

The Standard Entrance Test

for the Scottish Police Forces.

Guidance Notes

This document is a brief guide to the *Standard Entrance Test* which is used as part of the recruitment procedure for the Scottish police forces. It explains the background to the test, its contents, and how it is marked. There is also a set of specimen test papers available for candidates to study before they take the test.

Why do the Police Forces use a *Standard Entrance Test*?

Scottish police forces have a policy of open recruitment. This means that recruits come from a variety of backgrounds, cover a wide range of ages and can have very different educational experiences in their past. The police forces do not wish to restrict entrance by demanding that new recruits must have certain previous qualifications, but they do need to make sure that recruits have the skills needed to benefit from the training which they will have to undergo. Therefore they use the *Standard Entrance Test* as a check to see if recruits are likely to be able to cope with the academic part of the training.

All the Scottish police forces have agreed to use the same test so that they can apply consistent standards across Scotland.

The *Standard Entrance Test* is only one part of the recruitment procedure. Passing it does not guarantee that candidates will be accepted into the Police.

How was the test developed?

The *Standard Entrance Test* was developed by a team from the Scottish Council for Research in Education and is the result of a long process of investigation into the requirements of new police officers. Previous job analyses of the work of police officers were used, the work logs of serving officers were examined in detail, there was extensive consultation with the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan and advice was taken from a number of representative police organisations and from training officers in the police forces. All of this was to try to make sure that the contents of the

test are relevant to the work that police officers will do and the skills they will require to benefit from their training.

The tests have been piloted with new recruits, and with over one thousand actual candidates.

What is in the *Standard Entrance Test*?

There are three test papers which make up the *Standard Entrance Test*. These test:

1. *Language*
2. *Number*
3. *Information Handling.*

There are also several versions of the test. They all cover the same skills and topics and are designed to be the same level of difficulty. Having different versions of the test allows for the possibility of re-sitting the test for unsuccessful candidates who wish to try again, and it also helps maintain the confidentiality of the actual questions which candidates are asked.

Below are brief descriptions of the contents of the test papers. The specimen test papers also help to give an idea of what candidates are asked to do. These can only be a guide to the content of the test. The actual questions in the real test will be different.

Language

There are four sections in the *Language* test paper.

The first section concerns word choice. Each question presents a sentence with one word or phrase missing and a choice of four words or phrases to complete the sentence correctly. The choice of the correct word or

phrase might depend on the spelling, grammar or meaning of the word or phrase.

The second section is a 'cloze' test in which a passage of prose is presented with a number of words missing. A list of possible words to complete the passage is given. Candidates have to put the correct words into the spaces.

The third section presents a number of sentences which have been broken up into phrases and jumbled up. Candidates have to re-assemble the sentence by putting the phrases into the correct order.

The fourth section consists of two short passages each of which has a series of questions designed to test the candidates' understanding of the content of the passages.

Number

The *Number* paper consists of twenty questions in one section.

Some of the questions are traditional 'sums', presented in figures, and designed to test basic arithmetic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division). Other questions are in words and may involve ratios, percentages, time calculations (using both 12 and 24 hour clocks), financial calculations, speed and distance calculations, or scale measurements.

Information Handling

There are four sections in the *Information Handling* paper. They are designed to test candidates' ability to understand information presented in various ways, and to transfer information accurately from one form of presentation to another.

One section consists of a graph or chart with a series of questions about the information which it presents. The graph could be either a line graph, bar chart or pie chart

Two sections consist of information presented in a table. These may include things like crime statistics, itemised telephone bills or shift rotas. Candidates are asked to extract and interpret the information in the tables.

One section will consist of some type of form (for example an expenses form or an order form) which candidates have to complete using information which they are given.

How long does each paper take?

There are three test papers in the *Standard Entrance Test*. Candidates have 30 minutes to complete each paper. There are therefore one-and-a-half hours of testing in all, although the full session will take longer depending on the amount of time between papers, and the administrative arrangements in the test centre.

Marking

There are two important things to note about the marking of the *Standard Entrance Test*:

1. candidates must pass each paper
2. the pass mark for each paper is deliberately set higher than 50%.

Each paper tests different skills, and each of them is required by new recruits. Therefore it would make no sense to add the marks from the separate papers together and apply an overall pass mark. Candidates must pass each paper separately.

The skills which are being tested are important if candidates are going to be able to benefit from their later training. Therefore candidates must show that they can do them reasonably consistently.

The marking for each paper is:

1. the *Language* paper is marked out of 40 and candidates must score 30 to pass
2. the *Number* paper is marked out of 20 and candidates must score 13 to pass
3. the *Information Handling* paper is marked out of 24 and candidates must score 16 to pass.

All the test papers have a marking column down one side of the page. The number of marks for each question, or part of question, are shown in brackets in this column.

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