

## 2020 PMF Assessment Preparation Guide

### Revision History

Revision Date	Revision Summary
06-12-2019, 4:00pm (Eastern Time)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial release.</li> </ul>

## INTRODUCTION

This *Assessment Preparation Guide* (“Guide”) will help you prepare for the rigorous assessment process used by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to select Finalists for a diverse Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) candidate pool. An on-line assessment is part of the annual application to the PMF Program. This Guide is specific to the PMF Class of 2020 on-line assessment process and will familiarize you with its key features so that you know what to expect and are prepared to do your best. In addition, this Guide is the official PMF Program Office instructions regarding the on-line assessment process, including the instructions provided during the application; you should ignore any third-party guidance or what you may be told from former applicants, Fellows, etc., as these instructions and procedures may have changed since the previous on-line assessment.

You are highly encouraged to thoroughly review this Guide and refer to it as you complete the assessment process. **This Guide is subject to change and any updates will be identified in the “Revision History” above and the revised Guide will be posted to the “Become a PMF\Assessment Process” section on the PMF website at [www.pmf.gov](http://www.pmf.gov).**

This Guide will be removed from the PMF website after the application has closed.

**NOTE FOR CURRENT PMF CLASS OF 2019 FINALISTS:** If you choose to reapply, or attempt to reapply, to the PMF Program for the Class of 2020, by initiating an application and starting the on-line assessment, you will forfeit your standing as a current Finalist (5 CFR 362.403).

## ON-LINE ASSESSMENT

The on-line assessment is administered in an un-proctored environment and includes four parts: Situational Judgment, Life Experience, Problem Solving, and Writing. Each part is timed. The table below provides the approximate number of items and the time allowed for each:

Assessment Part	Number of Items	Time Allowed
Part A: Situational Judgment	54	60 minutes
Part B: Life Experience	40	30 minutes
Part C: Problem Solving	20	45 minutes
Part D: Writing	1	25 minutes

Once you begin any of the four parts, you must complete that part unless there is an emergency (i.e., natural disasters, fire, explosion, major structural failure, loss of electrical power, loss of internet connectivity). If you experience an emergency situation, you will be allowed to resume your assessment with the *time remaining in that part*, and prior to the application announcement closing. You will be presented with an *Interruption Alert* where you will be asked to enter an explanation. Upon submission, you will be able to resume where you left off if time permits. If the emergency requires you to leave your connection, we suggest you log out or close the browser to ensure the timer stops.

**NOTE:** An applicant may complete each of the on-line assessment parts at different times or all at once, as long as the applicant completes the entire on-line assessment and submits their application by the closing of the announcement. For example, an applicant can start and complete Part A and then start and complete Part B at a later time. However, once an applicant starts a part, he/she must complete that part.

The on-line assessment is designed to uncover evidence of the following competencies that are critical to success on the job across all PMF occupations:

- Adaptability
- Integrity
- Interpersonal Skills
- Motivation to Serve
- Problem Solving
- Written Communication

Descriptions for each assessment part, including instructions and sample questions, are described below. The use of a calculator is allowed where needed.

## **PART A: SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT**

The Situational Judgment requires you to read through a series of scenarios relevant to PMF work. The questions place you in realistic situations that you are likely to encounter as a PMF. Through a series of multiple-choice questions you will be asked to select an option based on how you would *most likely* respond or *least likely* respond in each situation. Questions in this part draw primarily on your experiences in working with and relating to others in a work setting. In each of the questions in this part, you are asked to indicate how you would respond in a given situation. If you are not currently in a work group, you can answer the questions based on experiences you may have had in previous jobs or in school, social, athletic, or volunteer organizations.

### **Situational Judgment Sample Questions**

Four sample questions are provided below to give you an idea of the type of questions you will encounter when completing this part.

**Directions:** In each of the following situations, you are asked to indicate how you would respond. No special training or experience is required to answer these questions. Identify from the response options the one that best represents how you would handle the situation. Select the response that is closest to how you would actually handle the situation, not the response that you think others might select or the response that you think is expected.

**Sample Question 1:** You are a member of a project team in your office. During a project meeting a colleague gives you a task that you do not feel qualified or trained to handle. Which of the following actions are you *most likely* to take?

- ☐ Complete the task as best you can.
- ☐ Complain to your supervisor.
- ☐ Ask someone in the office who knows how to do the task to help you.
- ☐ Explain to the colleague that you do not feel qualified to work on the task and you would prefer that the task be given to someone else.

**Sample Question 2:** You are a member of a project team in your office. During a project meeting a colleague gives you a task that you do not feel qualified or trained to handle. Which of the following actions are you *least likely* to take?

