



Admissions  
Testing Service  
*Measuring Potential*

# CPSQ

Cambridge  
Personal Styles Questionnaire

Supporting values based recruitment  
for healthcare



# What is the Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire®?

The Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire (CPSQ) assesses a range of personal styles of behaving. These personal styles have been identified in liaison with healthcare staff and support values based recruitment for universities and the NHS.

CPSQ can be used to:

- assist in selection where there are large numbers of applicants
- determine whether an applicant's values and behaviours align with the NHS values
- identify areas for development.

## Why use CPSQ?

### A standardised assessment that is fair to all applicants

CPSQ provides a transparent method of assessing values and behaviours, in a standard format suitable for large numbers of applicants. All your applicants are asked the same questions, in the same way, and scoring is objective.

### Reporting tailored to the healthcare sector

The CPSQ competency-based report shows the respondent's score band for seven entry-level, healthcare-related competencies, which are aligned with the NHS values. CPSQ reporting can also be mapped to your organisation's values.

### More accurate results compared to other assessments

CPSQ uses a rating and ranking format. This format is almost twice as accurate as traditional, single statement personality assessments in predicting academic or occupational performance, and equal to or better than assessment centres, structured interviews and situational judgement tests.<sup>1</sup>

### Reinforces your existing selection processes

CPSQ provides a clear framework for assessing values and behaviours, which can supplement your existing selection criteria. Triangulating CPSQ results with other parts of the recruitment process helps to build a broader picture of your applicants. We can provide staff training and support on reading the results report and integrating CPSQ with other parts of your selection process.

### Rigorous development

CPSQ was developed through a 4-year trial with healthcare organisations, including schools of nursing and medical faculties. It is designed to conform to the established, well-researched Five-Factor Model of Personality.

### Developed by education experts

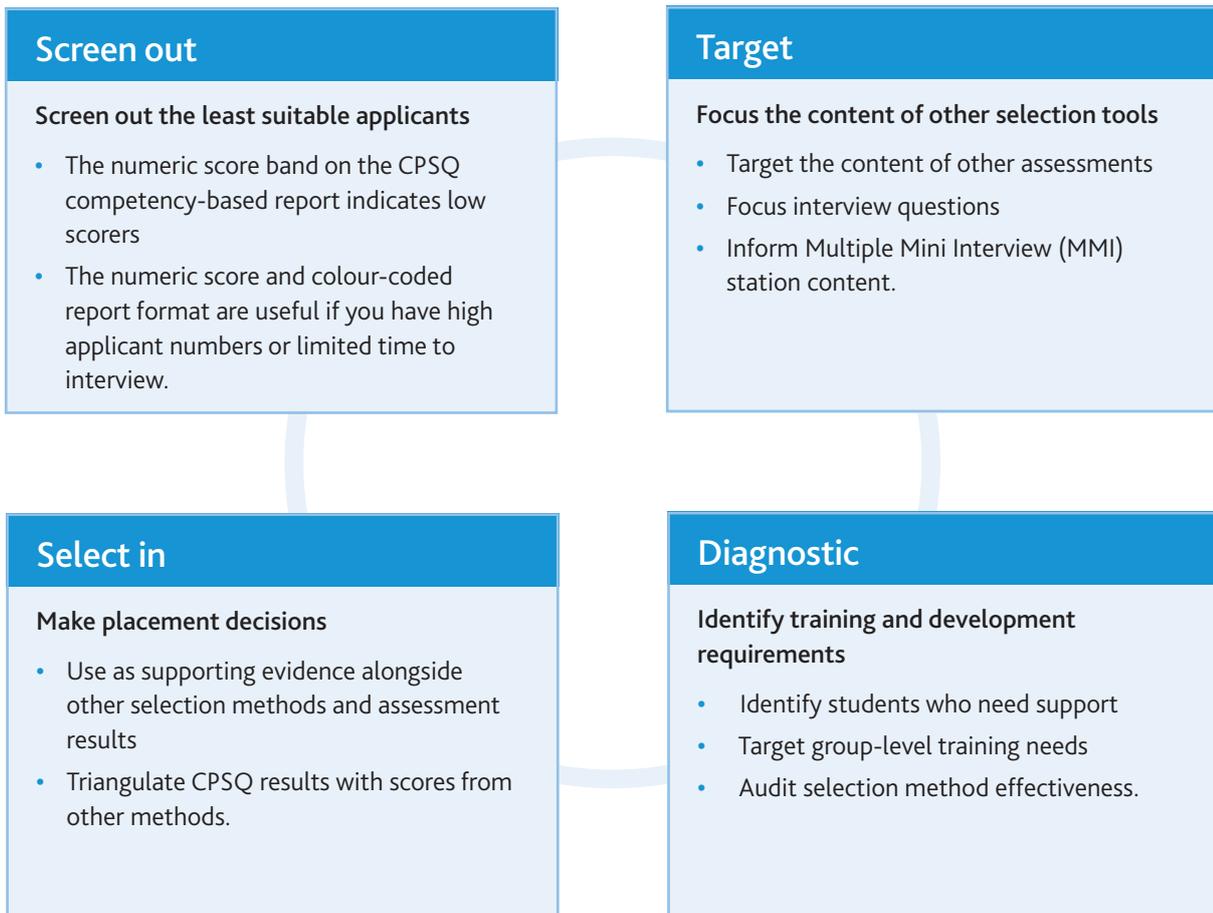
CPSQ is developed by the Admissions Testing Service. We are part of Cambridge English Language Assessment, a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge. We have significant experience in developing assessments. We work extensively with the healthcare sector and are the producers of the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) and the Occupational English Test (OET).

