publisher of any tests or assessment devices.
5. Applicants must declare potential conflicts of interest in any review of tests per review.
6. Applicants must agree to complete evaluations within agreed time frames per review.
7. Applicants must agree to the remuneration per assignment (whether financial or CPD based).
8. Applicants must agree to attend ASSA review training and to maintain their competence as a reviewer.

2.5 EDITORIAL PANEL

The editorial panel is made up of the Senior Editor, Administrator, and Consultant Editors. The panel is responsible for the following:

1. Reporting on general operational progress on each of the reviews currently ongoing.
2. Deciding whether to proceed with an appeal or not, and reviewing independent reviews once completed to evaluate appeal decisions.
3. Reviewing updates submitted for tests still within their valid certificate period.
4. Ratifying Trainee Reviewers as Reviewers

2.6 MEETINGS AND TIMELINES

ASSA review committee meetings are to be scheduled once a month at approximately 4-week intervals from **January to December** with set dates communicated on the website to allow for timeous review and feedback processes. Administrative processes will run in an ongoing fashion, so the submission and allocation processes need not be linked in any way to the meeting dates and can continue. Meetings will be mostly focused on the final review documents to be managed, approved, signed off and made available online. Meetings can be held as virtual meetings to reduce costs involved for travel and venue.

These processes can be refined but a provisional (proposed) estimation of timelines could be as follows (refer to Gantt chart below as an example):

- Submission of a test to be reviewed on any given date. Managed by the Senior Editor for initial checklist sign-off – feedback on checklist result within **1-2 weeks**.
- Test review process allocated to the responsible Consultant Editor. Allocation to reviewers within **1 week** and feedback from the reviewers within **6 weeks** after receiving the test for review.
- Integration of reviewers’ reports by the Consultant Editor within **2-3 weeks** and submitted to the Senior Editor.
- Communication by the Senior Editor with the Test Developer / Distributor for factual corrections (**1-2 weeks**)
- Collation of integrated reports, feedback from the test developer/distributor (**1-2 weeks**)
- Results noted at the next scheduled meeting (**1-4 weeks**)
- If no resubmission and/or additional research is required, the certificate can be issued, and the final report can be uploaded online within **1 week**.
- If an appeals process is started, the steps provided later in this document should be followed.

Action	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13	Week 14	Week 15	Week 16	Week 17	Week 18	Week 19	Week 20
Submission of test																				
Administrator checklist screening																				
Senior Editor checklist sign-off																				
Allocate Consultant Editor, reviewers, trainee reviewers																				
Test review																				
Integration of reviewer reports by Consultant Editor																				
Submit integrated report to Senior Editor																				
Communication with submitter																				
Finalisation of integrated report based on feedback from submitter																				
Log results at next scheduled meeting																				
Send final reports to submitter																				
If approved, issue certificate & Load reports onto website																				

3 ASSA SUBMISSION AND REVIEW MANAGEMENT PROCESS

This process is intended to be transparent, logical, and practical to operationalise.

3.1 SUBMISSION OF TEST FOR REVIEW

3.1.1 PHASE 1 (PRELIMINARY SCREENING)

For submission of new, revised, lapsed or imported measures, the first step entails an administrative screening to check whether all required relevant materials have been submitted. This is done by the administrative person using a checklist. The following checklist items are required:

- Completed application form with terms and conditions (ASSA version to be developed)
- Check whether all test materials and all the necessary forms are submitted

If all seems in order, a non-disclosure form is signed. If all materials have not been submitted, the submitter has 2 weeks to submit missing materials, otherwise they will have to resubmit once they have all of the relevant materials to hand.

3.1.2 PHASE 2 (CONTENT SCREENING/CHECKLIST SIGN-OFF & REVIEW)

A second step in the submissions process involves the preliminary checking by the Senior editor as to whether the content areas that are crucial for the ASSA review process seem to be adequately covered by the materials submitted. This information is contained in the Editorial panel test review factual information form. The following key areas must be covered in the submitted material:

- Theoretical framework / Rationale
- Clear description of the test development process
- Validation evidence
- Reliability evidence
- Sample descriptions
- Report outputs

If all seems in order, the test is accepted for review, scheduled to be reviewed, allocated to a Consultant Editor to manage the review process and due dates set. The administrative person captures the relevant information. If content areas are missing, the submitter has 2 weeks to submit missing materials, otherwise they will have to resubmit once they have all of the relevant materials to hand.

3.2 ALLOCATION OF THE REVIEW TO TWO INDEPENDENT REVIEWERS

The Consultant Editor, in consultation with the Senior Editor, allocates the test to two independent reviewers with the set due dates clearly indicated and agreed upon. When the reviewers accept, they acknowledge receipt of the relevant material and the due dates for the review reports. Submitters will have access to the names of reviewers in the pool of reviewers, but not the specific reviewers for their submission. Submitters may request that certain reviewers are not involved in reviews of their assessments when submitting their initial applications.