- ☐ Complete the task as best you can.
- ☐ Complain to your supervisor.
- ☐ Ask someone in the office who knows how to do the task to help you.
- ☐ Explain to the colleague that you do not feel qualified to work on the task and you would prefer that the task be given to someone else.

**Sample Question 3:** One of your customers has arrived at your office and wishes to speak with your supervisor, who is not at her desk right now. The customer is frustrated because she has left several messages on your supervisor's voice mail in the past week and has not received a call in return. You know that your supervisor is attending a meeting that will last for at least another hour. Which of the following actions are you *most likely* to take?

- ☐ Find out what the customer needs and interrupt the meeting.
- ☐ Find out what the customer needs and assure the caller that your supervisor will get the message.
- ☐ Tell the customer that your supervisor is not available.
- ☐ Ask the customer if someone else in the office can help her.

**Sample Question 4:** One of your customers has arrived at your office and wishes to speak with your supervisor, who is not at her desk right now. The customer is frustrated because she has left several messages on your supervisor's voice mail in the past week and has not received a call in return. You know that your supervisor is attending a meeting that will last for at least another hour. Which of the following actions are you *least likely* to take?

- ☐ Find out what the customer needs and interrupt the meeting.
- ☐ Find out what the customer needs and assure the caller that your supervisor will get the message.
- ☐ Tell the customer that the manager is not available.

- ☐ Ask the customer if someone else in the office can help her.

## **PART B: LIFE EXPERIENCE**

The Life Experience contains questions involving work- and education-related experiences. In this part you will be instructed to select one answer from among the alternatives presented. Some questions will ask you to consider your experience in working with and relating to others in a work setting. If you are not currently employed then you will be instructed to answer questions based on experiences you may have had in previous jobs, or in your academic pursuits. No special training or experience is required to answer these questions.

When completing this part, remember:

- Do **not** skip questions; it is in your best interest to answer every question.
- A response of “I don’t know” means that you would expect the other person not to know or to have no basis for making a judgment if asked to describe you.
- The term “peer” refers to co-workers, classmates, or other close associates.

Please note that your responses are subject to verification and deliberate attempts to falsify information may be grounds for not being selected or for being dismissed after beginning work.

### **Life Experience Sample Questions**

Two sample questions are provided below to give you an idea of the type of questions you will encounter when completing this part.

**Sample Question 1:** In the past when I have given a speech or presentation, I was likely to have prepared ahead of time:

- ☐ much less than others did
- ☐ less than others did
- ☐ about the same as others did
- ☐ more than others did
- ☐ much more than others did

**Sample Question 2:** When working as a member of a team, I prefer to:

- ☐ do less complex tasks
- ☐ keep a low profile
- ☐ always take the lead
- ☐ take on challenging tasks but not take the lead
- ☐ take the lead at times

## PART C: PROBLEM SOLVING

The Problem Solving part is the Professional Employment Test (PET). The PET is designed to assess cognitive abilities important for success in managerial and professional positions. There are 20 total questions for this part.

### Critical Thinking Skills Question Types

The PET contains four question types designed to measure various aspects of critical thinking. Each question type uses a multiple-choice format.

**Data Interpretation:** These questions consist of numerical tables with missing data. You must use the information in the tables to determine the values of the missing entries from among five alternatives. These questions require the ability to understand data presented in tables, demonstrate reasoning, and perform basic arithmetic calculations.

### Data Interpretation Sample Question

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT BY RESIDENT AND SEX (in thousands)

		Sex		Percent Distribution	
Residence	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female
Urban	260	143	[I]	55.0	45.0
Rural	95	57	38	60.0	40.0

What is the value of [I]

- A. 62
- B. 100
- C. 117
- D. 162
- E. None of these or cannot be calculated from the data provided.

The correct answer is C, 117.

**Reasoning:** These questions will provide you with a set of premises that are accepted as true and a conclusion statement. You will be asked to make judgments about the conclusion based on the information provided. The premises are based on hypothetical work-relevant situations. These questions require the ability to reason through information to form accurate conclusions.

### Reasoning Sample Question

Look at the sample problem below. First, read the premises that are given; then, look at the conclusion. Assume that the premises are true and decide whether the conclusion is:

- A. Necessarily true.
- B. Probably, but not necessarily, true.
- C. Indeterminable, cannot be determined.
- D. Probably, but not necessarily, false.
- E. Necessarily false.

Select the best answer and mark the appropriate space below.

Premises: If Mr. Brown receives his supervisor's approval, the new work schedule goes into effect immediately. The new schedule calls for Ms. Oliver's work hours to be 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Ms. Oliver's workday begins at 8:00 a.m.

