

### INTRODUCTION

Thank you for applying to the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. 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 a diverse PMF candidate pool. This Guide is specific to the PMF Class of 2017 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 assessment process; 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.

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 posted to the “Become a PMF\Assessment Process” section on the PMF website at [www.pmf.gov](http://www.pmf.gov).** Additional information about eligibility, how to apply, and the assessment process can be found under the “Become a PMF” section on the PMF website at [www.pmf.gov](http://www.pmf.gov) and within the application announcement.

### RETIREMENT OF THE PMF STEM TRACK PILOT

In 2012, President Obama directed Federal agencies to close the skills gap for mission critical occupations, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Beginning with the PMF Class of 2014, the PMF Program piloted a STEM track to address this skills gap. The pilot continued with the PMF Class of 2015 and 2016.

The PMF Program Office solicited workforce planning estimates from participating Federal agencies in identifying STEM-eligible disciplines and adjusted its recruitment efforts annually. A total of 53 STEM-eligible disciplines have been identified throughout the 3-year period. Those applicants with STEM-eligible degrees were asked if they were applying for the traditional PMF Program or the PMF STEM Track Pilot. Those who applied for the pilot and selected as STEM Finalists were only eligible for PMF STEM positions. Limiting STEM Finalists to only PMF STEM positions caused restrictions on appointment opportunities and appointment rates.

**The PMF Program Office decided to retire the PMF STEM Track Pilot beginning with the PMF Class of 2017** to enable those applicants ultimately selected as Finalists and having STEM-eligible degrees to obtain any PMF appointment (STEM or non-STEM). Additional information can be found under “the Opportunity\PMF STEM” section on the PMF website at [www.pmf.gov](http://www.pmf.gov).

**NOTE FOR CURRENT PMF CLASS OF 2016 FINALISTS:** If you choose to reapply to the PMF Program for the Class of 2017, by initiating an application and 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 three sections: Situational Judgment, Life Experience, and Critical Thinking Skills. Each section is timed. The table below provides the approximate number of items and time allowed for each:

Assessment Sections	Number of Items	Time Allowed
Part A: Situational Judgment	54	60 minutes
Part B: Life Experience	40	30 minutes
Part C: Critical Thinking Skills	42	50 minutes

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
- Motivation to Serve
- Problem Solving
- Interpersonal Skills
- Oral Communication
- Written Communication

Descriptions for each assessment part, including instructions and sample questions, are described below.

### Part A: Situational Judgment Assessment

The Situational Judgment Assessment 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 the Situational Judgment section draw primarily on your experiences in working with and relating to others in a work setting. In each of the questions in this section, 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 the Situational Judgment Assessment.

**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 Assessment

The Life Experience Assessment contains questions involving work- and education-related experiences. In this assessment 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 assessment, 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 the Life Experience Assessment.

**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

There are no correct responses listed for the *Situational Judgment and Life Experience* sample questions because answers to these questions will depend on your individual experiences, preferences, and opinions.

## **Part C: Critical Thinking Skills Assessment**

The Critical Thinking Skills Assessment requires you to read through a series of scenarios relevant to PMF work and respond to a series of multiple-choice questions. Thinking skills, such as decision-making, problem solving, and reasoning, are of critical importance for successful performance in PMF positions throughout the Federal Government. In this section of the Guide, you will read useful information about applying thinking skills on the job and doing your best on the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment.

The questions in the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment are designed to measure your ability to understand complicated situations and to derive correct conclusions from them. The kind of thinking that these questions ask you to do is the kind of thinking that PMFs have to do when planning and implementing projects, dealing with issues that arise, and interacting with colleagues and agency leaders.

The assessment asks you to make logical conclusions based on facts you are given about workplace situations. These conclusions need to be based only on the facts given about the situation. Therefore, answering correctly requires careful reading and focused thought about what information is given and what information is not given about the situation.

### **Critical Thinking Skills Sample Questions**

Three sample questions are provided in this Guide to assist you in preparing for the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment. The target situations included as part of these sample questions are similar to those found in the actual Critical Thinking Skills Assessment. Each situation has five questions. Read the situation carefully and then record your answer to each question. Compare your answers to the answers and explanations that we have provided for you below. You will receive the most benefit from the sample questions if you first record your answers before examining the answers and explanations.

