

Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ)

The most widely used job analysis instrument, a worker-oriented questionnaire, is the *Position Analysis Questionnaire* (PAQ), developed and described by McCormick, Jeanneret, and Mecham (1972). It is an evolving document. Form C, made available in 1989, had 187 items, called *job elements*, each describing behavior. Earlier forms over a research span of more than 30 years included questionnaires under other names as well as the two preceding forms of the PAQ. Changes were mainly in the form of additions, deletions, or modifications based on ongoing research. The most recent 2005 version (the “enhanced” PAQe) has incorporated major changes and brings the total number of items to 300.¹ Supplementary items included those for disability analysis, items based on questions included in the 2004 amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act, and items covering matters long believed to be important, such as physical work positions required, stress-related items, and educational requirements. Most of the added items continue to describe what the worker does, regardless of the result of doing it.

The 300 items are organized under eight major divisions, outlined in Table 2.4. The earlier emphasis on cognitive information processing (input-process-output) as a grouping principle seems less central than in earlier PAQ versions. This might be a problem for people coming to the PAQ without training, but the earlier insistence that job analysts be explicitly trained in PAQ use continues in this version.

Table 2.4

An Outline of the PAQe Items

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1. Supervisory and Managerial Responsibilities
 - 1.1. Leadership competencies
 - 1.2. Scope of supervision and management
 - 1.3. Coordination activities
 2. World of Work (Environments; positions with which an incumbent interacts)
 - 2.1. Workplace diversity (multi-lingual; multi-cultural)
 - 2.2. Level and impact of position
 - 2.3. Organizational position (organizational requirements)
 - 2.3.1. Place within organizational structure
 - 2.3.2. Special demands relevant to organization in general
 - 2.4. Responsibilities
 - 2.5. Decision making, reasoning, planning, and scheduling (Levels of responsibility)
 3. Cognitive Skill and Ability Demands (Including KSAs, training, credentials, etc.)
 - 3.1. Mental knowledge and understanding
 - 3.2. Literacy and mathematics
 - 3.3. Mental and activity demands (largely demands requiring adjustment or adapting)
 4. People Demands
 - 4.1. Personal and social aspects summary (Scaled “People functions” from FJA)
 - 4.2. Personal and social aspects and communications required
 - 4.3. Communications (one overall item)
 - 4.4. Oral communications
 - 4.5. Written or print communication

¹ I am indebted to Dr. David J. Thomsen of PAQ Services, Inc., for providing a copy of the new form.

- 4.6. Other communications
- 4.7. Personal communication and interpersonal relationships
- 4.8. Types of job-required personal contact
- 5. Information and Data Demands
 - 5.1. Information and data summary (Scaled “Data functions” from FJA)
 - 5.2. Visual sources of job information
 - 5.3. Non-visual sources of job information
 - 5.4. Sensory and perceptual
 - 5.5. Estimation of information
 - 5.6. Information systems
 - 5.7. Information processing activities
- 6. Work Output
 - 6.1. Work output summary (Scaled “Things functions” from FJA)
 - 6.2. Use of hand-held tools or instruments
 - 6.3. Use of other hand-held devices
 - 6.4. Use of stationary devices
 - 6.5. Use of control devices on equipment
 - 6.6. Transportation and mobile equipment
 - 6.7. Manual activities
- 7. Physical Demands
 - 7.1. Full body activity – Strength
 - 7.2. Full body activities, body positions and postures
 - 7.3. Manipulation and coordination activities
 - 7.4. Outside physical working conditions
 - 7.5. Indoor physical working conditions
 - 7.6. Physical hazards
 - 7.7. Other physical job activities
 - 7.8. Job work period
- 8. Enhanced Analysis Input
 - 8.1. Pay or income items
 - 8.2. Aptitudes
 - 8.3. Interests and sense of accomplishment

Several differences distinguish PAQ statements from most task inventory items in addition to being worker-oriented. Each statement has just one response scale, but scales may change from one statement to the next. Many statements use response scales for extent of use, importance to the job, or relative time spent, but other statements call for different responses. Many statements are lengthy and somewhat detailed, with a variety of examples, and many contain long or uncommon words. This may result in less ambiguity in PAQ items for respondents who understand them, but they can be a challenge to people who do not read well. Readability problems, coupled with what amounts to a change in instructions with each change in response scale, suggest that incumbents in jobs requiring little verbal ability may find the PAQ difficult to complete. Such problems are reason enough for the strong recommendations that (a) the PAQ *not* be completed by job incumbents, and (b) that job analysts should complete a two-day training program in PAQ use.