
P. NIKIFOROS DIAMANDOUROS

Mr Erik Halskov
Director
European Personnel Selection Office
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Strasbourg, 20 -02- 2006

Own initiative inquiry OI/5/05/PB relating to the European Personnel Selection Office

Dear Mr Halskov,

On 10 October 2005, I informed you about the opening of my own initiative inquiry concerning candidates' access to the evaluation criteria established by the selection boards for written examinations. I also asked for a meeting between members of our services, in order to obtain more information about the procedures concerning the establishment and the application by the selection boards of such evaluation criteria.

The meeting was held on EPSO's premises on 25 November 2005. During this meeting your staff provided explanations on the nature of the recruitment procedures, the rules applicable thereto, and issues relating specifically to the evaluation criteria established by the selection boards. Your staff furthermore presented samples of recruitment competition files containing such evaluation criteria and other materials produced by the selection boards concerned.

On 13 December 2005, I sent you the report that my services had prepared of that meeting. By e-mail of 16 December 2005, your services submitted comments on statements contained in that report.

On 16 January 2006, your services kindly sent me copies of your recent "Guide for Selection Boards and Selection Committees" (the Guide), dated December 2005.

I am now writing to inform you of my preliminary findings in the context of the present inquiry, and to request an opinion.

On the basis of the above-mentioned information and materials, it is my understanding that the Selection Boards essentially establish, or may establish, three types of criteria for their assessment of written tests:

(A) *general* criteria, underlying the conditions laid down by the notice of competition, regarding the purpose and/or the content of the test;

(B) criteria for the allocation of marks, such as the weighting of questions; these are implicitly but clearly referred to in the Guide;

(C) criteria in the form of instructions for marking the written tests.

Criteria A refer to criteria which *elaborate on, specify the scope of, or present in a more detailed manner* the criteria laid down in the notice of competition. These criteria are *general*, in the sense that they are applicable to a certain *type* of written exams (which is why they may also appear in the notice of competition itself). For example, the criterion "thorough knowledge" of a language may be specified by the Selection Board as implying, *inter alia*, the absence of spelling and grammar errors. The condition to meet "the character requirements for the duties involved" may be specified as "knowledge of the field", "editing skills", which may, in turn, include sub-specifications such as "reference to key points", "ability to structure", "creative input", and so forth (cf. "Fiche d'évaluation finale du jury" in Concours EPSO/A/19/04 - domaine 2 - "Administrateurs - Ingénierie", épreuve écrite d), sujet 2 ("Réduction de l'émission de CO₂ des véhicules en Europe").

Criteria B refer to the *marking methods*, to the rules for the calculation of marks, for instance the weighting of questions and the value of the answers given. For a translation test, the Selection Board may for instance decide that a serious vocabulary error (e.g., use of a phrase which is irrelevant to the meaning of the correspondent phrase in the test) leads to the deduction of one point while a minor vocabulary error (use of a phrase which is relevant to the correspondent phrase in the test but which does not convey its meaning in a particularly accurate way) leads to the deduction of half a point. For an essay test it may, for instance, be laid down that "clarity and precision" have a greater weight in the overall evaluation than for instance "style, presentation". Such criteria may appear as inextricably intertwined with criteria concerning the propriety of certain answers (i.e., *criteria C*). For example, the Selection Board may say that a specific translation error leads to the deduction of one point. Or an instruction sheet may contain a bullet point overview of the key-elements that *must* be included in the respective parts of the essay (for instance specific historical developments, conventions, treaties and declarations), accompanied by instructions as to how many points should be awarded for each key-element (example taken from the documents copied at the meeting with EPSO on 25 November 2005).

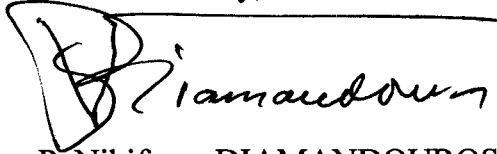
Criteria C must be deemed as applying criteria A and/or the conditions laid down by the notice of competition, regarding the purpose and/or the content of the test, in view of the *specific content of the selected test*. These criteria consist of *instructions* concerning the correctness, adequacy, structure etc. of the candidates' replies to the specific test. These instructions might include either *authoritative rules* to be respected

by the markers (e.g., a rule that a specific translation choice is to be considered as correct, or a rule concerning the elements that *must* be included in an essay), or *simple guidelines* about (i.e., *mere indications* of) what could constitute good or bad answers (usually the former) to the questions or tasks posed in the written test [for a translation test, these guidelines might consist of suggested translation choices for specific terms or phrases; for an essay test, it might consist of model answers ("corrigé type")].

I would be grateful to know your views on the above typology of evaluation criteria established by the Selection Boards, and to receive your opinion on the possibility of granting candidates access to these types of criteria.

I would be grateful to receive your reply by 31 May 2006.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Nikiforos DIAMANDOUROS', written over a horizontal line.

P. Nikiforos DIAMANDOUROS