

POSITIVE 5-YEAR REVIEW OUTCOME FOR THE THINKING SKILLS ASSESSMENT (TSA) OXFORD

The 5-year review

In June 2014, the University of Oxford's admissions review board decided to continue the use of the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) for its Experimental Psychology, and Psychology and Philosophy (PP) courses, based on the positive research evidence presented by the University's Department of Experimental Psychology and the Admissions Testing Service.

Dr David Poplewell, Undergraduate Admissions Coordinating Tutor for Psychology at the University, said of the 5-year review outcome: *"The extensive 5-year review supports our use of TSA as a very important additional key indicator, at both the shortlisting stage and when we make our final offers."*

Research focus

The 5-year review project involved staff from the Research and Validation group at Cambridge English Language Assessment, the Department of Experimental Psychology and the Student Data Management and Analysis team at Oxford University, working together over a 6-month period.

TSA is used alongside a range of measures during the application



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process. The review confirmed that TSA scores make a useful contribution to the admissions process, in addition to prior academic achievement (e.g. GCSE grades), and predicted grades.

The review showed that:

1. TSA is a significant predictor of exam performance in the 1st year of the Psychology course.
2. The discrete Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking sections of TSA correlate with

performance in different parts of the course, meaning that each has value for admissions tutors.

3. For applicants who do not have A-level or predicted A-level grades, TSA scores can act as a common benchmark of performance.

4. On average, applicants with similar TSA scores go on to perform equally well on their course, irrespective of gender and school background.

An ongoing programme of research continues to evaluate the technical performance of the test.

About the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)

TSA tests problem-solving and critical thinking skills that are key for success in university study, but are not assessed separately in school-leaving qualifications. The test offers a vital additional selection filter, to help admissions tutors make an informed selection between applicants.

Working with Oxford

The Admissions Testing Service has worked in partnership with the University of Oxford on a number of its pre-interview admissions tests since 2006. Oxford has also used the [BioMedical Admissions Test \(BMAT\)](#) since 2003 for entry to its biomedical and medical courses.

The University's Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) course piloted TSA in 2007, and has been using the test results as part of the shortlisting process since 2008. An additional Writing Task component was added at the University's request.

Six more courses at Oxford have since made TSA an integral part of the admissions process. This includes a number of courses with a Psychology component, including Experimental Psychology and Psychology and Philosophy (PP). The Department of Experimental Psychology trialled the test in 2008 before adopting it in 2009.

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. It offers 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, its services include:

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

Interested in finding out more? Contact our Stakeholder Relations team to discuss your admissions testing requirements:

Stakeholder Relations
Admissions Testing Service

Cambridge English
Language Assessment
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU
United Kingdom

+44 (0)1223 552593
atsinfo@cambridgeenglish.org
www.admissionstesting.service.org