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1.0 Key Information about the Saville Assessment Workplace English Tests

- The Workplace English tests are a suite of short assessments designed to assess workplace English language proficiency in individuals for whom English is not their first language.
- They are designed to assess the ability to understand workplace-relevant sentences. For each item candidates are asked to fill in a missing word from a choice of four answer options:
 - e.g. “The meeting will be [?] at midday”
held in that start
- There are five different versions of the Workplace English tests, designed for five different industry sectors (Operations; Hospitality; Customer Service; Office; Healthcare).
- There are 33 items in each test, of which 24 are industry-specific and nine are general workplace items (the general items are shared across each version for comparison purposes).
- Each industry sector has a test available in an invited access (IA) and a supervised access (SA) form.
- The IA and SA versions contain items reviewed as being equivalent in difficulty.
- The time limit for each test is 20 minutes.

2.0 Why Use the Saville Assessment Workplace English Tests?

- They are far shorter than the industry standard and can be used for efficient screening/checking of proficiency in workplace English.
- They are designed specifically for the workplace and are built using workplace-relevant content.
- There are five different versions designed to target different workplace industries.
- They specifically target reading comprehension and the application of written English - candidates are not required to complete lengthy spoken and/or written tests for their workplace English to be assessed.
- There is the reassurance of a supervised parallel form for each test which carries several advantages (e.g. it permits re-testing to verify candidate identity if this is required).
- They have been compared to the reading components of a range of established tests benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

3.0 Theoretical Background

The earliest examples of formal English language assessment date back over one hundred years, although English language proficiency had likely been assessed from much earlier on. By the early 1900s the Cambridge assessment center had been established and in 1913 released the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE), which was succeeded by the First Certificate in English in 1939. Similar work was also being conducted in the United States in the 1950s and one of the earliest large-scale assessments to be released in the US was the Educational Testing Service's Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in 1961. Most tests at the time were aimed at students and were often used by university and colleges as entry tests.

With the increased immigration of workers into English-speaking countries, demand for assessments of English language proficiency was stoked. Tests began to be developed in the latter half of the twentieth century which were designed specifically for industrial use and to measure Workplace English at work. More recent tests have included the Business Language Testing Service (BULATS) which was designed to assess the English language skills of current and future employees. Modern English language assessments are used in a wide range of public and private sector businesses and contexts, including for immigration purposes and for entry into the armed forces. Many tests are complex and often involve reading, writing, speaking and listening components. Commonly used tests include BULATS, TOEIC, TOEFL and a number of different ESOL certificates.

It had also become clear by the 1980s that the increased globalization of many businesses necessitated international standards and agreement on levels of Workplace English. In 1989 the International Language Testing System (IELTS) was produced, aiming to provide the first international standards. Between 1998 and 2000 the Council of Europe developed the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR), which is used today as a common system of foreign language testing and certification. It categorizes candidates according to three separate ability levels (Basic, Independent and Proficient) which break down into more specific classifications and the system is used consistently across all European languages.

The various English language assessments have evolved into a range of long and complex testing suites designed to provide an extensive overview of an individual's English language proficiency. Many of these tests have been extensively researched and benchmarked against the international standards outlined above. Because of this, typical completion times tend to be in the range of one to two hours per test. For some testing suites, there are multiple components (speaking, writing, listening, reading), some of which require heavy resources such as an individual assessor for each candidate.

Before the Saville Assessment Workplace English tests, there was a need for valid, simple and efficient tests which could be used to quickly check an individual's English language proficiency specifically for workplace contexts. The Workplace English tests therefore fill a niche in the market for short screening tools, in contrast to resource-heavy and costly tests.

4.0 Construction

4.1 Development Goal

The starting point for the development of any assessment must be a clear understanding of the criterion (outcome) it is designed to measure. The primary assessment goal of the Saville Assessment Workplace English tests is to accurately measure the workplace-relevant English language ability of those without English as their first language. The tests are also designed to be as fair as possible in and to be internationally applicable.

