

EPSO Competitions – problems with Prometrics (EPSO/AST/154/22 – ASSISTANTS (AST 3))

Element/Stage of the test	Problem name	Details	Importance
Phase: Test's format	Remote only test format	04/11/2022 EPSO informed the applicants that the tests will be organised solely remotely (notice of competition was published 22/9/2022 with closing date for the applications on 25/10/2022). Relatively short notice for someone not expecting it.	
		Necessary investment for some candidates to comply with the test conditions (e.g., hardware, software, internet connection). EPSO exams can become costly.	
		The physical examination centres provide a manual calculator and a pencil and paper which is more convenient and here it was totally forbidden. Only the calculator and scratchpad were incorporated in the PC, which increases the time for doing the calculations.	
		Burden for visually or hearing-impaired candidates (particular type of equipment needed)	
		Shift of responsibility for test environment from EPSO to participants. The responsibility for the internet & equipment is solely with the candidate.	
		No special leave without confirmation on sitting the test, e.g., in case of technical issues. In case you have technical issues to have confirmation for the exam, the special leave will not be approved for the exam.	
		Large amount of private data gathered by a third party (in ID card information). Access to private content on private computers. Possible privacy infringements.	
		"No right to privacy" stipulated in Prometric guidelines. Condition necessary to confirm to start the test.	
		Important amount of private data gathered by a US company Prometrics	

Commented [V(1): What does it mean exactly

Phase: Booking the slot of the test		Very long waiting time ("hours"). Case of 614 other participants in the queue, waiting for booking.	
		Slots available in "non-human" hours (outside working hours) also leading to confusion.	
		During the booking process a candidate was asked to choose the test centre first. His/her choice was Brussels, so 3.15 meant afternoon for him as there are no centres in Brussels working at night. The EPSO booking system is not clear and misleading. Questions refer to the non-existent "centres" instead of to the time zones. Since there was no indication of AM/PM it was not clear to candidates if 01:30 is AM or PM	
		Day time slots non-available or very limited choice	
	Hotline consultants	Hotline consultants not available or selected language not available or numbers not existent, or not able to reply. Operators speaking in strong American accent. Replies in different languages than requests.	
Phase: Testing the link			
Phase: Connecting for taking the exam		Not compulsory mock test but if not done and something goes wrong, they will not take responsibility for it and candidate cannot contest.	
		There were technical issues when downloading software for a mock test, which made it impossible to conduct it.	
		Technical issues with Mac PCs (sometimes issues appearing during the exam after successfully passing the mock test). On some new HP computers Prometric/EPSO software does not work.	
		Inconsistent replies on the use of Bluetooth mouse and keyboard.	

		Different language of the exam than booked, causing inability to start the exam and further issues with helpdesk. Official EPSO line is to continue in the wrong language otherwise the candidate would be disqualified.	
		Language information is not precise to which stage it refers to: exam, the mock exam, or the communication. Confused applicants were leaving the test upon advice of proctors "you have to exit the application and contact your test sponsor." Candidate not able to connect again.	
		Agent was not present to carry out a security check	
		Confusion on the language of the different stages of the exam.	
Phase: Taking the exam	Excessive control measures	Request from the supervisor to show a tattoo. Supervisor's comments on lack of light under the table.	
		Request to show body parts (e.g., shoulders) to the camera	
		Ban on pets in the room resulting in the animals meowing, barking, or entering the room by force leading to exams to be interrupted.	
		Candidate eliminated for going for some water during 20 min break, without prior authorisation.	
	Non optimal and non-standardised test conditions	Some home environments are not suitable for taking exams. Issue of equal treatment.	
		For privacy and conditions reason some candidates decided to sit the tests at work, with extra limitations which it may cause (disruption, closing of office in case of delay etc.)	
		Non equal conditions due to different technical equipment available (e.g., bigger screens for some; participants, if you have an extra screen but no extra keyboard and mouse, you will not be able to use the screen because the laptop must be closed during the exam.	
		Tests are designed for 19" screens whereas laptop screens are smaller at 17.3". This results in Scratchpad and calculator completely covering the questions. Waste of time for switching on and off the calculator and scratchpad. Some candidates could not find the calculator on the screen.	

		Not standardised approach for imposing the test conditions by various proctor agents.	
		Agents were opening chat windows during the exam, without any messages. It distracted the candidates.	
Other technical problems		Disappearing information from the screen during time slot booking.	
		Frequent technical problems making connection impossible.	
		Software crashing and screen freezing during a exam with time ticking.	
		Exam interrupted because "shade of green" on the candidates' camera.	
		Interruption of ongoing test by a proctor due to "technical issue".	
		Missing calculator at the beginning of a numerical test. First contacted agent stated that there was not any calculator provided for this test. Then the calculator reappeared at the 4 th question.	
		Request to switch to another computer during the test in case of problems. Test did not start after positive technical check.	
		Remote proctor system allows sitting exams 24h; however, no IT assistance is granted 24/h by the contractors and/or by EPSO.	
		US phone numbers indicated for technical support with "one hour on hold time." Problems were not solved, and high connection costs borne by the candidates.	
		Technical issues solved with proctors' staff via chat during the exam time.	
		Use of bots for solving technical issues (a bot referred a candidate to an invalid page or was not able to issue a ticket number). EPSO does not allow to reschedule exam without a ticket number.	
		Long delays in solving technical problems made taking exam impossible (lost transport options, closing of offices, breastfeeding, childcare, return home of partner)	
		Some exams due to technical problems lasted for 5 hours	
		Helpdesk not available	

		Limit of characters to complain to the EPSO does not allow to explain complicated issues related to the remote proctored exams.	
		The EPSO asks candidates to show proves of the technical issues to take their complains into account. This can be performed by taking pictures or screenshots; however, the proctor system disables the possibility to take screenshot, phones are not allowed and leaving the camera is also a violation of the rules. Prometric agents not aware of these rules	
		Delayed access to assistance with comparison to test centres.	
		Bad sound quality, strong accents or masks made communication between proctors and candidates difficult and sometimes impossible.	
		In spite of having successfully passed quality checks, technical problems reappeared during the exam.	
		"Security violation" messages appeared during the test or at the end forcing the candidates to interrupt their exam. No information was given to explain the reason.	
Proctor staff		Unable to solve problems on its own. Referring candidates to EPSO or waiting for a reply from EPSO. No help provided.	
		Examples of disrespectful behaviour, (e.g., shouting: 'Stop showing your ID card. Call prometric! Contact EPSO! Do you understand English!? Here we don't speak Dutch. You can quit the exam!')	
		Redirecting the candidates among different helpdesk agents	

Comments:

Most of above-mentioned incidents were source of a serious stress to the candidates