<sup>1</sup> Salgado, J F and Táuriz, G (2014) The Five-Factor Model, forced-choice personality inventories and performance: A comprehensive meta analysis of academic and occupational validity studies, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 23:1, 3–30.

# Using CPSQ for values based recruitment

CPSQ helps your organisation to formally assess values in a standardised, objective and reliable way. It provides easy-to-use results that fit alongside other parts of the selection process.

The diagram below shows the potential uses of CPSQ, based on best practice. CPSQ can help you to:



## Mapped to the NHS values<sup>2</sup>

In order for your organisation to recruit or train according to the NHS values, it is useful to define these values in terms of applicants' behaviours.

CPSQ therefore reports your applicants' behaviours against seven healthcare competency areas, which are based on national healthcare frameworks and aligned to the NHS values.

The following table shows how the NHS values align to the competency areas reported by CPSQ:

NHS values	CPSQ competency areas used in reporting	Definition of CPSQ competency areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compassion</li> <li>Respect and dignity</li> <li>Everyone counts</li> </ul>	<b>Caring and compassion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Puts others first and responds with kindness to distress.</li> <li>Capable of acting with patience and respect, even with the most challenging individuals and patients.</li> </ul>
	<b>Person-centred communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engages with others to develop caring relationships.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working together for patients</li> </ul>	<b>Working well with others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-operative and supportive of the team.</li> <li>Capable of working effectively with others to deliver care.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment to quality of care</li> <li>Improving lives</li> </ul>	<b>Self-management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strives to be excellent in what they do.</li> <li>Backs it up with self-discipline and planning.</li> </ul>
	<b>Safe practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows guidelines, but also possesses a strong sense of social responsibility to alert others if standards are not being met.</li> </ul>
	<b>Engagement with learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keen to develop understanding and learn.</li> <li>Enthusiastic and creative problem solver.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All NHS values</li> </ul>	<b>Coping with demands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resilient and can manage their emotions, enabling them to consistently deliver care and work well with others.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup>The values of the NHS in England. See [www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/thenhs/about/pages/nhscoreprinciples.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/thenhs/about/pages/nhscoreprinciples.aspx)  
CPSQ can also be mapped to other national frameworks.

## Assessment format and content

CPSQ is an online questionnaire. The questions are designed to be suitable for entry-level respondents with no previous healthcare experience. It typically takes 20–30 minutes to complete for native English speakers, or up to 60 minutes for non-native speakers.