In the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment, you are asked to indicate whether each conclusion is true or false or whether you have insufficient information to make a determination. Selecting the “insufficient information” response is not a sign that you are unable either to be a PMF, to make critical decisions, or to make decisions under fire. Choosing “insufficient information” means that you recognize that you would need to gather more information to know for sure if the conclusion is true or false. These types of situations occur frequently in real life. For example, you often have insufficient information to make a decision when you must first speak with your boss, check a database, call another agency, or check with colleagues before you make an informed decision.

## Sample Situation 1

*The following passage describes a set of facts. The passage is followed by five conclusions. Read the passage and then evaluate each conclusion against the following three options:*

- A) **true**, which means that you can infer the conclusion from the facts given*
- B) **false**, which means that the conclusion cannot be true given the facts*
- C) **insufficient information**, which means that there is insufficient information for you to determine whether the conclusion is true or false.*

Federal Agency X is responsible for monitoring unfair employment practices across the Federal Government. During the second week of March, there was a marked increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices in Federal Agencies. The second week alone accounted for 75% of the entire reported total of 120 unfair employment practices cases that month. There was also a dramatic increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action. In fact, for the preceding six months, whenever there had been an increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices, there had also been an increase in the number of employment applications submitted and an increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action. However, during the first week of April, when over 50% of the month's 180 unfair employment practices cases occurred, there were only a few reported investigations resulting in legal action.

### Situation 1 Questions:

- 1) For the preceding six months, whenever there had been a decrease in reported unfair employment practices cases, there has also been a decrease in the number of employment applications submitted and in investigations resulting in legal action.
- 2) In May, there will be more than 180 unfair employment practices cases across the Federal Government.
- 3) During the second week of March, most of the unfair employment practices cases for the month occurred.
- 4) Reported cases of unfair employment practices increased throughout the month of March.
- 5) Past experience has shown that whenever there has been an increase in investigations resulting in legal action, there has also been an increase in unfair employment practices cases.

## Sample Situation 2

*The following passage describes a set of facts. The passage is followed by five conclusions. Read the passage and then evaluate each conclusion against the following three options:*

- A) **true**, which means that you can infer the conclusion from the facts given*
- B) **false**, which means that the conclusion cannot be true given the facts*
- C) **insufficient information**, which means that there is insufficient information for you to determine whether the conclusion is true or false.*

Federal Agency Y is responsible for printing public information brochures. Whenever there is a sustained increase in print jobs during the evening shift, Agency Y will activate its Emergency Overflow Team. If an Emergency Overflow Team is activated, two employees from the day shift and two employees from the midnight shift will be assigned to a 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. shift. Their tour of duty will start at the beginning of the next pay period. These employees will be rotated back to their regularly assigned shift after the pay period is over. All volunteers for this team must contact the Supervisor in Charge (SIC) before the schedules are made for the following pay period. Because many employees on the day shift are committed to community outreach projects for the next pay period, the SIC expects that most volunteers for the first pay period after an Emergency Overflow Team is activated will be from the midnight shift. Most employees, regardless of their normal shift, prefer to work on these Emergency Overflow Teams when they do not conflict with other commitments.

### **Situation 2 Questions:**

- 6) There are probably some employees on the day shift who would like to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team for the pay period immediately following its implementation but do not.
- 7) If Agency Y has not activated an Emergency Overflow Team, then there has been no sustained increase in print jobs during the evening shift.
- 8) There will be some employees from the day shift who are available to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team for the pay period immediately following its activation.
- 9) When an Emergency Overflow Team is activated, all employees will probably contact the SIC before the beginning of the next pay period.
- 10) The SIC at Agency Y expects that most of the volunteers for the Emergency Overflow Team for the pay period immediately following its activation will be from the day shift.

