

# Introduction

## *Statement of Purpose*

The purpose of the *Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures* (hereafter, the *Principles*) is to specify established scientific findings and generally accepted professional practice in the field of personnel selection psychology in the choice, development, evaluation, and use of personnel selection procedures designed to measure constructs related to work behavior with a focus on the accuracy of the inferences that underlie employment decisions. This document is the fourth edition of the *Principles*, which is the official statement of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (Division 14 of the American Psychological Association and an organizational affiliate of the American Psychological Society) concerning validation and personnel selection. The revision is stimulated by theoretical and research developments since the previous edition of the *Principles* (SIOP, 1987) and by the publication of the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* in 1999 by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) (hereafter, the *Standards*). The *Principles* cover many aspects of validation and personnel selection; however, other professional documents (e.g., *Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists*) may also provide guidance in particular situations.

The *Principles* is intended to be consistent with the *Standards*. This revision brings the *Principles* up-to-date with regard to current scientific knowledge, and further guides sound practice in the use of personnel selection procedures. The *Principles* should be taken in its entirety rather than considered as a list of separately enumerated principles.

Federal, state, and local statutes, regulations, and case law regarding employment decisions exist. The *Principles* is not intended to interpret these statutes, regulations, and case law, but can inform decision making related to them.

This document provides:

1. principles regarding the conduct of selection and validation research;
2. principles regarding the application and use of selection procedures;
3. information for those responsible for authorizing or implementing validation efforts; and
4. information for those who evaluate the adequacy and appropriateness of selection procedures.

The *Principles* is intended to address the needs of persons involved in personnel selection. The *Principles* is to a large degree a technical document, but it is also an informational document.

## *Principles as Guidance*

It is important to recognize that this document constitutes pronouncements that guide, support, or recommend, but do not mandate, specific approaches or actions. This document is intended to be aspirational and to facilitate and assist the validation and use of selection procedures. It is not intended to be mandatory, exhaustive, or definitive, and may not be applicable to every situation. Sound practice requires professional judgment to determine the relevance and importance of the *Principles* in any particular situation. The *Principles* is not intended to mandate specific procedures independent of the professional judgment of those with expertise in the relevant area. In addition, this document is not intended to provide advice on complying with local, state, or federal laws that might be applicable to a specific situation.

The *Principles* expresses expectations toward which the members of this Society and other researchers and practitioners should strive. Evidence for the validity of the inferences from a given selection procedure may be weakened to the extent that the expectations associated with professionally accepted practice, and consequently the *Principles*, are not met. However, circumstances in any individual validation effort or application affect the relevance of a specific principle or the feasibility of its implementation. Complete satisfaction of the *Principles* in a given situation may not be necessary or attainable.

The *Principles* is intended to represent the consensus of professional knowledge and practice as it exists today; however, personnel selection research and development is an evolving field in which techniques and decision-making models are subject to change. Acceptable procedures other than those discussed in this edition of the *Principles* may be developed in the future. In certain instances, references are cited that provide support for the principles, but these citations are selective rather than exhaustive. Both researchers and practitioners are expected to maintain an appropriate level of awareness of research developments relevant to the field of personnel selection.

The *Principles* is not intended:

1. to be a substitute for adequate training in validation procedures;
2. to be exhaustive (although it covers the major aspects of selection procedure validation and use);
3. to be a technical translation of existing or future regulations;
4. to freeze the field to prescribed practices and so limit creative endeavors; or
5. to provide an enumerated list of separate principles.

### ***Selection Procedures Defined***

Selection procedures refer to any procedure used singly or in combination to make a personnel decision including, but not limited to, paper-and-pencil tests, computer-administered tests, performance tests, work samples, inventories (e.g., personality, interest), projective techniques, polygraph examinations, individual assessments, assessment center evaluations, biographical data forms or scored application blanks, interviews, educational requirements, experience requirements, reference checks, background investigations, physical requirements (e.g., height or weight), physical ability tests, appraisals of job performance, computer-based test interpretations, and estimates of advancement potential. These selection procedures include methods of measurement that can be used to assess a variety of individual characteristics that underlie personnel decision making.

The terms “selection procedure,” “test,” “predictor,” and “assessment” are used interchangeably throughout this document. Personnel decisions are employment-related decisions to hire, train, place, certify, compensate, promote, terminate, transfer, and/or take other actions that affect employment status.