

The UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)

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PROF IAN JOHNSON, CHAIR OF THE UKCAT CONSORTIUM



Case Study

About UKCAT

The UK Clinical Aptitude Test (www.ukcat.ac.uk) is used by 23 universities to inform the application and admissions process for their medical and dentistry courses. The test is run by the UKCAT Consortium in partnership with Pearson VUE.

Why introduce a test?

Medical and dentistry courses at UK universities are in huge demand, with around 22,000 applicants for fewer than 9,000 places. The test was introduced in 2006 to help universities identify candidates' likely aptitude for a clinical career. All applicants must take the test before applying to any of the 23 participating universities.

Professor Ian Johnson, Chair of the UKCAT Consortium, explains:

“It has become progressively more and more difficult to identify who to interview, with most applicants predicted to get A and A grades at A Level.*

“Academic performance remains important, but the tests give us another tool. There is a long history of such testing in the USA and other countries - here it was an idea whose time had come.”

How does it work?

UKCAT consists of four sub-tests on verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, abstract reasoning and decision analysis. It is multiple choice and lasts 90 minutes. Pearson VUE manages the whole end to end process, including:

- Marketing, online registration, test booking and payment handling
- Venue provision via Pearson's 150 UK high street centres and a global network of 4,000 centres in 145 countries
- Test security
- Test question provision
- Test delivery and instant assessment
- Detailed management information for all universities

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Partnering with you for results that count

The benefits

The Consortium wanted tests that were credible - and a partner who could be trusted to deliver.

"The ability to deliver was a key factor in choosing Pearson VUE; undoubtedly the Pearson delivery system was superior and the company had substantial experience in computer based testing. "Such was the confidence with the Pearson VUE system that 23 medical schools came on board. Initially it had been much fewer than that." said Prof Johnson.

As well as exceptional delivery, other benefits include:

Efficiency

Thanks to Pearson VUE's question bank, candidates do not need to be tested at the same time on the same day. The system also eliminates the distribution, storage and tracking of test papers and answer scripts.

Speed and accuracy

For candidates, all answers are marked automatically, improving accuracy and providing instant results.

Detailed feedback

Each university obtains detailed information on all its applicants and can use the results in its own way to support admissions.

During the period July - October 2006, 19,000 people took the UK Clinical Aptitude Test.

"The first year has been an overwhelming success; it's been very hard work, but I don't think that anybody thought it would be so successful." said Prof Johnson.

The future

Students will be tracked over time to discover the link between test scores and real performance to help develop the recruitment and selection process. As Prof Johnson puts it:

"In the long term, we're not just interested in producing good medical students, but in producing the best doctors and dentists."

About Pearson VUE

Pearson VUE is the world's leading assessment and testing business, with a focus on advanced technology and exceptional service.

How we can help

If you offer paper-based tests, or need to introduce new forms of testing, we can ensure you maintain standards while making the transition to computer based testing. We offer a flexible range of services, including:

- Test development
- Registration and scheduling
- Test delivery through our global network of 4,000 test centres in 145 countries, or in your own test centres
- Management information
- Security and data integrity, including physical, password and encryption systems

"Such was the confidence with the Pearson VUE system that 23 medical schools and eight schools of Dentistry came on board. Initially it had been much fewer than that."

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Further Information

For more information, contact our Business Development Team.

+44 (0)20 7190 4670

pvukinfo@pearson.com

**Pearson VUE
Business Development
One90 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7BH**

Pearson VUE is ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System Standard and BS 7799 Information Security Management Systems accredited.