Every assessment should also be easy to use, acceptable to participants, attractive, and applicable to today's modern workplace. The Saville Assessment Workplace English range has been designed to ensure that it is easily accessible and understood by the end user, in terms of administration, scoring and reporting.

4.2 The Development Process

During the development of the Workplace English range, the following features and characteristics were focused on:

Security for Online Use: The provision of online and separate supervised versions of tests helps to ensure that online administrations can be followed up by supervised secure use. This provides a mechanism for safeguarding against the selection of individuals who might have received help on the test or even had someone else complete the test on their behalf.

High Face Validity, User-Friendliness and High-Quality Design: Users of tests should be impressed by the quality of test materials, supporting documentation and feedback reports as the standard of these materials can influence their perception of the organization using the tests. For this same reason, test items should also appear relevant. The Saville Assessment Workplace English range were designed to be modern, user-friendly and of the highest quality for users.

Fairness: Care was taken to include only materials suitable for test-users regardless of their culture, country of origin, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religious belief. This includes avoiding content which might favor one test taker over another (e.g. colloquialism).

Appropriate Difficulty Level: Tests were designed so that the majority of individuals could attempt all or most of the questions, and with the average number of correct answers tending to be around half or more of the items correct. This helped ensure that the test could differentiate effectively between the most and least able candidates at the intended level of difficulty. Based on trialing data, a generous time limit for each test was also applied.

Length: The Workplace English range was designed to comprise valid single tests which are shorter than the industry standard. This makes for a more efficient assessment process and more effectively uses both a candidate's and an assessor's time.

4.3 Item Writing

Inspiration for the test content came from various materials used in different industries including newspapers, company presentations and documentation, industry-specific magazines, press releases and web pages.

Initially item writers produced content for the trial versions of each of the tests. The item writers were a team of four psychologists, including experienced psychometricians. Item writing began in January 2010 and, following several cycles of writing, reviewing and re-writing, was completed by July.

Items were written specifically with the five different industries (Office, Healthcare, Hospitality, Customer Service and Operations) in mind. General workplace content was also considered, so additional items were written which could be used across all the different versions.

In total, around 500 items were produced during the item writing phases and approximately 170 were discarded during the cycles of item writing and reviewing prior to item finalization.

4.4 Item Review and Selection

There were several different review stages which formed an iterative process by which items were written, reviewed and then re-written and added to, or removed from, the original bank of approximately 500 items. The first review was conducted by two non-native English speakers not involved in any area of psychometric assessment and the second, third and fourth review phases were conducted by a range of industry professionals, including experienced psychologists, native English speakers and non-native English speakers. Between each review stage, feedback was used to amend, add and/or remove items in the trialing bank. At all review stages, reviewers were instructed to do the following:

- Respond to each item as if they were completing the test (trying to get the correct answer);
- Record how difficult they found each item, on a 1-5 scale where 1=easiest; 5=hardest;
- Record how long (in seconds) each item took them to complete;
- Provide any other comments about each item, including whether they felt there were any ambiguities in the item (i.e. the correct answer wasn't clear or more than one answer was possible), whether there was any objectionable content in the item and whether they judged the item to be workplace-relevant and motivating to complete.

Following the iterative review process, the difficulty ratings and actual responses collected during the review stage were used to build ten different tests with equivalent levels of difficulty. 33 items were selected for each version of the Workplace Proficiency test. Amongst these were nine general items used across the different versions, included to aid comparison of scores between the different tests. Each invited access version contained 24 industry-specific and the same nine general items which were balanced for difficulty. Each supervised access version also contained 24 industry-specific and nine general items, with the general items common to the supervised access versions being equivalent but distinct from those in the invited access versions.

5.0 Benchmarking

Once the content of the Workplace English tests was finalized a sample of six individuals, including four psychologists and three individuals for whom English was a second language, completed all ten of the Saville Assessment Workplace English tests along with the relevant reading comprehension sections of several other tests currently on the market (Bulats, ESOL, ETS-TOEFL and ETS-TOEIC). As well as providing their answers to all of these tests, they were also asked to rate the difficulty of every item using a 1- 5 scale (1 being reserved for the easiest items, 5 being for the hardest).