### **Sample Situation 3**

*The following passage describes a set of facts. The passage is followed by five conclusions. Read the passage and then evaluate each conclusion against the following three options:*

- A) **true**, which means that you can infer the conclusion from the facts given*
- B) **false**, which means that the conclusion cannot be true given the facts*
- C) **insufficient information**, which means that there is insufficient information for you to determine whether the conclusion is true or false.*

In Unit Z, the supervisor is responsible for scheduling progress reviews for all 22 of her employees. The employees work in shifts. To complete all reviews without depleting staff resources during the 4 p.m. shift, she will schedule all reviews to start between the hours of 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. while employees are on the day shift. For the next three months, half of the employees will be available for appointments during these hours. Three employees, Ms. Smith, Ms. Ruiz, and Mr. Jones are currently on special assignments that will last for the next three months and will not be available during that time. In Unit Z, an employee must be on assigned regular duty in order to be scheduled for a progress review. The supervisor has been able to schedule all progress reviews to be completed within six months.

### Situation 3 Questions:

- 11) At least fourteen employees are not available to be scheduled for progress reviews during the next three months.
- 12) Ms. Smith, Ms. Ruiz, and Mr. Jones are not scheduled to work the day shift at any time during the three months after they have returned to regular duty in Unit Z.
- 13) One half of the employees in Unit Z are not currently assigned to the day shift.
- 14) All 22 employees in Unit Z will be on assigned regular duty at some point during the next six months.
- 15) It is not true that some reviews are scheduled to start before 8 a.m. or after 2 p.m.

### Analysis of Critical Thinking Skills Sample Situations

#### Situation 1

##### 1. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information)

The paragraph does not tell us about what happens when there has been a decrease in reported cases of unfair employment practices. Therefore, the statement that there has also been a decrease in the number of employment applications submitted and in the number of investigations resulting in legal action whenever there has been a decrease in reported cases of unfair employment practices cannot be evaluated. Question 1 should be answered “C (Insufficient Information)” because there is insufficient information available to judge this statement as true or false.

##### 2. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information)

The second sentence tells us that there were 120 unfair employment practices cases in March and the fifth sentence tells us that there were 180 unfair employment practices cases in April. However, no information is provided about unfair employment practices cases in May. It is not possible to determine from the information provided that the unfair employment practices cases in May will be more than those in April. Question 2 states that there will be more than 180 unfair employment practices cases in May. Since no information is provided about unfair employment practices cases in May, there is insufficient information to decide if question 2 is true or false.

##### 3. Correct Answer: A (True)

The first two sentences tell us that 75% of the 120 unfair employment practices cases reported in March were reported during the second week of March. Question 3 states that most of the unfair employment practices cases for the month occurred during the second week. Since 75% is more than 50%, it is true that most of the cases occurred during the second week.

##### 4. Correct Answer: B (False)

The second sentence tells us that 75% of the reported cases of unfair employment practices in March occurred during the second week. Since more than half of the cases occurred during the first half of the month, it is not possible for the unfair employment practices cases to have increased throughout the month of March. Since this is not possible, question 4 is false.

**5. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information)**

The fourth sentence tells us that, in the preceding six months, whenever there has been an increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices, there had also been an increase in the number of employment applications submitted and an increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action. Question 5 states that whenever there has been an increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action, there has also been an increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices. The fourth sentence tells us about *all* instances in the past six months of reported increases in unfair employment practices cases, but only tells us about investigations resulting in legal action when there was a reported increase in cases of unfair employment practices. It is possible that there are instances of increased investigations resulting in legal action when there was no corresponding increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices. Therefore, there is insufficient information to draw the conclusion given in question 5.

**Situation 2**

**6. Correct Answer: A (True)**

Sentence 6 tells us that many employees on the day shift are committed to community outreach projects for the next pay period. Sentence 7 tells us that most employees prefer to work on these Emergency Overflow Teams when they do not conflict with other commitments. Since many employees on the day shift do have other commitments for the next pay period, it is likely that there are some employees who would like to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team but do not. Question 6 states that there are probably some employees on the day shift who would like to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team for the next pay period but do not. Since this is true, question 6 is true.

