

# Online assessments candidate guide

This guidance contains information on online assessments for applicants who have been invited to take part and those wanting to find out more.

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## Introduction

This guide sets out:

- what the online assessments involve
- technical requirements for the exercises
- how you will be assessed
- how you can prepare for the online assessment process

We recommend you take the time to read this guide before starting the assessment and use this to aid your preparation.

We wish you the best of luck with the process.

## What are the College of Policing online assessments?

The College of Policing online assessments include a selection of exercises used to assess candidates' suitability for policing. These exercises are mandatory assessments designed specifically for initial police recruitment.

Throughout the exercises, you will be assessed against the competencies and values that are important for effective police constables. The competency and values framework (CVF) sets out the behaviours expected in policing. For initial police recruitment, the competencies review criteria is set at level 1.

- [Find out more about the CVF](#)

You do not need any prior knowledge of policing or the police role to complete the online assessment exercises.

If you are unsure of your application process, please contact the force you have applied to directly who will advise on the process and timeframes.

You can review the role profile of a police constable for your own interest.

- [View the police constable role profile](#)

## Your journey as a candidate

The online assessments consist of the sift and the online assessment process, which is to be taken in a timeframe agreed between the College and the force you have applied to. The sift is completed first, followed by the online assessment process.

The process is broken up as follows.

Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You apply and register to your recruiting force.</li><li>• Your recruiting force completes application and eligibility checks.</li></ul>
Sift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You will complete either an in-force sift or the national sift. The sift allows you to demonstrate your suitability for entry to the online assessment process.</li><li>• The sift you complete will depend on the force you have applied to.</li></ul>

## Online assessment process

The online assessment process consists of the:

- competency-based interview (CBI)
- written exercise
- briefing exercise

Each exercise is described in further detail in the following sections.

You will receive a confirmation email from the assessment platform confirming that your CBI and briefing exercises have been submitted.

You will not receive a confirmation email after completing the written exercise.

You will receive your results for the online assessment process at a later date. Your recruiting force will provide you with more information on the specific timeline.

## Process breakdown – sift

### National sift – if applicable

The national sift consists of two exercises. These reflect the competencies and values relevant to the role of a police constable. You will be asked to complete both:

- a situational judgement test (SJT)
- a behavioural styles questionnaire (BSQ)

You will receive one invitation email with a link that takes you to the national sift platform.

### Situational judgement test (SJT)

The SJT is designed to assess your judgement and decision-making in work-relevant situations against the CVF. The situations are presented to reflect the types of scenarios and actions police constables may face in their role.

You will be presented with 15 scenarios that police constables may face in their role. For each scenario, you will be given four actions. You will need to rate the effectiveness of each action in addressing the scenario.

During the SJT, we encourage you to:

- rate all of the actions presented for each scenario. You must rate all actions before moving on to the next scenario
- rate each action independently of the other actions
- take time to familiarise yourself with the rating scale, which will be provided in the exercise

### **Completion time**

This exercise is untimed. However, this is expected to take approximately 30 minutes.

### **CVF competencies assessed**

The CVF competencies and values that will be assessed are:

- analyse critically
- innovative and open-minded
- take ownership
- emotionally aware
- collaborative
- deliver, support, inspire

### **Behavioural styles questionnaire (BSQ)**

The BSQ is designed to explore your typical behaviour and preferences at work.

During the BSQ, we encourage you to:

- think about your actual behaviour at work when considering statements
- be as honest as possible when responding to the statements

You will be presented with 80 statements regarding your typical behaviour and preferences at work. You will need to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

### Completion time

This exercise is untimed. However, this is expected to take approximately 20 minutes.

### CVF competencies and values assessed

The CVF competencies and values that will be assessed are:

- analyse critically
- innovative and open-minded
- take ownership
- emotionally aware
- collaborative
- deliver, support, inspire
- integrity
- transparency
- public service
- impartiality

### In-force sift – if applicable

Depending on the force you apply to, you may be asked to complete an in-force sifting process. Your recruiting force can provide you with more details on what this entails.

## Process breakdown – online assessment

On the date your online assessment process opens, you will receive one invitation email with three separate exercise links. Please allow for the full day to receive your email invitation. Your recruiting force will inform you about when you can expect to receive the invitation email and inform you of the deadline.

If you do not receive this email by 5pm on the day specified, please contact your recruiting force or [recruit@college.police.uk](mailto:recruit@college.police.uk). If you have a Hotmail account, please ensure the domain [no-reply@outmatch.com](mailto:no-reply@outmatch.com) is added to your approved senders list. If you have a Gmail account, please

check all folders.

