

PPAD-E

Post-Primary Assessment & Diagnosis – English

Essential Information and Frequently Asked Questions

Essential Information

Intended Uses of the PPAD-E and Ethical Issues

The intended uses of the PPAD-E are set out in the Teacher’s administration manual (pages 2-3) and the accompanying training video.

In order to achieve these aims, the test must be used appropriately and care must be taken to observe ethical standards and to be compliant with national educational policy.

Therefore, this document covers the following key issues: Test Security, Confidentiality and Appropriate Use of Test Results. It also addresses frequently asked questions about the suitability of the PPAD-E for use in specific circumstances: Exemption from the study of Irish, Applications for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE), Disability Access Route to Education (DARE), eligibility criteria for special educational placements and resources (e.g. access to special reading schools, special reading classes and assistive technology). Finally, we include a note on interpreting results in the context of Covid-19.

Test Security

In order to protect a standardised test from misuse, the contents of the test need to be handled sensitively. It is important for example, that the integrity of the test is not compromised by inappropriate sharing of the content or by careless management of the materials. All materials associated with the test, including the student booklets, the scoring overlays, the manuals and the scoring and reporting tool need to be kept securely.

Confidentiality

Individual and class test results should only be shared with those with a legitimate professional interest and in line with the school’s assessment policy. Under no circumstances should individual or class test results be published or displayed in a public forum. Students should never be asked to correct each other’s work, nor to share their results in front of other students. Indeed, considerable care needs to be taken in sharing test results with students and parents, to ensure that it is done in a way that is respectful and meaningful.

Appropriate Uses of Results

Those using the PPAD-E also need to be clear about the intended purposes of the test and guard against any potential negative consequences for individuals who complete the test. For example, tests results cannot be used to deny students access to a school or to a subject option. These practices are contrary to Department of Education (DE) policy and indeed may also be contrary to the Equal Status Act.

The Equal Status Act requires that schools do not discriminate across nine grounds, including 'disability'. The term 'disability' is broadly defined. It covers a wide range of impairments and illnesses. It covers all physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. Schools must mainstream and reasonably accommodate people with disabilities. The Equal Status Acts specify particular areas in which a school must not discriminate, including

- the admission of a student, including the terms or conditions of the admission of a student
- the access of a student to a course, facility or benefit provided by the school
- any other term or condition of participation in the school

Additionally, under the terms of GDPR, data collected for one purpose, cannot subsequently be used for another purpose. If parents and young people cooperate with testing using the PPAD-E for particular purposes, the test results cannot be used outside of those purposes, without seeking individual consent.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can the PPAD-E be administered on an individual basis?

One question that sometimes arises in relation to the use of the PPAD-E for eligibility criteria (and indeed for screening in schools) is whether the test can be individually administered. The Word Reading subtest is already an individually administered test. While standardisation of the other four subtests is based on group administration, in the view of the test developers, it can also be used appropriately for individual testing, as long as the procedures used in administration and scoring are consistent with the guidance. Examples of situations where individual testing may be appropriate include: facilitating a student who is excessively anxious in a group situation, facilitating a student who was absent on the day of group testing, completing an assessment with a student for a specific purpose (to review progress etc).

Do all elements of the PPAD-E need to be administered, or can schools select some subtests and not use others?

The PPAD-E is designed to be administered in its entirety, to provide schools with really comprehensive literacy information about students. However, in the view of the test developers, in some circumstances, particular subtests can also be administered separately. Since each subtest is a stand-alone test, scores on each subtest can be generated separately. This may be particularly useful, for example, when student progress is being monitored, and some subtests may be relevant, while others are not. These provisions are likely to become more relevant as the test is standardised across the age range and/or after a period of intervention where test-retest is needed to review progress.

The procedures used in administration and scoring must be consistent with the guidance. Care must be taken in interpreting scores achieved in these conditions, as they differ from the conditions of the standardisation process. It is likely that student motivation and achievement may be slightly higher when testing is considerably shorter. Additionally, research indicates that the order in which tests are taken, may influence performance (students may do better on a spelling test, if they have just completed a reading task) and therefore, whatever subtests are being administered, should be administered in the sequence set out in the manual. Again, care needs to be taken in interpreting scores, taking account of the potential impact of order effects.

Can the PPAD-E be used for RACE/ DARE/ Exemption from the study of Irish?

The results of PPAD-E tests can be used to contribute to decision making for a range of educational provisions and schemes, including Exemption from the study of Irish, Applications for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE), Disability Access Route to Education (DARE), eligibility criteria for special educational placements and resources (special schools, special classes and assistive technology). While some guidance is set out in Appendix 1 of *Manual 3: Scoring, Reporting, Interpretation and Intervention*, these specific schemes are open to change and modification and teachers must ensure that they check current criteria and procedures in any given school year. It is also helpful to appreciate that tests results, in and of themselves, do not confer eligibility for any particular scheme. **All schemes include the collection of information from a number of sources over a period of time and the standardised test results generated by the PPAD-E are only one part of multi-element criteria.**

How do I interpret tests results in the time of Covid-19?

The impact of Covid-19 presents very particular challenges in the use and interpretation of standardised tests. In particular, everyone in the educational community is aware of the significant impact of school closures on children and young people. The Department of Education has suggested that schools do NOT carry out standardised assessments until after the first mid-term break in October, 2020, as some students will have suffered some regression as a result of school closures. See Circular 0067/ 2020.

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0067_2020.pdf

Schools need to be aware that students who participated in the standardisation sample, for whom data was collected in October and November 2019, had enjoyed a stable educational experience, compared to students in the 2020 cohort. Therefore, particular caution needs to be exercised in interpreting scores, particularly in informing decisions about eligibility criteria.