**7. Correct Answer: A (True)**

The first sentence tells us that whenever there is a sustained increase in print jobs during the evening shift, Agency Y will activate its Emergency Overflow Team. This means that if Agency Y has *not* activated its Emergency Overflow Team, then there has not been a sustained increase in print jobs during the evening shift. Question 7 states this conclusion and so question 7 is true.

**8. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information)**

Sentence 6 tells us that *many* employees on the day shift are committed to community outreach projects. It is also possible that other factors could make an employee unable to volunteer to work on the Emergency Overflow Team that are not mentioned in the paragraph (such as scheduled annual leave, for example). This means that from the information given in the paragraph, we do not know if there are any employees on the day shift who can volunteer to work on the Emergency Overflow Team. Question 13 states that there will be some employees from the day shift who are available to volunteer for the Emergency Overflow Team. We cannot determine whether this statement is true, and so question 13 should be answered insufficient information.

**9. Correct Answer: B (False)**

The fifth sentence tells us that all *volunteers* for the team must contact the SIC. Sentence 6 tells us that many employees on the day shift are committed to community outreach projects for the next pay period and would probably not be able to volunteer. Question 9 states that *all* employees will probably contact the SIC before the beginning of the next pay period. Since only employees who are volunteering would contact the SIC, and probably not all employees would volunteer because of other commitments, question 9 is false.

**10. Correct Answer: B (False)**

The sixth sentence tells us that the SIC expects most volunteers for the Emergency Overflow Team to be from the midnight shift. Question 10 states that the SIC expects most volunteers for the Emergency Overflow Team will be from the day shift. Since this is not true, question 10 is false.

**Situation 3**

**11. Correct Answer: B (False)**

The first sentence tells us that there are 22 employees in Unit Z and the third sentence tells us that half of the employees will be available for appointments during the next three months. This means that 11 employees are available and 11 employees are not available for appointments during the next three months. Question 16 states that at least fourteen employees are not available for appointments during the next three months. Since this is not true, question 11 is false.

**12. Correct Answer: B (False)**

Sentence 2 tells us that all reviews will be scheduled during the day shift. Sentence 5 tells us that an employee must be on assigned regular duty in order to be scheduled for a progress review. Taken together, these statements mean that Ms. Smith, Ms. Ruiz, and Mr. Jones are not available for a review in the next three months. Sentence 6 tells us that all reviews were scheduled in the next six months. This means that inspectors Smith, Ruiz, and Jones must be scheduled to work the day shift some time during the three months after they return to regular duty. Question 12 states that employees Smith, Ruiz, and Jones are **not** scheduled to work the day shift any time during the three months after they return to regular duty. This must be false because, if it were true, then Smith, Ruiz, and Jones could not have been scheduled for progress reviews during the three months after they returned to regular duty.

**13. Correct Answer: C (Insufficient Information)**

The second sentence tells us that all reviews will be scheduled on the day shift. The first sentence tells us that there are 22 employees and the third sentence tells us that half of the employees will be available for appointments during the next three months. This means that 11 employees *are or will be* on the day shift during the next three months. We are not given information about how many employees are *currently* on the day shift. Question 13 states that one half (11) of the employees are not currently assigned to the day shift. Since we cannot know this from the paragraph, there is insufficient information to conclude if question 13 is true or false.

**14. Correct Answer: A (True)**

Sentence 5 tells us that all reviews will be scheduled while employees are on assigned regular duty. Sentence 6 tells us that all of the employees were scheduled for reviews within six months. Therefore, all employees will be on assigned regular duty during the next six months. Since question 14 states that all employees will be on assigned regular duty at some point during the next six months, question 14 is true.

**15. Correct Answer: A (True)**

Sentence 2 tells us that all reviews will be scheduled to start between the hours of 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. Since all of the reviews will be scheduled between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., it cannot be the case that any of the reviews are before 8 a.m. or after 2 p.m. Since question 15 states that it is *not* the case that some reviews are scheduled to start before 8 a.m. or after 2 p.m., question 15 is true.

## Preparing for the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment

The following section will give you some suggestions about how to approach the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment and some information that will help you further develop your reasoning skills.