Please note that the timings of each exercise may vary if you have a reasonable adjustment. More information can be found in the [Reasonable adjustments and accommodations](#) section.

## Competency-based interview (CBI)

You will be asked five competency or values-based questions about how you have dealt with specific situations in the past. This is your opportunity to provide some examples of the key competencies and values that are important for police constables. You can use examples from both your work and personal life.

During the interview, we encourage you to:

- refer to the online guidance given on the platform including use of prompts to structure your answer. Please note that you may need to scroll to view all of the prompts
- express yourself clearly and concisely
- be specific – remember that you only have a limited amount of time to respond
- try to relax – we are only making an assessment based on what you tell us about how you have dealt with situations in the past in relation to the relevant competencies and values, nothing else
- answer all five questions, ensuring you consider the relevant competency and values

Do not use notes or scripts that have been prepared prior to your assessment to support your response. Any evidence of this may result in an automatic failure.

## Completion time

Approximately 40 minutes.

## CVF competencies and values assessed

The CVF competencies and values that are assessed are:

- integrity
- public service
- transparency
- take ownership
- innovative and open-minded

## Method for answering competency and values-based interview questions

A common approach to respond to competency and values-based questions is the STAR (situation, task, action and result) method.

The STAR method allows you to structure your answer to ensure that you cover the relevant points. It may be beneficial to provide one example for each question and describe this in greater detail, as opposed to using different examples.

<b>Situation</b>	Briefly describe the specific event or situation. This should be a short description to set the context.
<b>Task</b>	Briefly explain what you had to do. What were you trying to achieve from the event or situation? What were the success criteria?
<b>Action(s)</b>	Here is the main part of your answer where you can really explain how you displayed the relevant behaviours and understanding. What did you do? How did you do it? Why did you do it that way? What skills did you use?
<b>Result</b>	Summarise the results of your actions. What was the outcome? What did you learn?

## What to expect

The interview will follow a structured format with a set list of questions. These questions are designed to make the process as fair and objective as possible.

You will be presented with five questions in total. You will be asked each question in turn. Each question will provide some prompts for you to consider when answering. These will be presented as text on screen. A pre-recorded video will also appear, and the questions will be read out to you.

For each question, you will have one minute (60 seconds) to consider the question and prepare your answer. You will then have five minutes (300 seconds) to record your answer. Nothing that

you say during the preparation time will be recorded. Please note, preparation time may vary if you have a reasonable adjustment. Once you have answered the first question, you will then move on to the next question and progress through until you have completed all five.

## Written exercise

In this exercise, you will assume the role of a police constable and will have to complete an urgent written task for your line manager. You will be provided with four items of information to help you with this task. In your response, please only use the information provided and do not add or invent any additional information.

During the written exercise, we encourage you to:

- manage your time using the timer displayed on the top left of your screen
- make use of the information that is provided to you in the exercise

## Completion time

The candidate instructions should take approximately 10 minutes to read. The exercise should take approximately 40 minutes to complete but we have set a time restriction of 120 minutes (two hours), so you don't have to rush things. Make sure that you do not let time run out as if you do, your response will not be submitted.

## CVF competencies and values assessed

The CVF competencies and values that are assessed are:

- impartiality
- analyse critically
- deliver, support and inspire
- collaborative

## How can I complete my written response?

Once you feel confident you have completed the written exercise, please click the 'Continue' button to submit your response. Once you have submitted your response, you will not be able to return to your answer. Therefore, please only press 'Continue' when your answer is completed to your satisfaction.



The only way for you to complete your written response is through the Outmatch platform. Please do not use any other means of communicating your answer as this will not be accepted. Copying and pasting your response from another application onto the platform will not be accepted.

If you have any system issues, please:

- report them to [support@outmatch.com](mailto:support@outmatch.com)
- do not complete the exercise

## **Will my spelling and grammar be assessed as part of this exercise?**

No. We appreciate candidates will be completing the written exercise on different devices and some may have access to spell check while others may not. Therefore, to ensure a fair approach, we will not be assessing candidates' spelling or grammar in this exercise.

## **Briefing exercise**

In this exercise, you will assume the role of a police constable and will have responsibility for dealing with some issues presented to you. You will be tasked with providing a verbal response to a number of questions in relation to these issues. You will be provided with preparation materials to consider your answer. In your response, please only use the information provided and do not add any additional information.

Each question and subsequent prompts will be presented as text on screen. A pre-recorded video will also appear, and the questions read out to you.

