

National sift candidate guidance

This guidance contains information about the national sift process for those who have been invited to take part and those wanting to find out more.

First published 11 April 2023

This guide sets out:

- what the national sift involves
- technical guidance for the exercises
- how you will be scored
- how you can prepare for the national sift

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

We wish you the best of luck with your assessment.

What is the national sift?

The national sift has been designed to allow you to demonstrate your suitability for entry to the next stage of the recruitment process. The national sift consists of two exercises:

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

These exercises are used to assess capabilities, strengths and behaviours that are important within the role you have applied for.

The competency and values framework (CVF) sets out the behaviours expected in policing. For the national sift, the competencies review criteria is set at level 1.

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

For the national sift, no prior policing knowledge is required to complete the exercises.

Situational judgement test (SJT)

What is the SJT?

The SJT assesses your judgement and decision-making skills in relation to job-relevant situations.

In the exercise, you will be presented with 15 scenarios that reflect challenging situations you may face when working in the role. For each scenario, you will be presented with four possible actions that could be taken. You will be asked to rate each of the four actions in terms of its effectiveness in addressing the scenario. The scale that you will use to rate the actions is shown below.

Counterproductive	An inappropriate action that will have a negative impact or make the situation worse.
Ineffective	A poor action which will not help to resolve the situation.
Slightly effective	An action that will have a small positive impact on the situation.
Effective	A reasonable action that will help to resolve the situation.
Very effective	One of the best actions that could be taken to resolve the situation.

Your responses should be based solely on the information presented in each scenario. You should consider the effectiveness of each action in terms of your first response to the scenario presented and you should rate each action independently of the other actions presented. You may feel that you would take a different action to those presented. However, you should concentrate on rating the effectiveness of the four actions that are provided.

How long will the SJT take?

This exercise is untimed. However, it is expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please note that you will be given full instructions about the exercise on the assessment platform before you begin.

What competencies are assessed in the SJT?

The CVF competencies and values that will be assessed are:

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

How do I prepare for the SJT?

We encourage you to do the following.

- Make sure you are in a quiet location and free from distractions.
- Ensure you have sufficient time to complete the exercise. While the exercise is untimed, we recommend that you complete it in one sitting if possible.
- Think about what the important decision-making criteria are in relation to the specific scenario. What is the main priority? What will a successful outcome look like?
- Consider the likely consequences of each action in relation to the situation. What will the impact be? Who will be affected? How are they likely to react?
- Take time to familiarise yourself with the rating scale descriptions, which will be accessible at any point during the exercise.
- Remember that you should rate each action independently of the other actions presented. You can allocate the same rating to more than one action within a scenario, if you feel this is appropriate. You should not assume that you have to use the full range of the rating scale in response to actions relating to a scenario.

Below, you will find two example scenarios similar to those that you will be asked to complete when you take the SJT. This will help you understand the format of the scenarios and actions.

Example scenario one

Read the scenario and rate each of the four actions. If you wish to remind yourself of the full description of the rating scale, this can be found in the [What is the SJT? section](#).

You have identified an area on a local estate that is well known for anti-social behaviour. A group of young people have been congregating outside a community centre and have been intimidating local residents who attend events there. You have spoken with a number of the residents to identify the main concerns and what actions they would like the police to take. It does not appear that the group of young people are committing any criminal offence. However, the residents want the young people to be moved on and prevented from congregating in this area.

Action one

Before taking any action, gather more information about the young people from any relevant parties, such as social workers or community groups, and seek their views on what should be done.

Choose an option from counterproductive, ineffective, slightly effective, effective, very effective.

Action two

The young people are not committing a criminal offence. Explain to local residents that you will record and monitor the situation for now, in case it worsens.

Choose an option from counterproductive, ineffective, slightly effective, effective, very effective.

Action three

Disperse the young people and prevent them from congregating outside the community centre – for example, through more regular patrols.

Choose an option from counterproductive, ineffective, slightly effective, effective, very effective.

Action four

Speak to the young people directly about why they are congregating outside the community centre and explain that the residents would prefer if they did not congregate in the area.

Choose an option from counterproductive, ineffective, slightly effective, effective, very effective.

Example scenario two

Read the scenario and rate each of the four actions. If you wish to remind yourself of the full description of the rating scale, this can be found in the [What is the SJT? section](#).

You are currently in the office completing some paperwork for a case. While you are working, you are approached by one of the new police constables in your team. He explains to you that he has forgotten to complete the necessary paperwork on a case that you both attended almost a week ago. The case was not particularly high priority, but it is still important that paperwork is completed as soon as possible. Your other colleagues have told you that the constable has done this many times and can be quite forgetful.

Action one

Stop your work to explain to your team member the implications of not writing up his case notes. Ask him why he forgot this time and whether he needs any help.

Choose an option from counterproductive, ineffective, slightly effective, effective, very effective.

Action two

Tell your team member that he should complete the paperwork as soon as possible because it is his responsibility and a crucial part of his role.

Choose an option from counterproductive, ineffective, slightly effective, effective, very effective.

Action three

Explain to your team member that you will have to inform your supervisor because this kind of behaviour is becoming a habit with him.

Choose an option from counterproductive, ineffective, slightly effective, effective, very effective.

