

TSA

Thinking Skills Assessment

WHAT IS THE TSA?

The TSA is a two-hour aptitude and skills assessment which is used for entry in Experimental Psychology, Geography, Human Sciences, Philosophy and Linguistics, PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics), Psychology and Linguistics and psychology and philosophy.

This guide aims to breakdown the entire test and provide further insights but will be best used in combination with existing material, most importantly see links below for an in-depth question breakdown and general information.

SECTION BREAKDOWN

1

Section one of the TSA is used to test two things. The first is problem-solving skills which is assessed in three forms which are relevant selection, finding procedures and identifying similarities. All of which require reasoning using numerical skills. The second is critical thinking which is assessed in seven forms as below. This section consists of 50 multiple choice limited to 90 minutes.

Identifying the main conclusion:

- Here you need to dissect which sentence serves as the final conclusion of the passage. Be sure to take a holistic view of what the passage aims to tell you.

Drawing a conclusion:

- Here the conclusion does not appear in the statement. Instead the options are to be compared to see which best serves as the conclusion.

Identifying an assumption:

- In order to do so, it is useful to first identify the conclusion, grasp the reasoning and find any which is taken for granted in the passage.

Assessing the impact of additional information:

- Best practice here is to grasp the conclusion, main reasoning which will help you identify its vulnerabilities.

Detecting reasoning errors:

- To find the flaw, find the purpose and the rationale given and then evaluate it.

Matching arguments:

- Here you should practice replacing content with letters to find the skeleton argument.

Applying principals:

- Here the principal will be the underlying rationale given to support the conclusion.

Relevant Selection:

- As in the real world deciphering which bits of data are useful is key. Here you will need to focus on the prompt to decide what is needed.

Finding Procedures:

- Here you will need to use the numbers in the question to generate a solution to a problem. Simple operations suffice.

Identifying Similarities:

- Here you will be presented with information in more than one form and will usually need to use one to complete missing information in the other.

2

This section assess the ability of the applicant to organise ideas in a clear and concise manner, and communicate them effectively in writing. Here, the questions are not subject-specific which allows for range of responses. There are four essay prompt options given to candidates. Candidates must pick one to complete in the space of 30 minutes.

Given that you may have some knowledge specific to the question, it is not always the case that you can argue it effectively in a balanced manner so don't be afraid to go with what is more broad rather than specific in detail.

PREPARATION TIPS

1. Approach the practice by organising a few past papers into the types of question. This way you can practice each type of questions back to back and get a feel of how they are to be solved. Make use of the specimen paper and the explained solutions for your first attempt at each for a guide.

2. After practicing and getting a feel for the types of questions using a few papers, attempt another few in timed conditions. This way you can get a feel of the constraints and identify which types of questions cost you more time. These can then be worked on or logged as more difficult.

3. Work on the weak types of questions, returning to the initial papers for reference if necessary. If you need more practice for section one, look to the BMAT section one which has similar questions. Also be sure to read the prompts first to avoid fatigue.

4. For the essay section, practice planning prompts in under five minutes using familiar subheading like intro, thesis, anti-thesis and conclusion.

USEFUL LINKS

TSA Website - <https://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/thinking-skills-assessment/tsa/oxford/about-tsa-oxford/>
Question guide - <https://www.admissionstesting.org/Images/47832-tsa-question-guide.pdf>
TSA Walkthrough - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9evb_UbSI
TSA Essay Plan Practice - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Buxa40ahGV4&t=348s>