### Reading the Paragraph

Every paragraph in the assessment is drawn from an incident that is relevant to PMFs. There may be facts in a paragraph that do not actually apply to every part of a Federal agency or that may not always be true everywhere. In any case, it is important for assessment purposes that you **accept every fact in the paragraph as true**. Remember that, in this part of the assessment, you are not being judged on job knowledge but rather on your ability to reason on the basis of given facts.

### Reasoning about Groups

Sometimes the decisions that you make are based on information concerning things that can be grouped or categorized and on your knowledge of how the groupings or categories themselves are related. The decision that you need to make may concern only two categories or may concern several categories. Below you will read about statements in which groups are related by the terms “all,” “none,” and “some.”

#### What To Do With “All” Statements

A statement about two groups that begins with the words “all” or “every” gives you information about how the two groups are related. Such a statement tells you that this relationship consists of the total inclusion of one group in another. For example, in the statement, “All the books on this set of shelves are about tax law,” the group made up of “the books on this set of shelves” is totally included in the group made up of “books about tax law.”

When people jump to conclusions, they have most likely misinterpreted a statement beginning with “all.” For example, from the statement “All the books on this set of shelves are about tax law,” you might be tempted to conclude that all of the office library’s books on tax law were on that set of shelves, but this conclusion is unsupported and might be wrong. The books on those shelves might only be part of the entire group of books on tax law. The sentence does NOT provide information on whether or not there are other tax law books that are placed elsewhere in the office library. Therefore, you have insufficient information to determine whether or not all of the office library’s books on tax law were on that set of shelves.

*That all the members of one group are also members of a second group is NOT a sure sign that all the members of the second group are also members of the first group.* “Every employee at this meeting conducts interviews on Monday” is not a sure sign that “all the employees who conduct interviews on Monday are at this meeting.” “All funding reports have been sent to Headquarters” is not a sure sign that “all of the reports sent to Headquarters are funding reports.”

On the other hand, when all the members of the first group are members of the second group, at least *some* members of the second group must also be members of the first group. For example, based on the fact that all of the tables in my house are made of wood, it must be true that (at least) some pieces of furniture in my house that are made of wood are tables. Based on the fact that all of Office X’s

vehicles that are under repair are in this garage, it must be true that (at least) some of the vehicles in this garage are from the Office X. Based on the fact that all of John's cases are unfair employment practices cases, it must be true that (at least) some of the unfair employment practices cases are being conducted by John.

It is also important to keep in mind that when all the members of one group are also members of a second group, it cannot be the case that some members of the first group are not members of the second group. It also cannot be the case that no members of the first group are members of the second group. If we know that "all training on new applications is conducted by the training coordinator" we also know that the statements "some training on new applications is not conducted by the training coordinator" and "no training on new applications is conducted by the training coordinator" are false. If we know that "all funds are recorded daily," we also know that the statements "some funds are not recorded daily" and "no funds are recorded daily" are false.

### What To Do With "None" and "Not" Statements

Learning that something is **NOT** true is useful information. For example, you may learn that one group or category of things is **NOT** part of another group or category of things. Here, you can draw conclusions about either group as it relates to the other since you can count on the fact that the two groups have no members in common. If you can say "no reptiles are warm-blooded," you can **also** say "no warm-blooded creatures are reptiles" because you know that the first statement means that there is no overlap between the two groups. You can also say that the statements "all reptiles are warm-blooded," "some reptiles are warm-blooded," "all warm-blooded creatures are reptiles," and "some warm-blooded creatures are reptiles" are all false. If you know that "none of those deported aliens were Mexican," you also know that the statements "all of those deported aliens were Mexican" and "some of those deported aliens were Mexican" are false. As you can see from these examples, disproved facts provide a great deal of information.