Following data collection, the tests were scored up and the difficulty ratings were averaged for each item and across all items in each test. These calculated scores were then used to compare the Saville Assessment Workplace English tests to the other English language assessments, according to the scores achieved and the difficulty ratings. The average difficulty across each of the Saville Assessment Workplace English tests ranged from 1.5 for the Hospitality and Operations versions and 1.65 for the Healthcare version.

Using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), against which the other assessments had been benchmarked, it was possible to estimate where the Saville Assessment Workplace English tests were likely to be positioned according to the CEFR levels. The aggregated average difficulty rating across all the Saville Assessment tests was equivalent to those items designed for level B1 on the ESOL test and the items designed to constitute approximately 50% of the full range of difficulty on BULATS.

The Saville Assessment tests were estimated to cover the range from A1-B2 on the CEFR and so can be said to be compared to the reading elements of other tests which have been benchmarked against these levels of the CEFR. While the Saville Assessment Workplace English range does not confer qualification at any level of the CEFR, based on this benchmarking those who score highly on the Workplace English tests are likely to be able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions relating to their place of employment. Several competency descriptions from other tests suggest that candidates achieving this level of performance are likely to understand the main ideas of complex communication and tend to have a “generally effective” command of English.

6.0 Available Versions

The IA and SA versions of each test contain items which have been developed to be equivalent in difficulty but different in content.



Workplace English: Operations (IA Online)
Workplace English: Operations (SA Online)
Workplace English: Hospitality (IA Online)
Workplace English Hospitality (SA Online)
Workplace English: Customer Service (IA Online)
Workplace English: Customer Service (SA Online)
Workplace English: Office (IA Online)
Workplace English: Office (SA Online)
Workplace English: Healthcare (IA Online)
Workplace English: Healthcare (SA Online)

7.0 Workplace English Sample Report



Report
Sample Candidate



Workplace English
Office



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About this Report

This report is based on Workplace English - Office, an online assessment of the ability of Sample Candidate to identify the appropriate missing word for workplace English sentences.

When reading this report, please remember that it is based on the information gained from the assessment session only. It describes performance on this particular assessment, rather than performance at work or study.

The information contained within this report is confidential and every effort should be made to ensure that it is stored in a secure place.

The report is based on the results of the online assessment that the respondent was invited to complete under unsupervised conditions. The identity of the actual respondent has not been verified by a test administrator, so a supervised verification assessment is recommended for high-stake decision making.

This report was produced using Saville Assessment software systems and has been generated electronically. Saville Assessment do not guarantee that it has not been changed or edited. We can accept no liability for the consequences of the use of this report.



Workplace English Profile

The profile shows the score achieved by Sample Candidate as well as the percentage of items they attempted.

Results

Score **Moderate (88% Correct)**

The candidate is likely to be able to understand and use a moderate amount of workplace English

Percentage Score



Speed Sample Candidate attempted 91% of the items within the time available. If a candidate has only attempted a small percentage of the items, their score on the test may have been limited by a low prioritisation of speed.

Interpretation Guidelines

The candidate's performance has been benchmarked against independent criteria using a performance framework developed by Saville Assessment. This assessment is based on English usage on administrative roles, such as in public or private sector offices.

Advanced (Scores of 90% or higher)

The candidate is likely to be able to understand and use a wide range of workplace English vocabulary to communicate a message

Moderate (Scores of 80% or higher)

The candidate is likely to be able to understand and use a moderate amount of workplace English to communicate a message

Basic (Scores of 50% or higher)

The candidate is likely to be able to understand and use a basic amount of workplace English to communicate a message

Limited (Scores of 30% or higher)

The candidate is likely to be able to understand and use a limited amount of workplace English to communicate a message

Poor (Scores of less than 30%)

The candidate is likely to be able to understand and use little or no workplace English

8.0 References

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