Conclusion: Mr. Brown has not yet obtained his supervisor's approval.

The correct answer is A, Necessarily true.

**Quantitative Problem Solving:** These questions consist of work-relevant word problems, for which you must apply appropriate mathematical procedures to identify the correct answer from among five alternatives. These questions require the ability to solve problems involving mathematical reasoning and computation.

### Quantitative Problem Solving Sample Question

The City of Sandhill sold 500 tax-free municipal bonds at \$1,000.00 each. If one-half of the total amount generated was used to make repairs to City Hall, how much remains from the sale of the bonds?

- A. \$25,000.00
- B. \$50,000.00
- C. \$250,000.00
- D. \$500,000.00
- E. None of the above

The correct answer is C, \$250,000

**Reading Comprehension:** These questions present you with a passage to read followed by a number of statements. You will be asked to select the statement from among five alternatives that is best supported by the information presented in the passage. The questions require the ability to understand written materials.

### Reading Comprehension Sample Question

All states impose a ceiling on the total amount of unemployment insurance benefits any claimant may receive during a benefit year. This ceiling is most commonly expressed as 26 times the weekly benefit amount.

The paragraph best supports the statement that

- A. Claimants who qualify for benefits are entitled to the maximum duration.
- B. All states utilize the same method to calculate the benefit ceiling.
- C. Only one claim may be filed per benefit year.
- D. In every state, there is a yearly limit on the benefits that a claimant can receive.
- E. The benefit year used for unemployment insurance calculations is based upon the calendar year.

The correct answer is D, In every state, there is a yearly limit on the benefits that a claimant can receive.

## **PART D: WRITING**

This part requires you to provide a written response based on a question or topic provided to you in the assessment. This part is a very straightforward assessment that will require you to simply type a written response to a single, open-ended question or prompt. Superior written communication skills are critical for being an effective leader or manager. Accordingly, this part measures your ability to communicate in writing. This part is used to measure your ability to communicate an appropriate message in writing, organize content in a clear and appropriate manner, and use proper grammar.

Completing this essay is required. The essay is timed at 25 minutes and must consist of a minimum of 150 words. There is no maximum number of words; however, only a minimum of 150 words are needed for each.

A word counter is provided on the screen during this assessment part, as well as a timer to show how much time is remaining. When there are 5 minutes remaining, a time warning pop-up will appear. The essay must be organized into simple paragraphs only. Use of bullets or any other non-standard formatting is not permitted. It is highly recommended that you take this assessment without interruptions or distractions and use simple, concise language for best results.

**NOTE:** You are not permitted to cut and paste text (e.g., from a word processor or use CONTROL-C/V) or undo text (e.g., CONTROL-Z); such attempts will erase any pasted content, prompt an error message, and the system will record your action. Attempts or other suspicious activity may result in disqualification.

### **Writing Assessment Sample Question**

An example of the kind of question or prompt you will encounter when completing this part is provided below.

**Sample Question:** The PMF Program provides many potential opportunities and challenges for individuals interested in working for the Federal Government. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a career in public service.

## **CERTIFICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

During the on-line assessment, applicants will be prompted to certify that they completed each part of the assessment independently and without any assistance. **DO NOT** close your browser or exit out of the on-line assessment until you have certified your responses. If you do not certify your responses, even if time expired, your application will be deemed incomplete and you will not be considered during this year's application cycle. Applicants who make an intentional false statement, or commit deception or fraud in their application and its supporting materials, risk being fined or imprisoned, disqualified from further consideration, fired from Federal employment, and/or debarred from Federal employment (5 C.F.R. part 731).

## REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Reasonable accommodations are provided to applicants with disabilities when appropriate, as qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, or the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Applicants with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation for the on-line assessment when applying to the PMF Program. Requests for a reasonable accommodation for the on-line assessment must be received **before** the applicant starts the on-line assessment and before the application announcement closes to be considered. The PMF Program Office will review each request during the application process and contact you directly via email to adjudicate your request.

If you unsure whether or not you need an accommodation for the on-line assessment, please review sample questions for each assessment as well as technical requirements for completing the on-line assessment provided in this Guide. Keep in mind that the on-line assessment is un-proctored, meaning you do not need to take it at a certain location. You can complete all components of the on-line assessment using your personal computer, taking advantage of your own assistive technology. There are no videos or need for plug-ins (e.g., Adobe Flash). Both the application and on-line assessment are 508 compliant, accessible to people with disabilities.