Many judgments are based on disproved or negative facts. As in real-life, in the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment, you will see phrases or terms such as "It is not the case that" or "Not all of the" or words that begin with the prefix "non-". All of these phrasings are ways to say that a negative fact has been established. Pay special attention to the entire statement that establishes a negative fact. "It is not the case that those applicants are graduate students" means "none of those applicants are graduate students." "It is not the case that *some* of those applicants are graduate students" also means "none of those applicants are graduate students." However, "it is not the case that *all* of those applicants are graduate students" only means "*some* of those applicants are not graduate students" and provides insufficient information to determine whether or not the statement "none of those applicants are graduate students" is true.

Sometimes, our speech habits can cause us to jump to conclusions. Most people would not make a statement such as "Some of the pizza has no pepperoni" unless they are trying to suggest at the same time that some of the pizza **does** have pepperoni. By contrast, a detective might make a statement such as "some of the bloodstains were not human blood" simply because only part of the samples had come back from the laboratory. The detective is trying to suggest that *at least* some of the bloodstains were not human blood. The rest of the bloodstains might or might not be human; there is insufficient information to make a determination. As you take the assessment, think about each negative phrase or term you find. Take care to assume only as much as is definitely indicated by the facts as given, and no more.

## Reasoning About Parts of a Group

The quantifying term “some” refers to a subset or subgroup of a larger set or group. For example, in the statement “some employees are taking that training course,” “some employees” refers to a portion of the set of all employees. You should note, however, that the fact that we know that “some employees are taking that training course” implies nothing about the remaining portion of the set of employees; other employees may or may not be taking the training course. From the statement that “some employees are taking that training course,” we simply cannot infer anything about the remaining employees. There is insufficient information to determine if all employees are taking the training course or if some employees are not taking the training course. Unless information is provided in the paragraph to the contrary, you should treat “some” as meaning “at least some.”

Statements that refer to a portion of a set may contain other quantifiers such as “most,” “a few,” “almost all,” or a percent, such as 70%. Also, as discussed in the previous section, they can be negative, as in “Many employees are *not* fluent in French.” Remember, from this statement you may be tempted to infer that there are at least a few employees who *are* fluent in French, but that would be jumping to a conclusion. From this statement alone, you do not know about the entire set of employees and whether or not they are fluent in French. In this and similar cases, you should remember that the quantifier restricts the given information to a part of the group and that from this information on part of the group you cannot infer anything about the rest of the group. Unfortunately, costly errors can be made by neglecting this principle of sound reasoning. As we said earlier, when all the members of one group are also members of a second group, (at least) some members of the second group must also be members of the first group. It is also true that when a portion of the members of one group are also members of a second group, (at least) some members of the second group must also be members of the first group.

For example, based on the fact that some of this office’s supervisors are in the meeting, it must also be true that some of the people in the meeting are supervisors from this office. If it is true that many of the award-winning employees are from this office, then it must also be true that some employees from this office were award winners. If it is true that almost all of the computers that are used at this office are laptop computers, then it must also be true that some laptop computers are being used at this office.

Sometimes statements about parts of a set are made using the term “only.” For example, “only some of the employees are fluent in French.” This statement means “some employees are fluent in French, and some are not.” When “only” is used in this way, you have information about both parts of the entire group of employees: the part that is fluent in French and the part that is not.

The use of percentages also describes all of the parts of a group. For example, the statement “of all employees, 30% are fluent in French” describes the complete set of employees. From this statement, you can conclude both that 30% of the employees are fluent in French and that 70% of the employees are not fluent in French. From the statement, “of all employees, *only* 30% are fluent in French,” you can still conclude that 30% of the employees are fluent in French and 70% are not. The use of percentages describes all the parts of a group whether or not “only” is used.

When you see a paragraph describing parts of a group, read the paragraph carefully to see if that description is based on knowledge of the entire group or only on knowledge of part of the group.

## Reasoning About Linked Events (“If-Then” Statements)

We are all familiar with the idea of a *chain of events* in which one thing leads to another thing, which in turn leads to a third thing, and so on. For example, “if a person is convicted of possession of a gram of marijuana in Aker County, that person is guilty of a misdemeanor, and persons found guilty of a misdemeanor in Aker County are fined by the court.” A chain of events supports reasoning backward and forward along the chain. Reasoning forward means that when the first thing happens, the later events will follow. For example, if you learn that Bill is guilty of a misdemeanor in Aker County, you know that Bill will be fined by the court. Reasoning backward means that the absence of later events suggests that the earlier events did not occur. For example, if you know that Bill has never been fined by the court in Aker County, you know that he has not been found guilty of a misdemeanor there. Furthermore, by reasoning backward from the fact that Bill has not been found guilty of a misdemeanor in Aker County, you know that he has never been convicted of possession of a gram of marijuana there.