3.3 ASSA REVIEW

The full EFPA review criteria are very comprehensive and include detailed descriptions for various domains. The ASSA review process focuses mainly on the psychometrically related aspects listed below, using the agreed criteria for the ratings. Certain aspects included in the original EFPA review such as quality of test material, costs of the test, quality of the reports etc. do not form part of the main ASSA review.

3.3.1 PSYCHOMETRIC RELATED ASSA REVIEW CRITERIA

1. **Rationale** / theoretical base of the test (intended target group)
2. Clear description of the **scientific development process** followed in its development and the constructs measured
3. Quality of the available **samples**
4. **Reliability** evidence / quality
5. **Validity** evidence / quality
6. **Cross-cultural dif/bias analysis** evidence

The criteria for the review should be clear and transparent using commonly used statistical processes understood by most assessment practitioners to allow for ease of completing the review. Each reviewer completes the review of the test and submits their report to the Consultant editor within the specified time frame.

3.3.2 REVIEWER TRAINING AND TRAINEE REVIEWER SUPERVISION PROCESS

This process runs parallel to the review process and includes TRAINEE REVIEWER FEEDBACK as part of this process. When Trainee Reviewers have been identified, the Consultant Editor may allocate them as a third reviewer for a test. The Consultant Editor will provide feedback to the Trainee Reviewer after each review to facilitate learning. Each Trainee Reviewer must be trained according to accepted standards of the ASSA review process before being considered and must complete 3 test reviews deemed to be of an appropriate standard in order to qualify to become a Reviewer.

3.4 REVIEWERS' REPORTS SUBMITTED TO THE CONSULTANT EDITOR

The Consultant Editor integrates the feedback from the two reviewers' reports. If discussion is required, the Consultant Editor manages such communication and collates the reviews into a single review document. This integrated review document is submitted to the Senior Editor by the agreed due date. If a trainee reviewer was allocated to the reviewer, the trainee reviewer feedback report should be submitted to the Consultant Editor by the same due date.

3.5 FINALISATION OF INTEGRATED REPORT

The Senior Editor does a final check of the integrated review report (with access to the independent review reports also). The Senior Editor manages communication with the Test developer/distributor for

factual corrections to the review report. The test developer/distributor will have 30 days to comment and make factual corrections. Once the corrections have been made, the report is finalised. The outcome in terms of both the classification and the review of the test is noted and captured.

As part of the review process, additional indications of the quality of the evidence available for the test - for the 6 critical domain areas indicated respectively - will be provided in the review report as Inadequate, Adequate, Good, or Excellent. In cases of Inadequate notes of caution will be provided as part of the review while in cases of adequate, notes to improve and obtain a good review rating will be noted.

3.6 APPEALS PROCESS

Should submitters feel the need to dispute the findings of the review process, the final outcome and the certification decision reached can be appealed.

An appeal shall be considered valid if any of the following criteria are met:

- It can be substantively motivated, with research findings, where possible.
- A misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the psychometric information provided can be shown to have occurred which could have led to erroneous conclusions being reached by the reviewers.
- In the case of the review outcome assigned to the test during the evaluation process, substantive reasons are provided why this was erroneous.

The process followed to lodge and process an appeal is as follows:

- Submitter lodges an appeal using the Appeal form (electronically) within 30 days of the submitter receiving the decision.
- Administrative person alerts the Senior Editor to the appeal.
- The Editorial panel considers the appeal and reaches a decision to either not uphold the appeal (by applying the criteria for what constitutes a valid appeal) or to submit the test for a further independent, arbitration review.
- If the appeal is not upheld, this is communicated to the submitter.
- If arbitration is recommended, an independent additional reviewer is selected by mutual agreement. Arbitration reviews should be conducted by experienced reviewers (who have conducted at least 5 reviews). The independent reviewer is appointed and conducts the arbitration review and submits it to the Senior Editor. The administrative person sends the arbitration review together with the two original reviews to the Editorial panel to reach a decision.
- If the overall outcome and certification recommendation of the arbitration review is similar to those of the previous reviewers, the original evaluation and certification outcomes are upheld. If the overall outcome of the arbitration review differs significantly from that of the previous reviewers, the original evaluation and certification outcomes could be set aside and be replaced by the outcomes of the arbitration review if the Editorial panel so decides.
- The result is communicated to the submitter.
- The submitter could after all reasonable solutions have been explored decide to withdraw from the review process. No refund of fees will be possible.

3.7 PUBLICATION OF THE REVIEW

The review outcome (when positive) is published on the ASSA website under the list of tests with adequate evidence for compliance with legislation. Should the public wish to purchase the high-level review report, they can do so for a fee of R500. The review summary can also be published in the African Journal of Psychological Assessment (AJOPA).

