

IAAP Division 2 Newsletter

Testing and Assessment News from 'Down Under'



1. Survey of Australian Psychologists (2024)

In early 2021 a small team from the then Australian Psychological Society (APS) Tests and Testing Expert Group (TTEG) commenced an important project resulting in the late 2024 publication of a study into the attitudes of Australian psychologists to psychological testing, addressing several themes in the process:

Macqueen, P., Abbott, J. A. M., Khawaja, N. G., Mathews, R., Scott, D., & Watt, B. D. (2024). Psychological testing in the profession of psychology: an Australian study. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 76(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2024.2419682>

The survey was administered over a period of around seven months and was prompted by an initial desire to learn more of the perceived training and CPD needs of Australian psychologists with regards to psychological testing and assessment. The survey was bolstered greatly by the inclusion of much of the EFPA/ITC instrument as reported in various academic articles over the past 15 years. However, our survey added extensive demographic and qualitative information, and it is hoped that further papers will follow. It should be noted that the survey design and data collection predated the rise of Generative AI in late 2023. The last broad, but very limited, survey of test use by Australian psychologists was undertaken in 1988, and so this 2024 publication is a very timely, and perhaps historical, contribution to this important topic.

Peter Macqueen (the first author for this paper) provided a short presentation on the survey results at EAWOP 2023 in Katowice, Poland. Furthermore, this recent 2024 paper follows a chapter on the history of testing and assessment in the region:

O’Gorman, J., St George, R., & Macqueen, P. (2022). A brief history of testing and assessment in Oceania. In S. Laher (Ed.), *International histories of psychological assessment* (pp. 269–294). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108755078.016>

2. APS Tests and Testing Expert Group: and the demise of a country-based test commission

The APS Tests and Testing Expert Group was formed in December 2011, after a decades long hiatus. In a previous incarnation, a similar body was headed at one time by Professor John Keats, a quantitative psychologist who was also a former President of the APS as well as the International Test Commission (ITC). The TTEG was a relatively small but diverse group consisting of professionals selected based on their expertise and focus upon the field of psychological testing, with such practitioners, educators, researchers and publishers drawn from clinical, organisational, educational, forensic and health psychology.

Despite the productive contributions of the TTEG, this body was disbanded by the APS in May 2023. It is difficult to fathom the reasoning behind this decision of the APS. Country-based test commissions such as the TTEG have an important role to play in providing evidence-based and best practice guidelines and advice to psychologists, who are usually paying members of the parent body. The APS is considered the peak, but not sole, professional body representing Australian

psychologists, with membership of around 27,000. Bodies such as the TTEG have a role in distilling various materials, including international documents, and adapting these to meet local demands and requirements. An excellent potential example relates to the 2023 release of the ITC/ATP Guidelines for Technology-Based Assessment. This 163-page document <https://www.intestcom.org/page/16> is very comprehensive, albeit published prior to the emergence of Generative AI. However, it is much too comprehensive for the vast majority of those operating within the testing ecosystem, and certainly for practitioners. This is where a test commission can create value for members of the relevant professional body by developing an accessible document of around 15 pages.

Other projects to which a test commission could turn their attention include providing guidelines on test use for neurodiverse individuals or other populations; or providing input on the recently published draft EFPA Test Review Model that will replace the current 2013 version. Consultation submissions for this updated model closed 31 January 2025. <https://tinyurl.com/y2dnmzk4>. The 2013 EFPA model has been used in Australia either via self-assessment, or by psychologists evaluating a suite of tests as used in a work setting. Interestingly, an Australian PhD qualified organisational psychologist was assisted greatly in applying the 2013 Test Review Model by completing several modules from the ITC Learning Centre. <https://learning.intestcom.org/>. Many of these modules are available free of charge to Individual members of the ITC, and accordingly this keen psychometrician and human factors psychologist made use of his ITC membership.

Psychological testing is a core competence and mandated as such under the Australian psychology profession regulator: the Psychology Board of Australia. The BPS has its Psychological Testing Centre and the American Psychological Association has a Committee on Psychological Tests and Assessment. The EFPA, comprised of 30+ psychology associations, has the Board of Assessment. Similar bodies exist in other countries e.g., the Brazilian Institute of Psychological Assessment <https://www.ibapnet.org.br/> and South Africa's The Psychometrics Committee of the Professional Board for Psychology. (It is acknowledged this committee is associated with the regulator rather than the professional society, although the recent advent of Assessment Standards South Africa <https://www.assa.co.za/> should hopefully broaden the South African focus beyond regulation and test certification matters).