The wording we typically use to indicate this kind of linkage between events includes the simple “if-then” statement in which the one event that precedes the other is tagged by “if” and the one that follows is tagged by “then.” An example would be the sentence “if Mr. Ramirez gets assigned to the Bike Patrol, then the Bike Patrol will need additional equipment.” We also use the same language to describe linked events that have occurred in the past. An example of that structure would be the statement “if there are tracks in the ground, then an animal passed through this area.” In this statement, the latter part describes an event that must have occurred in the past in order for the tracks to be present.

There is more than one way of wording the if-then relationship between statements. When a sentence starts with the word “whenever,” it means that a linkage of statements is being described: for example, “whenever I wear my identification badge, I represent the Department.” The phrases “each time” or “every time” mean the same thing; for example, “every time there is a power surge, my computer switches off.”

You can infer important information by reasoning backwards. For example, from the statement “when someone gets convicted of a third DUI in Aker County, that person goes to jail,” you can determine the truth of the statement “a person who has not been sent to jail has not been convicted of a third DUI in Aker County.” The absence of the latter event (being sent to jail) is a sure sign that the first event (convicted of a third DUI in Aker County) did not happen.

However, *the absence of the first event is NOT a sure sign that the latter event did not occur*; someone who has not been convicted of a third DUI could be sent to jail for some conviction other than a third DUI. If we only know that the first event did not occur, we have insufficient information to determine whether or not the latter event occurred. Moreover, *the presence of the latter event is NOT a sure sign that the first event occurred*; someone in jail could have been sent there for being convicted of something other than a third DUI. If we only know that the latter event occurred, we have insufficient information to determine whether or not the first event occurred.

We introduced if-then statements by talking about a chain of events because the idea of a chain of events helps to demonstrate how the if-then statement works. However, as you may have noticed, not all of the examples were about two events. For example, “an animal passed through this area” is a statement about an event, but “there are tracks on the ground” describes the present condition of the

ground, it does not refer to an event. This brings us to an advanced point that will refine your thinking about if-then statements. If-then statements connect two statements together, not two events. The two statements may both be about events, but it may be the case that neither statement refers to an event. In order to master the if-then statement, you must understand how to reason forward and backward about statements that are connected by if-then.

Finally, it is extremely important to pay close attention to the use of the word “only.” Consider the sentence “the safe will open if this key is used.” The first statement is “this key is used,” and the latter is “the safe will open.” From this sentence it is true that “if Bill uses this key, the safe will open” (by reasoning forward) and that “if the safe does not open, Bill did not use this key” (by reasoning backward). Now consider the sentence “the safe will open *only if* this key is used.” Unlike the first sentence, here the first statement is “the safe will open,” and the latter is “this key is used.” From this sentence it is true that “if Bill does not use this key, the safe will not open” (by reasoning backward) and that “if the safe is open, Bill used this key” (by reasoning forward). Finally, a sentence such as “The safe will open *if and only if* this key is used” is a very strong sentence which means that there is just one way to open the safe -- with this key. This sentence is actually just a condensed sentence of the following two sentences: “the safe will open *if* this key is used” and “the safe will open *only if* this key is used.”

### **Reasoning With Probabilities**

Some of the questions in the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment require you to determine the probability that an event will occur. You can determine a probability when you have definite information about a group. For example, if you know that 60% of all supervisors have taken the Leadership Development Center’s Basic Supervision course, then you can conclude that any particular supervisor has a 60% chance of having taken the course. You can also conclude that any particular supervisor has a 40% chance of *not* having taken the course. However, there is insufficient information about the entire set of people who have taken the course to determine either the probability that a person who has taken the course is a supervisor or the probability that a person who has taken the course is not a supervisor.