Action four

Reassure your team member that everyone makes mistakes sometimes and offer to write up the case notes yourself as you were also present at the incident.

Choose an option from counterproductive, ineffective, slightly effective, effective, very effective.

Behavioural styles questionnaire (BSQ)

What is the BSQ?

The BSQ measures your typical behaviour and preferences at work. The purpose of the questionnaire is to assess whether you have the right behaviours and attitudes to be effective in the role.

You will be presented with 80 statements and asked to decide the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. You will use the rating scale of:

- completely disagree
- strongly disagree
- somewhat disagree
- neither agree or disagree
- somewhat agree
- strongly agree
- completely agree

Depending on your responses, you may also be asked to rank statements in terms of which is most like you, in relation to your typical behaviour at work.

How long will the BSQ take?

This exercise is untimed. However, it is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please note that you will be given full instructions about the exercise on the assessment platform before you begin.

What competencies and values are assessed in the BSQ?

The [CVF competencies and values](#) that you will be assessed on are:

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

- public service
- impartiality

How do I prepare for the BSQ?

We encourage you to do the following.

- Make sure you are in a quiet location and free from distractions.
- Ensure you have sufficient time to complete the exercise. While it is untimed, we recommend that you complete the exercise in one sitting if possible.
- Read and think about each statement carefully before responding.
- Be as honest as possible about the extent that each statement reflects your typical behaviours and attitudes at work.

Below, you will find an example question, which is similar to the types of questions you will be asked to complete when you take the BSQ. This will help you understand the format of the exercise and the types of questions that you will be asked.

Example question

Each statement will be presented for you to rate on the seven-point scale. Respond to all statements in terms of your typical work behaviour.

I enjoy having to solve complex problems.

- Completely disagree.
- Strongly disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Neither agree or disagree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Strongly agree.
- Completely agree.

Depending on your responses throughout the exercise, you may also be asked to rank statements. When ranking statements, you will be asked to select the statement that is most like you.

Of the following statements, please select the one that is most like you.

- I am patient when dealing with others.
- I always set high standards for my work.
- I stay true to my beliefs, even when it is easier not to.

After selecting the statement that is most like you, you will continue to the next screen, where you will then be asked to select which of the remaining two statements is most like you.

General technical guidance

Both exercises in the national sift can be completed on a laptop, desktop computer, tablet or mobile device. If you run into any technical issues or your internet connectivity drops during your assessment, you can access the exercises again by clicking on the assessment link in the invitation email.

For any technical difficulties during the national sift, please contact 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 if your assessment was affected by technical issues. If you have any queries relating specifically to the national sift assessment, please contact your recruiting force.

What do I do if I get asked for an access code when I access a link for the national sift?

If you get asked for an access code when you click on the link to sit the national sift, please clear the cache, cookies and temporary files from your internet browser. The way to do this will vary depending on your device and browser. Once you have cleared these, click on the national sift link again and you will no longer require an access code.

Reasonable adjustments and accommodations

Some people taking online assessments require additional help in the form of reasonable adjustment or accommodation.

As both exercises in the national sift are untimed, we are unable to offer additional time as an adjustment.

If you have any condition that might cause you to be disadvantaged during the national sift, temporary or otherwise (for example, pregnancy, injury, medical conditions, disability or neurodivergence such as dyslexia and autism) and are unsure how you can be best supported, please contact the force you are applying to directly. They will be able to assist you.

The following adjustments are supported by the online system and can be managed by yourself as the candidate.

- Text-to-speech software.
- Coloured overlay or screen colour.

If you believe you require these adjustments, you will need to make these adjustments yourself and are not required to seek permission from the College of Policing or your recruiting force.

Any additional requests for accommodations or reasonable adjustment provided for the national sift will be based on supporting information provided to your recruiting force in a relevant report, produced by an appropriately qualified professional.

If you have concerns about completing the exercises or feel that you may have a condition that could disadvantage you at the assessment, please contact your recruiting force who can assist you with further advice.

Further information

How am I scored during the national sift?

A fair and transparent recruitment process is important to us. The national sift has been designed to ensure we assess each of the competencies and values relevant to the role. For the national sift, 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 scored against a comparison group, which consists of applicants to police constable roles and is displayed as a percentile. Using these exercises offers a number of benefits, including:

- they provide an objective method of assessing people based on job-relevant criteria
- they provide candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths and abilities

How will I get my 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, which provides more information of the kinds of performance that distinguish better-performing candidates from those who did not perform as effectively.

Please note that the results window will vary depending on your recruiting force and their processing requirements. For specific dates, please contact your recruiting force.

When can I resit the national sift?

If unsuccessful, you may wish to resit the national sift. You may do so in three months' time from the date you completed your assessment.

You will be limited to attempt the assessments twice in a 12-month period. You will be required to complete both exercises in the national sift again.

What is the appeals procedure?

Our aim is to ensure that you have a positive experience of our online assessments 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 immediately.

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 had a negative impact on your performance and were beyond your control, 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.

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. Please note that you cannot appeal based on an unsuccessful result alone. However, procedural issues 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 national sift 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 technical support or your recruiting force, please contact recruit@college.police.uk stating your recruiting force in the header of the email.

Tags

Police recruitment