The questionnaire contains 164 behavioural-based statements, in sets of four. Each set of four covers a range of personal styles of behaving. Respondents select their level of agreement with each statement:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	In Between	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I persist with even the most boring tasks	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it easy to get to know people	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can be relied on to keep my temper	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to challenge myself by setting difficult goals to achieve	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When a respondent selects the same level of agreement for two or more of the statements, they are then asked to choose which statement is 'More like me' and which is 'Less like me':

	More like me	Less like me
	1	2
I persist with even the most boring tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it easy to get to know people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This ranking of statements helps respondents to reflect on their behaviour, and reduces the ability to over-exaggerate socially desirable qualities – 'faking good'.

# Understanding CPSQ results

A CPSQ competency-based report is generated for each respondent. The 1-page report uses a colour-coded score band (from 1–5), which shows the respondent’s potential fit against the seven competency areas. The colour-coded format makes it easy to scan, to identify areas of concern or for follow-up – useful for selection contexts.

Below is part of a sample competency-based report, with explanations of the key report features:

**1** — **Competency: Caring and compassion**

The applicant’s CPSQ responses suggest that he/she:

- Tends to respond quickly and willingly to requests for help.
- Is attentive to the needs of others.
- Is likely to be kind and sensitive to others’ feelings.
- Tends to be patient and tolerant even with difficult people.

competency potential

1	2	3	4	5
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**2** —

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**3** — **Competency: Person-centred communication**

The applicant’s CPSQ responses suggest that he/she:

- Engages with others in a warm and compassionate manner.
- Is comfortable meeting and getting to know strangers.
- Feels reasonably confident when communicating with others.

competency potential

1	2	3	4	5
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**4** — **Competency: Working well with others**

The applicant’s CPSQ responses suggest that he/she:

- Prefers independent working to collaborating with a team.
- May find it difficult to compromise with the group.
- Does not give way just to avoid conflict.
- Can sometimes show frustration with others.

competency potential

1	2	3	4	5
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**4** —

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**5** — **Competency: Coping with demands**

The applicant’s CPSQ responses suggest that he/she:

- Has a tendency to worry about things.
- Could be more sensitive to work pressures than most students.
- Generally has a positive attitude towards coping with problems and change.
- Recovers or ‘bounces back’ from setbacks as well as most people.

competency potential

1	2	3	4	5
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**6** —

- 1. Competency area:** based on national healthcare frameworks and NHS values.
- 2. Score band:** the number on the score band indicates the alignment between the respondent’s personal styles of behaving and the competency area. The higher the score, the greater a respondent’s potential to effectively learn and develop professional competencies.
- 3. Behavioural descriptions:** these link to the score band and are based on the respondent’s questionnaire responses.
- 4. Amber flag:** this indicates the least fit between the respondent’s personal styles of behaving and the competency area.
- 5. Colour-coded:** Green bullet points indicate strengths within a competency area. Amber bullet points indicate potential areas for development.
- 6.** This score band shows a weaker fit, but there are also green bullet points (see 5 above), which highlight *potential* strengths.

Group reporting is also available. This enables selectors to compare individuals in the applicant pool and to quickly identify respondents who received CPSQ amber flags.

## City University London: Using CPSQ to assess undergraduate applicants

City University London wanted to introduce a robust and valid way of assessing applicants' values before they commenced a health pre-registration course at the University:

“ We wanted to **enhance our existing recruitment process** to ensure we produced high-quality graduates with the academic ability, behaviour and values to meet the needs of Health Education England.

We invited the Admissions Testing Service to discuss the tool with academic staff and we invited staff to take the questionnaire themselves. This helped to give confidence, as staff agreed with their profile results.