During the briefing exercise, we encourage you to:

- consider the issues raised and how the police can build positive relationships
- refer to the online guidance given on the platform including use of prompts to structure your answer – please note that you may need to scroll to view all of the prompts
- express yourself clearly and concisely
- be specific – remember that you only have a limited amount of time to respond
- try to relax – we are only making an assessment based on what you tell us in relation to the relevant competencies and values, nothing else
- prepare alone and without reference to any materials or information outside of the preparation material, whether electronic or printed

- answer all of the 12 questions, ensuring you consider the relevant competencies and values throughout

Do not use notes or scripts that have been prepared prior to your assessment to support your response. Any evidence of this may result in an automatic failure.

## **Completion time**

Approximately 60 minutes (one hour).

## **CVF competencies and values assessed**

The CVF competencies and values that are assessed are:

- public service
- emotionally aware
- take ownership
- innovative and open-minded

## **What to expect**

### **Exercise preparation**

You will be presented with some initial information about the exercise. You should take approximately 10 minutes to independently read the preparation materials and consider your response to part one of the scenario, although this initial preparation stage is not timed and is not assessed.

### **Exercise**

You will then have approximately 50 minutes in which you will be given questions to answer. This will be split into three parts.

#### **Part one**

After completing your preparation, you will be asked to answer four questions in part one. For each question, you will be presented with a video where the question is read aloud. The question will also appear on your screen so you can also read it. Once the video ends, you will have up to one minute (60 seconds) to prepare your response to the question. You will then have three minutes (180 seconds) to provide your response to the question.

## Part two and part three

In part two and three you will be provided with some new information to consider, and you will be asked to answer a further four questions for each part. Again, for each question you will be presented with a video where the question is read aloud. The question will also appear on your screen so you can also read it. Once the video ends, you will have up to one minute (60 seconds) to prepare your response to the question. You will then have three minutes (180 seconds) to provide your response to the question.

Please note that additional time will be made up of viewing video questions and platform navigation.

## Process breakdown – confirmation and results

### Confirmation

Once you have submitted, you will receive a confirmation email from the assessment platform confirming receipt of your competency based interview and briefing exercises. You will not receive a confirmation email after completing the written exercise.

### Results

Your recruiting force will provide you with information on the expected timeline for receiving your results.

You will receive an automated email from [police.assessments@notifications.service.gov.uk](mailto:police.assessments@notifications.service.gov.uk) with instructions of how to access your results.

Please note that this is an automated inbox. Emails sent to this inbox will not be responded to.

## General technical guidance

The online assessments will not assess your technical skills.

However, to support you in completing the online assessments please ensure that:

- you have all the relevant equipment required to access the exercises online
- if you are using a desktop computer or a laptop, your operating system is Windows 7 (or higher) or Mac OS 11.0 (or higher)

- your device does not have any updates waiting to be installed (for Windows, open Windows Update by clicking on the Start button, click All Programs, and then click Windows Update. In the left pane, click check for updates, and then wait while Windows looks for the latest updates for your computer. If any updates are found, click Install updates. For Apple, Go to Settings > General > Software Update. The screen shows the currently installed version of iPadOS and will let you know whether an update is available).
- if you are using an Apple iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch, your device has iOS 8.0 or later installed
- if you are using an Android device, your device has Android compatibility 4.1 (or higher)
- you have the latest version of Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome installed on your device – please do not use Internet Explorer or Safari, as these browsers are not supported for the online assessment process
- you have a strong internet connection via Wi-Fi – if you have a weak connection or you are unsure, connect via an Ethernet cable
- your device is on ‘do not disturb’ mode and electronic devices are fully charged or plugged in
- you do not close, refresh or click ‘Back’ on your browser or Outmatch Interview app during the exercises, as you may lose your response
- you do not open multiple exercise links at a time or across devices, as this will result in unsuccessful submission of the assessments on the platform

## What equipment do I need to sit the online assessments?

You need a laptop, desktop computer, tablet or mobile device with access to speakers, a microphone and a webcam or inbuilt camera.

If you are using a mobile device or tablet to complete the competency-based interview and the briefing exercise, please download the Outmatch Interview app from your device’s app store. Allow the Outmatch Interview app to access your device’s camera and audio.

The Outmatch Interview app is not used for the written exercise, although you can choose to use a supported browser on your mobile to complete this. However, your experience may be affected when using a mobile to complete the written exercise, so we recommend using a laptop, desktop computer or tablet for this exercise where possible.

## What happens if I encounter technical difficulties?

If you encounter technical difficulties during the online assessments, please contact the assessment platform immediately. Please do not finish the exercise if you are experiencing technical issues.

