A Rationale for the Design of the Psychometric Entrance Test

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Preface

The Psychometric Entrance Test (PET) is produced by the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation (NITE) and used in the selection of candidates for higher education in Israel. PET consists of about 220 short multiple-choice questions and the duration of the test is three hours and twenty minutes.

PET is composed of three subtests: Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and English. The Verbal Reasoning subtest includes questions in the domain of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and analytic reasoning. The Quantitative Reasoning subtest includes questions based mainly on the Mathematics curriculum taught in elementary and high-school. The English subtest includes questions aimed at assessing the ability to read and understand English texts at an academic level.

Many questions arise from this short description of PET. For example, the same PET score is used for the selection of candidates for Biology studies, Philosophy, and Law. Surely the abilities that are needed to succeed in these different fields of study are different, so why is the same test being used?

A similar point could be made about the Quantitative Reasoning section. Most students do not need mathematical knowledge for their studies, so it is odd that this domain is assessed for all candidates.

There are other abilities that are relevant for many academic fields and are not assessed in PET, such as writing skills, motivation, and creativity, to name a few. These and other questions concern consumers of PET, both university candidates and decision-makers in the universities. This paper will try to address these issues by explaining why the current test content was chosen, why other contents do not appear in the test, and why the format of the test is as it is.