Submitters will receive an outcome letter, which specifies the outcome of the review. This letter will be sent by the Senior Editor using a standard template that allows for insertion of details as appropriate.

3.8 RENEWAL OF A CERTIFICATE

The test review certificate is valid for a 10-year period.

3.9 EDITORIAL PANEL REVIEW UPDATE PROCESS

Should the test have undergone substantial changes in the 10-year period before the certificate needs to be renewed, and has an existing test review less than 10 years old, the submitter can submit the updated information to the editorial panel for review, submitting only the changes and updates that have been made, with the relevant review update fee. A decision to renew the test certificate or request a full new review process will be communicated by the editorial panel.

3.10 RESUBMISSION

Once the review reaches the 10-year mark, the submitter will need to resubmit the test for a full review again. The full review process should be followed in this case.

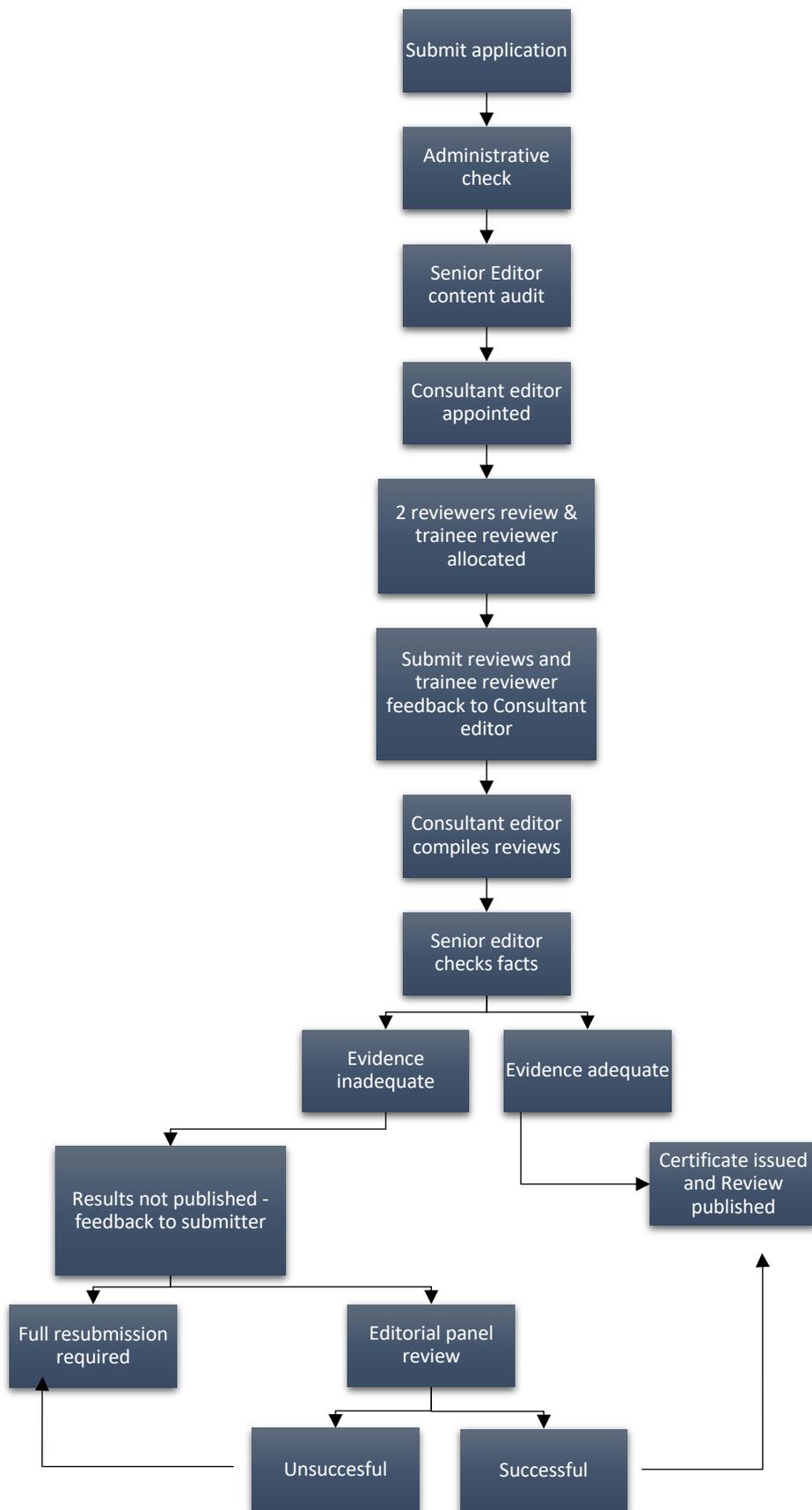


Figure 1. Test review procedure