



Cambridge Assessment
Admissions Testing



CPSQ

Cambridge
Personal Styles Questionnaire

Supporting selection and personal
development in higher education

What is the Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire®?

Success at university requires more than academic ability: students' personal styles of behaving also contribute to their educational progress. Factors such as conscientiousness, motivation and resilience all influence on-course success, student retention rates and graduate employment prospects.

The Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire (CPSQ) is an online assessment of behavioural styles which are important for higher education studies. It has been designed in collaboration with educational institutions and can be used to:

- help select students with the most potential to succeed
- identify students who are not a good fit with the course
- provide an early indicator of student development needs
- create a holistic view of student potential
- offer feedback to aid reflection and build self-awareness.

CPSQ is used alongside other information about applicants, such as their academic record, personal statement and admissions tests results, to provide admissions staff with additional evidence of suitability.

What does CPSQ assess?

CPSQ assesses five personal styles of behaving:

Thinking style	Intellectual curiosity and open thinking.
Study style	Motivation to achieve and self-management.
Coping style	Resilience and adaptability to demands.
Interpersonal style	Social confidence and working with others.
Social style	Responsibility and risk taking.



Why use CPSQ?

Identify students with high potential

CPSQ assesses the personal styles of behaving that support educational progress. Research has found that conscientiousness, in particular, adds as much to the prediction of university performance as intelligence.¹

Get the information you need to help improve student retention

CPSQ helps you to identify applicants best suited to the demands of higher education, to identify development needs at an early stage and to support students to achieve their full potential. This can contribute to increased retention rates.

Promote self-reflection and target group development

CPSQ can be used to help promote individual reflection, which can assist students' self-awareness. Group-level reporting can be used to identify whole group development needs and target study-skills or life-skills training.

Differentiate between applicants in a fair, valid and transparent way

CPSQ provides a transparent method of assessing applicants – all applicants are asked the same questions, in the same way, and scoring is objective. Convenient online delivery means the assessment is easy to implement, provides instant reporting and is less resource intensive than interviewing.

Rigorous development

CPSQ was developed through an extensive 4-year trial programme with Higher Education Institutions. It is designed to conform to the established, well-researched Five-Factor Model of Personality.²

Developed by education experts

CPSQ is developed by Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, part of a not-for-profit department of the University of Cambridge. We have significant experience in developing assessments for higher education contexts and can advise you on how to integrate CPSQ into your admissions process.

¹ Poropat, A E (2009) A Meta-Analysis of the Five-Factor Model of Personality and Academic Performance, *Psychological Bulletin*, American Psychological Association. gwern.net/docs/conscientiousness/2009-poropat.pdf

² Find out more: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Five_personality_traits



Assessing applicants to Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS

Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS (UTP) in Malaysia uses CPSQ as part of their selection process for students applying to engineering and technology courses.

"UTP takes pride in **nurturing students who are not only technically competent**, but who are also able to exercise the ability to think critically and synthesise solutions for real world problems.

The Cambridge Personal Styles Questionnaire (CPSQ) supports the University's objective to produce **well-rounded graduates who are creative and innovative**, with the potential to become leaders of industry and the nation.

CPSQ has been particularly helpful in providing us with **greater insight into candidates' personality and potential**, and how they are likely to approach learning at the University.

CPSQ keeps pace with what UTP is looking for today, measuring the **skills required for success in the 21st century.**"

Datuk Ir (Dr) Abdul Rahim Hashim | *Vice Chancellor, Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS*



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PETRONAS



Assessment format and content

CPSQ is an online questionnaire. The questions are designed to be suitable for students applying to or on higher education courses and do not require any subject-specific knowledge. CPSQ is suitable for students with English language skills at CEFR* level B2 or above. It typically takes 20–30 minutes to complete for native English speakers, or up to 60 minutes for non-native speakers.

The questionnaire contains 164 behavioural-based statements, in sets of four. Each set of four covers a range of personal styles of behaving. Respondents select their level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	In Between	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I persist with even the most boring tasks	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it easy to get to know people	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can be relied on to keep my temper	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to challenge myself by setting difficult goals to achieve	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When a respondent selects the same level of agreement for two or more of the statements, they are then asked to choose which statement is 'More like me' and which is 'Less like me':

	More like me 1	Less like me 2
I persist with even the most boring tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it easy to get to know people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This ranking of statements helps respondents to reflect on their behaviour, and reduces the ability to over-exaggerate socially desirable qualities – 'faking good'.