For technical difficulties encountered during the online assessment process, contact the assessment platform via the 'need help' button that is visible during your exercise or email [support@outmatch.com](mailto:support@outmatch.com). Please provide Outmatch with your full name, your recruiting force, name of the exercise you are having technical difficulties with, the device and browser you are using and a brief explanation of the technical issue you are experiencing. Outmatch support is available 24/7. You can expect a response within 30 to 60 minutes of your query.

For any technical difficulties during the national sift, please contact [support@cubiks.com](mailto:support@cubiks.com). The support hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5:30pm. You can expect a response to your query within four support hours.

You may also contact [recruit@college.police.uk](mailto:recruit@college.police.uk) if your assessment was affected by technical issues. If there are any issues that have not been fully addressed by the deadline, please be assured that the issue will still be investigated.

## How am I assessed during the exercises?

A fair and transparent recruitment process is important to us. The online assessments have been designed to ensure we assess each of the competencies and values relevant to initial police recruitment.

For the online assessments, you do not need to know about the law or procedures relating to police work to be successful.

The national sift is automatically scored by the assessment platform. Your scores from the SJT and the BSQ are combined to give an overall score. Your overall performance in the national sift is assessed against a comparison group, which consists of applicants to police constable roles and is displayed as a percentile.

For the remaining exercises in the online assessment process, our assessors will assess you solely on your performance in the exercises you take. We have a team that is responsible for quality assuring the performance of assessors to ensure a fair process.

## Who are the assessors?

The assessors are a mixture of police officers, police staff and people who have been specifically chosen from the community, many of whom have supported previous police recruitment campaigns. All assessors have received specific training in relation to the online assessment process for each exercise, and they are continually monitored to assess their performance.

## What information do the assessors have about me?

The assessors will only know your name and email address. They will not have seen any other information about you and they will not know whether you have applied before.

## How will I get my results?

For the in-force sift, your recruiting force will provide you with more information on when and how you will receive your results.

For the national sift, you will be informed via email whether you have or have not met the national standard. You will receive a personalised feedback report. Please note that the results window will vary depending on your recruiting force and their processing requirements. For specific dates, please contact your force.

For the online assessment process, you will receive the final outcome following the assessing and marking of your completed exercises. You will receive an email with notification and instructions on how to access your results. Your recruiting force can provide you with more information on when you can expect results. If you are successful, your recruiting force will contact you to discuss next steps.

## What is the automatic fail policy?

You are expected to act in line with the principles and standards of behaviour, as set out in the Code of Ethics, at all times during the assessment.

- [See the Code of Ethics](#)

If you are believed to have acted in contravention of the Code, been inappropriate to others or acted in a way that would provide you an unfair advantage over other candidates, the Quality

Assurance (QA) team will be notified.

The QA team will independently review any evidence in relation to your behaviour and decide if there is sufficient evidence to award you an automatic fail. An automatic fail means that you would fail the assessment process regardless of your performance in the individual exercises. As the independent verification by the QA team allows us to be confident of the decision made, you cannot appeal against an automatic fail received at the assessment.

You should treat all exercises at the assessment as you would treat any other tests or examinations. You must not note or record the assessment material in any way.

## Reasonable adjustments and accommodations

Should you have any condition, temporary or otherwise, that might cause you to be disadvantaged during the assessment – for example pregnancy, injury or disability, including dyslexia – you may be entitled to an accommodation or reasonable adjustment.

If you believe you may have a condition that could disadvantage you at the assessment, please contact the force you are applying to, who can assist you with further advice with your application for an accommodation or reasonable adjustment.

- [Find out more about reasonable adjustments and accommodations](#)

## How can I prepare for the online assessment process?

Before you begin each exercise, we encourage you to do the following.

- Remind yourself of the deadline to complete the exercises. This will be midnight on the date specified in the email from the force you applied to. Make sure you are ready to sit the assessments. If you feel that there are extenuating circumstances that could affect your performance, please refer to the guidance in the [Further information](#) section.
- Remind yourself of the competencies and values being assessed in each exercise (please refer back to the [Your journey as a candidate](#) section).
- Ensure you are in a quiet room without distractions so you can concentrate. We do however recognise that unexpected interruptions may occur. If you are interrupted during your assessment, please take a moment to gather your thoughts and continue with your response. If

you feel this interruption will heavily impact on your performance, please contact [recruit@college.police.uk](mailto:recruit@college.police.uk). Please note that as a candidate you must ensure you are completing each exercise alone with no additional support. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in an automatic fail.