A peak professional body has an obligation to provide appropriate resources to assist their members (psychologists) in their effective and ethical use of psychological tests. The view of some psychologists that psychological test use should be restricted to (registered) psychologists is at odds with the absence, let alone cancellation, of such a body as the APS TTEG. The notion floated that the TTEG could be supplanted by a loosely formed APS 'interest group' (alongside many other APS interest groups) would seem to be quite fanciful to anyone with reasonable knowledge of psychological testing, and the challenges and issues in play.

It perhaps goes without saying that much attention is now focused on the impact of technology (and particularly Generative AI) on society in general, and this includes all elements within the testing ecosystem. Those countries and bodies with a dedicated test commission are likely to be better placed to provide consistent, quality guidance to members using psychological tests as part of their practice or scholarly activities.

3. Community of practice: the potential to partially fill the void?

The clear void created by the absence of the APS TTEG may be filled, but in part only, by a community of practice model. Depending upon its structure and membership 'rules', such groups can provide a great forum for a small group interested in particular themes. In June 2023, following the initiative and under the leadership of Professor Pat Dunlop (Curtin University WA, and an Associate Editor of the International Journal of Selection & Assessment), a small group of around 10 was invited to become inaugural members of a body to be known as ANTAPAS: Australian Network of Talent Assessment Professionals and Scholars. The group has subsequently held quarterly meetings (of two hours each via MS Teams or Zoom) and is composed principally of organisational psychologists in scholarly, publishing or practitioner roles.

Apart from introductory round-the-table updates from members, the following topics have been presented by a lead member and thence discussed by the group:

AI Bias Audits

Use of Generative AI by candidates during assessment

Science-Practice Gap

Assessment and Neurodiversity

Survey of Australian Psychologists' Attitudes to testing (item 1 above)

Various shorter segments including Values research by one member

ANTAPAS members do not need to be members of a professional society such as the APS, thus expanding the field from which members can be drawn. In due course it is possible ANTAPAS may apply for Associate Member status with the ITC; and consideration will be given to how this network can grow without compromising its focus or quality.

4. APS IOP 2024 (Perth): Testing and assessment content...and ICAP 2026 (Florence)

The APS organisational psychology conference (IOP) is held biennially. From 1995-2019 it was held in July in the odd calendar years, thus avoiding a clash with the large international psychology conferences of ICAP (under IAAP) and ICP (under IUPsyS), also held in July. COVID was responsible for the cancellation of ICAP 2022 (Beijing) and the postponement of IOP 2021 to 2022; and the APS has subsequently moved these IOP conferences to the even years. Fortunately, the Perth organisers of IOP 2024 settled on an October date, thus avoiding a potential July clash with ICP 2024 (Prague). It is hoped that the organisers of IOP 2026 (to be held probably in Sydney or Melbourne) will also avoid July as this would clash with ICAP 2026 (Florence) and dilute the quality (and profit!) of Australia's IOP 2026.

Note: ICAP 2026 has just opened the window for abstract submissions. <https://www.icap2026.org/>. At this conference, the Division 2 baton will be passed from Dragos Iliescu (Romania) to Paula Elosua (Spain). It is hoped that amongst a plethora of quality submissions, Division 2 will shine. It will be intriguing to see if any submissions across the conference can reflect the cultural heritage of Florence and its reputation as the 'jewel of the Renaissance' in the western civilisation tradition.

And it would be remiss of me to omit: at ICAP 2014 (Paris) the number of registrants from Australia was only outstripped by France, and just ahead of registrant numbers from the UK and USA.

Back to IOP 2024 and Perth: relevant testing presentations included the following:

- Filip Lievens (keynote): *Talent Assessment in the 21st Century: Progress and Challenges*.

- ANTAPAS (panel event): *Talent Assessment: AI & Technology – issues and potential developments.*
- Christopher Nye (Editor, International Journal of Testing): *Meta-analyses of personality and leadership relationships.*
- Pat Dunlop: *Rethinking assessment validity in the advent of human-co-pilot partnerships.*
- Jaymon Kirk: *Increasing the use of evidence-based assessment by manipulating social changes.*

Conclusion:

There are challenges and opportunities ahead for those Australians working in the field of psychological and educational testing and assessment. However, we are not alone in this regard and moreover we all can engage with overseas test commissions and international bodies such as IAAP (Division 2) and the ITC.

Peter Macqueen FAPS
(Member IAAP since 1994)
Brisbane, Australia