* The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) – the international standard for describing language ability. Find out more: cambridgeenglish.org/cefr

The CPSQ report

1

Thinking style – intellectual curiosity and open thinking

Your responses suggest you:

- Typically question and analyse information
- Need to find things out for yourself and like to be thorough with your research
- Think of yourself as highly imaginative and as someone who can come up with lots of creative ideas
- Probably explore problems from many different perspectives and are open to multiple possible solutions.

Thinking style potential

1

2

3

4

5

2

3

Study style – motivation to achieve and self-management

Your responses suggest you:

- Describe yourself as ambitious and as someone who wants to achieve high standards
- Have a clear idea of what you want to do and usually set yourself challenging goals to reach
- Usually get on with your work but occasionally you might put off starting some routine or boring tasks
- Are similar to most students in your capacity to focus on your work and persevere until it is finished
- Probably plan and prioritise some of your activities
- Mainly approach work in a structured way and tend to be organised for what you need to do.

Study style potential

1

2

3

4

5

4

Coping style – resilience and adaptability to demands

Your responses suggest you:

- Tend not to worry too much and cope as well as most students with new and unexpected challenges
- Sometimes feel less positive about your capacity to cope with problems and setbacks
- Might take some time to adapt to change and new learning environments
- May on occasion react with annoyance if tasks or situations are frustrating.

Coping style potential

1

2

3

4

5

5

6

Strengths

Over-played strengths

Your responses suggest your potential strengths...

Your strengths may work against you – if you...

Interpersonal

- ✓ you usually respond to requests for help and support others
- ✓ you work well with others and prefer to be part of a team
- ✓ you listen to others and try to find compromises which work for everyone
- ✓ you are comfortable working on your own
- ✓ you like to let others speak and are happy to listen.

- allow others' problems to keep you from your own studies
- start to rely on others to provide direction
- agree with things just to please others
- keep to yourself and potentially lose out on building social support
- hold back and rarely contribute to discussions.

Social

- ✓ you typically follow organisational rules and guidelines
- ✓ you take responsibility and admit to your mistakes
- ✓ you think before you act and usually ask for advice
- ✓ you rarely get bored and stick with things until you have mastered them.

- always keep to rules without any flexibility
- become overly strict with yourself and others on standards of behaviour
- become overly cautious
- avoid widening your experience.

How to interpret the report

A CPSQ report is generated for each respondent. The sample 1-page report to the left uses a colour-coded score band (from 1 to 5), which shows the respondent's potential fit against the competency areas. The colour-coded format makes it easy to scan, to identify areas of concern or for follow-up.

The first part of the report provides feedback and scores for styles of behaviour which contribute to educational progress. The 'Interpersonal and social styles' section of the report describes behaviours which indirectly support educational progress. This includes behaviours which help students to work well with others, contribute in class, demonstrate social responsibility and build social support networks.

- 1 Style area:** behaviours which influence educational progress are grouped into three distinct styles: thinking, study and coping with demands.
- 2 Score band:** potential to demonstrate an effective style of behaving which supports learning is indicated by a higher score.
- 3 Behavioural descriptions:** these are linked to the score band and describe typical behaviours based on questionnaire responses. The colour of a bullet point indicates how well a specific behaviour supports overall style potential. In this example, mid to dark green bullet points indicate behaviours that contribute positively.
- 4 Interpreting the colour coding:** the 'Coping style potential' score band shows an overall less effective style of behaving. However, the green bullet point in the behavioural descriptions highlights specific behaviours which are more likely to help the student cope with demands.
- 5 Amber flag:** this indicates less effective styles of behaving and signposts areas for potential development.
- 6 Strengths/over-played strengths:** all behavioural styles have potential pros and cons, which are shown on the report as 'Strengths' and 'Over-played strengths'. Over-played strengths in behavioural terms are 'too much of a good thing'. For example, students who are kind and supportive may help others, to the detriment of their own studies.

Group reporting is also available. This enables admissions staff to compare individuals in the applicant pool and to quickly identify respondents who received CPSQ amber flags. In a student development context, it can help to identify group training requirements.

We are Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, part of the University of Cambridge. Our tests provide a fair measure of skills and aptitude to help you make informed decisions.

We believe everyone should have a fair opportunity to prove they have what it takes, and you should have the right tools and information to find the people who will thrive.



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