- Read and listen to the instructions carefully. Remember that all the information you will need is provided to you.
- Ensure you have enough time to complete each exercise. Only visit the link to each exercise when you are ready to complete.
- Familiarise yourself with the [General technical guidance](#) section to prevent and overcome any technical issues that may arise during the online assessment process.

## Can I bring in prepared notes?

You cannot bring prepared notes into any of the online assessments. Everything you require to answer the questions appropriately will be available on the Outmatch system.

As each exercise is different, please see below a breakdown of what you are entitled to in relation to preparation on the system.

- CBI – after receiving the question, you can make notes to prepare your answer.
- Written exercise – you can make notes in the answer box, but please ensure you delete any content you do not want to submit. Once submitted, all text in the answer box will be assessed, so please ensure your final response is the only text submitted.
- Briefing exercise – you can make notes during the preparation phase and after receiving the question.

You can refer to notes that you have written during the exercises.

If there is evidence to suggest any notes (digital or physical) were prepared before your assessment, this may result in an automatic failure.

In line with the candidate declaration that you will have accepted before each exercise commences, please ensure all notes are securely destroyed. Notes must not be shared with anybody, including potential candidates or other parties. This would be considered a breach of integrity and could impact your potential to be recruited in the role.



## Further information

### When can I resit the online assessment process?

If unsuccessful, you may wish to resit the online assessments. You may do so in three months' time from the start date of your assessment window.

You will be limited to attempt the assessments twice in a 12-month period. You will be required to complete all exercises in the assessment process again.

### Can I apply to more than one force?

You may have started an application with more than one force. Please note however that you are only permitted to sit the online assessments with one force at a time. You must inform us immediately if you have already completed the assessment process with another force. Please contact us at [recruit@college.police.uk](mailto:recruit@college.police.uk).

### Can I transfer an online assessment process pass from one force to another?

You may be able to transfer your online assessment process pass from your original recruiting force to another force upon receiving your results.

Please note, it is at the discretion of the forces if they wish to accept your transferred score. You will need to consult with the forces regarding this.

To see if this is possible, you will need to contact the force you wish to transfer to and request that they obtain your previous online assessment pass from your original recruiting force that you sat the online assessment process with. This should be conducted between forces.

### What is the appeals procedure?

Our aim is to ensure that you have a positive experience of our online process and that you are provided with the opportunity to perform at your best. If you have a concern about an issue that occurs during the assessment, you should raise it with your recruiting force who can escalate to the College if required.

If you feel that the matter has not been resolved after initial communication, and if you still wish to report any extenuating circumstances or procedural concerns that you believe may have negatively impacted your performance, you must do so in the form of a written appeal to the force to which you are applying. To support your appeal, you will need to provide supporting evidence.

You must submit the appeal to the force recruiting department within 24 hours of taking the assessment. Reports received after this date will not be considered. You therefore cannot appeal after receiving your final result from the assessment.

If you have met the standard in the assessment, your appeal will not be considered further. Your appeal will only be considered if you have not met the standard. Procedural issues however will still be investigated, as they may have important implications for the assessment as a whole.

## Extenuating circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are likely to be a serious event or series of events, such as illness, accident or injury, or the death or serious illness of a family member. We recognise that lack of preparation and/or a heavy workload prior to completing the online assessment process may not allow you to perform at your best. However, these are not considered to be extenuating circumstances.

Prior to completing your assessment, if you are aware of any extenuating circumstances that will affect your performance or involvement, you may request to complete the assessment later. If the assessment is due to expire, you should notify your force to explain and request an extension, as these will not be grounds for appeal after the assessment. It will be your decision as to whether you continue with the assessment or withdraw and attend later.

We provide all candidates with this opportunity as we recognise that it is important for candidates to feel ready and able to take the assessment stages, so they can perform to the best of their ability.

If you have any further concerns or queries related to the online application process that cannot be answered by Outmatch or your recruiting force, please contact [recruit@college.police.uk](mailto:recruit@college.police.uk) and state your recruiting force in the header of the email.

## How do I give feedback about the online assessment process?

As part of the monitoring and development of the police constable online assessment process, we would like to hear your views on your experience. You may be given a link following the assessment that invites you to take part in a candidate feedback questionnaire.

Any feedback you can provide will be valuable. However, please note that we cannot treat any feedback you provide in this questionnaire as a formal appeal. You should therefore not expect a response to issues raised through this channel.

You may also email any feedback you have on the online assessment process to [recruit@college.police.uk](mailto:recruit@college.police.uk). If you have any feedback on the wider recruitment process, please direct this to your recruiting force.

## Tags

Police recruitment