### How to Request a Reasonable Accommodation for the On-line Assessment

If after reviewing the information in this Guide you would like to request a reasonable accommodation for the on-line assessment, please follow the steps below:

**STEP 1:** Once you have created your applicant user account, logged into the application system, and started completing the required steps under the “User Dashboard”, you will see a question about reasonable accommodations under the “Eligibility Information” section. Where prompted, indicate that you wish to request an accommodation for the on-line assessment and describe the specific assessment accommodation that you are requesting.

Upon submitting your response, follow the instructions under STEP 2 below. The system will immediately notify us of your request; therefore, you should make every effort to complete STEP 2 below in order for us to adjudicate your request.

- If you indicate a need for a reasonable accommodation for the on-line assessment, the application system will **not** allow you to access the actual on-line assessment until we adjudicate your request. You may continue with other parts of your application (e.g., submitting documents and reviewing previously completed parts).
- If you wish to void your request before we provide a decision, go back to the “Eligibility Information” section and indicate that you do **not** need a reasonable accommodation and submit your updated response. The application system will then allow you to take the on-line assessment without an accommodation.
- **You will not be allowed to request an accommodation once you have begun the on-line assessment.**



**STEP 2:** Submit any supporting documentation for the accommodation that you are requesting under the “Upload Documents” section from the “User Dashboard” screen in the application system.

- Supporting documentation must be from a qualified professional (e.g., medical doctor, rehabilitation counselor) concerning your claimed disability and functional limitations in relation to your performance during the assessment process (i.e., the specific tasks or functions affected by the disability).
- Please note that a “Schedule A” letter in and of itself is **not** sufficient documentation.
- **Your failure to provide supporting documentation may result in a delay or the inability to adjudicate your request.**

**STEP 3:** Submit your reasonable accommodation request and the supporting documentation **before** the application announcement closes.

**STEP 4:** The PMF Program Office determines assessment accommodations on a case-by-case basis based on claimed disability and documentation provided. During the adjudication process for your request, we will contact you via email to communicate our decision, next steps, or request additional information or documentation. Please ensure your email account settings will allow an email from a ".gov" email address (e.g., pmfapplication@opm.gov or no-reply@apply.pmf.gov). If not, the email may appear in a "Spam" or "Junk" folder.

If we contact you requesting clarification or additional supporting documentation and there is no response within 24 hours, we will adjudicate your request as is and notify you of the outcome.

- If the application announcement has not closed when notification of the accommodation decision is given, you must complete the on-line assessment before the application announcement closes.
- If the application announcement has closed when notification of the accommodation decision is given, you must complete the on-line assessment **within 48 hours** of the decision notice.
- We will adjudicate your request as soon as possible after complete supporting documentation has been received. We will be monitoring any requests throughout the application period.

## **SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ON-LINE ASSESSMENT**

Please check your computer for the following requirements **BEFORE** you begin the on-line assessment. System and browser requirements for the application process can be found under the “Become a PMF\Application Process” section on the PMF website at [www.pmf.gov](http://www.pmf.gov).

- Use a broadband internet connection. Dial-up connections affect the performance of the system and are not recommended.
- Use one of the following supported browsers:
  - Google Chrome (recommended),

- Internet Explorer (IE) 10 and above, including Edge, or
- Mozilla Firefox.
- Enable JavaScript and Cookies.
- Disable Pop-up blockers.

If you have questions about the computer requirements or encounter technical difficulties during the application and assessment process, click on the “Help” link on the top menu bar of the system.

## NOTIFICATION OF THE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

**Please note that the PMF Program Office does not provide assessment results and there is no appeal process. Applicants selected as Finalists are not guaranteed a PMF position.**

Candidates will be provided instructions on whether or not they are selected as Finalists via email. Please refer to the timeline posted under the “Become a PMF\2020 Application” section and any updates posted to the “News & Events” section on the PMF website at [www.pmf.gov](http://www.pmf.gov).

## CONTACT INFORMATION

All *general inquiries* regarding the application and assessment process must be sent via email to [pmfapplication@opm.gov](mailto:pmfapplication@opm.gov); this serves to document your request. The mailbox will be monitored during the application period. Contact the Help Desk for any *technical difficulties* during the application and assessment process by clicking on the “Help” link on the top menu bar of the application system.

We are delighted that you are interested in the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. The opportunities available to PMFs are as extraordinary as are the challenges facing our Nation today. The on-line assessment process you are about to go through is rigorous, demanding, and highly competitive, helping us find top talent with strong leadership potential for this elite program.

Please be sure to check often for any updates to this Guide. Applicants are reminded to check for updates throughout the application and assessment process.

**TIP:** Allow yourself plenty of time. Do not wait until the last day or last few hours to take the on-line assessment, as it will take anywhere from 3 to 4 hours to complete, in addition to any time needed to complete the rest of your application.