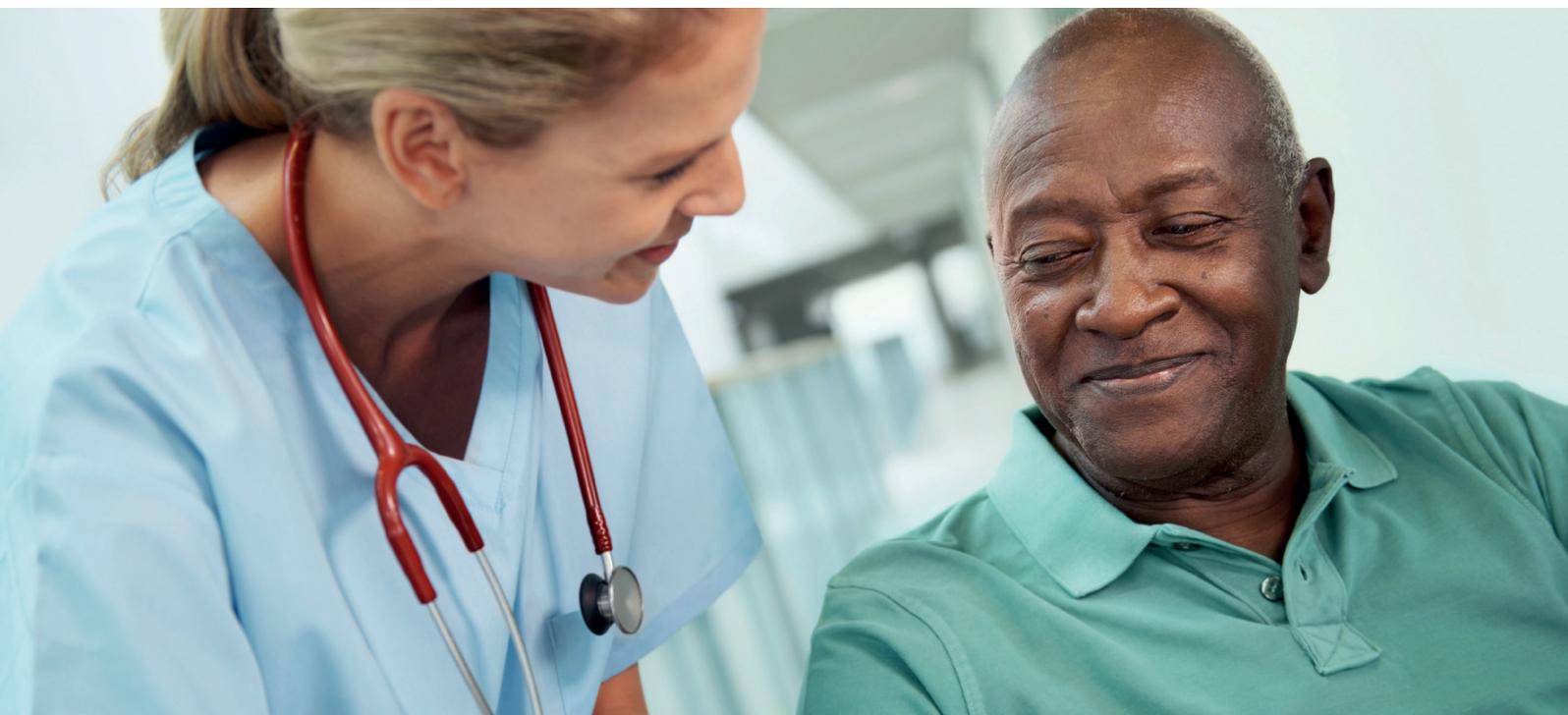
CPSQ has high internal consistency and test–retest reliability. Our **early evidence indicated close alignment with test results and interviewers' assessments of applicants**. In some instances, interviewers could not quite 'put their finger' on why an applicant seemed a poor fit, but when they viewed the profile they were able to agree with its rankings of the various style dimensions.

We will always use the CPSQ in conjunction with literacy and numeracy tests, the personal statement and an interview. In this way, **we will build a broad cognitive/ non-cognitive picture of the applicant on which to make our decision.**<sup>3</sup> ”

Kay Jones

Chief Operating Officer, School of Health Sciences  
City University London

<sup>3</sup> Originally published by Health Education England: <http://hee.nhs.uk/wp-content/blogs.dir/321/files/2014/09/VBR-City-University-London-case-study.pdf>



# About the Admissions Testing Service

The Admissions Testing Service is part of Cambridge English Language Assessment, a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge.

We offer a range of tests and tailored assessment services to support selection and recruitment for educational institutions, professional organisations and governments around the world. Underpinned by robust and rigorous research, our services include:

- assessments in thinking skills
- admissions tests for healthcare and medicine
- behavioural styles assessment
- subject-specific admissions tests.

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