



Australian Government

Department of Defence
Intelligence & Security

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

To work in some areas of Defence, it is necessary to complete a Psychological Assessment. This assessment is a mandatory requirement for work in the Defence intelligence agencies, as well as other areas of Defence that handle, or have access to, sensitive information. This requirement applies to all categories of employees in such work areas, including Australian Public Service (APS) personnel, Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and contractors. Psychological assessments are conducted to determine suitability to work in a high security environment and/or to hold a Top Secret (Positive Vetting) (TSPV) security clearance. You must obtain and maintain a TSPV security clearance to work in designated areas of Defence, including the Defence intelligence agencies.

The Defence intelligence agencies comprise the Defence Signals Directorate, the Defence Intelligence Organisation and the Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation. These agencies belong to the Australian Intelligence Community and, as such, may exchange psychological information with other agencies in the community on security matters. If a Psychological Assessment is being conducted for a Defence intelligence agency, written consent to the exchange of information to allow this will be sought at the time of the assessment. Written consent will also be sought to allow relevant considerations from the Psychological Assessment to be provided to the appropriate person (eg selection delegate or manager) for use in the recruitment decision-making process. Refusal to provide this consent will prevent the Psychological Assessment and security clearance processes from proceeding.

The Psychological Assessment is an integrated assessment tool which comprises the completion of a consent form, written psychological tests, a face-to-face interview(s) with a registered psychologist, and a written report completed by the interviewing psychologist. You may be asked to participate in further psychological testing if required. The assessment is administered in a manner which ensures informed consent, fair dealing with all applicants and employees, and the greatest possible degree of privacy and transparency of process.

Before you submit an application you should consider your own preparedness for questions that may include the following topics: personal relationships, living circumstances, personal values, financial situation, physical and mental health history including substance use, and any civil and/or military record. The process is necessarily more intrusive than you will encounter in most other employment applications but it is important that you be honest and accurate in disclosing details about yourself. If you feel uncomfortable about having to disclose such detail then please think carefully before applying.

Your written consent will also be sought to allow your personal information collected as part of the Psychological Assessment to be used for psychological research purposes. Refusal to provide consent has no bearing on the conduct or outcome of the Psychological Assessment and security clearance processes.

It is important that you do not discuss details of any aspect of the Psychological Assessment with others, including details of the psychological questionnaires, your responses or the interview. If you are an APS or ADF member, you are required under the Public Service Regulations and Defence Instructions not to disclose official information, including information regarding the Psychological Assessment. If you are not an APS or ADF member, you will be asked not to disclose such information.

Feedback

With regard to your psychological testing, you will have the opportunity to clarify your responses with the psychologist at the time of the psychological interview.

Applicants may request feedback on the Psychological Assessment in the context of the selection criteria as part of the merit selection process. If you are currently employed in the Australian Intelligence Community or the ADF, you will be provided with feedback on your Psychological Assessment if the outcome has an adverse bearing on your current employment.

Privacy and Access to Personal Information

The *Privacy Act 1988* (the Privacy Act) imposes obligations on the Department of Defence in relation to the collection, storage, access, alteration, use and disclosure of personal information¹. These obligations are set out in Section 14 of the Privacy Act as the Information Privacy Principles.

Your application and the personal information you provide will be handled in the strictest confidence. The Department of Defence is required to ensure, as far as possible, that the personal information collected is relevant to the purpose for which it is collected. Your personal information may only be used or disclosed for other purposes in accordance with the Privacy Act. Circumstances that would require this include enforcement of the criminal law, where required or authorised by law, or to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life or health.

The Psychological Assessment is conducted by registered psychologists in accordance with the Australian Psychological Society Code of Ethics. You will be able to confirm and, if necessary, correct your personal information with the psychologist at the time of your interview. Information obtained through the assessment process is stored and managed in accordance with the *Archives Act 1983* and the Privacy Act.

If you have undertaken a Psychological Assessment conducted by the Department of Defence, you are able to request access to your personal information under the Privacy Act and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act). Notwithstanding this, the Defence intelligence agencies have exemptions under the FOI Act that may limit access to Psychological Assessment material. Other exemptions may also apply.

Review Mechanisms

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Psychological Assessment process, you may seek a review of the actions and the decision taken by the agency. The process for such a review will depend on your current employment. Under Section 33 of the *Public Service Act 1999*, an APS member may lodge an application for a Review of Action under the Public Service Regulations 1999. An ADF member can appeal through the Redress of Grievance system under the Defence Force Regulations. If you are not a member of the APS or ADF, or you are a Senior Executive Service member of the APS, you may request a review by writing to the Director of the relevant Defence intelligence agency, if applicable, or the Secretary of the Department of Defence.

If you seek a review of the actions and decisions taken by a Defence intelligence agency, this does not preclude another Defence intelligence agency from proceeding with recruitment action.

¹ Section 6 of the Privacy Act defines 'personal information' as information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database), whether true or not, and whether recorded in a material form or not, about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained, from the information or opinion.

More information on review mechanisms can be found at the following websites:

APS

Australian Public Service Commission <http://www.apsc.gov.au/merit/index.html>

Defence internet www.defence.gov.au/fr/cr/apscomplaints.htm

ADF

Defence internet www.defence.gov.au/fr/cr/militarycomplaints.htm