Here is another example. If you know that 55% of the employees in this unit are assigned to special assignments, then you can conclude that any particular employee in this unit has a 55% chance of having been assigned to a special assignment. You can also conclude that any particular employee in this unit has a 45% chance of not having been assigned to a special assignment.

Continuing with the above example, there is insufficient information about the entire set of employees to determine the probability that an employee who has been assigned to a special detail is an employee in this unit. Therefore, an assessment question such as, “if Mr. Jones has been assigned to a special assignment, then Mr. Jones is an employee in this unit, with a probability of 55%” should be answered “insufficient information.”

### **A Few Final Cautions About Wording**

There are assessment preparation classes offered by private firms in some parts of the country. In some of these courses, students are advised against choosing any answer in an assessment of thinking skills if the answer starts with the word “all” or the word “none.” This is supposed to be useful advice because it is believed that most correct answers strike a balance between extremes and usually do not

cover subjects that can be summarized in sentences beginning with “all” or “none.” If you have heard this advice before, you should ignore it for this assessment. “All” and “none” are valid quantifiers that occur in real-life situations and, consequently, you will be asked to work with them in this assessment.

In general, you should pay special attention to any words that provide information on categories or on linked events. This includes a wide range of negative words (such as “seldom” or “never” or “illegal” or “prohibited”) and negative prefixes (such as “non-”, “un-”, or “dis-”). It also includes positive words (such as “all” or “some” or “most” or “always”). You should also watch for connectors, such as “whenever” or “unless” or “except,” since these words sometimes contain key information about the relationships among the facts given in the paragraph.

English is a language that ordinarily uses single negatives. The word “not,” by itself, does the job of making a formal English sentence into its opposite: the opposite of “That bird is an eagle” is “That bird is not an eagle.” When an English sentence has two negatives, the sentence has a positive meaning. For example, a sentence that reads “This applicant is *not unworthy*” means that the application *is* worthy. The statement “the bell rang” could be stated “it is *not* the case that the bell did *not* ring.” The statement “almost all of these convicts are able to be paroled” could be stated “almost none of these convicts are unable to be paroled.”

### **When Taking the Critical Thinking Skills Assessment, remember:**

- Do NOT use any outside factual information to reach your conclusion. Work exclusively with the information provided.
- If you run out of time, guess. No points are deducted for incorrect responses.
- Ignore any patterns of A’s, B’s, or C’s on your answer sheet. These correct answer positions are chosen randomly and there is no way to improve your chances by guessing based on an answer sheet pattern.

## **CERTIFICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

During the on-line assessment, applicants will be prompted to certify that they completed each component of the assessment independently and without any assistance. Applicants who make an intentional false statement, or commit deception or fraud in this application and its supporting materials, risk being fined or imprisoned, disqualified from further consideration, fired from Federal employment, and/or debarred from Federal employment.

After completing each section of the on-line assessment, you will be taken to a certification screen to certify your responses prior to submission. **DO NOT** close your browser or exit out of the on-line assessment until you have certified your responses.

## **ESSAY**

During the essay portion of the application process, you will be asked to complete an essay about your accomplishments and experiences. You **must** answer the essay question in order for an application to be considered complete **prior to** the closing of the application announcement, on your own, without

any assistance. The essay response must be a minimum of **2,000** characters and no more than **3,000** characters, including punctuation and spaces.

You may use a word processor to draft your response and then cut-and-paste it into the text box provided. When doing so, please review your essay for formatting and spacing. Avoid using special characters, font attributes, etc.; if you cut-and-paste, be sure to double-check your essay for formatting. After entering your essay, follow the instructions to certify and submit your essay.

Essay **must be** entered in one session; however, you may make edits to your essay up to the closing of the application announcement.

## **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 reasonable accommodations for the on-line assessment when applying to the PMF Program. Requests for reasonable accommodations for the on-line assessments must be received **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.

### **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.

- If you indicate a need for a reasonable accommodation for the on-line assessment, the application system will not allow you to access the assessment until we adjudicate your request. However, you will be allowed to continue with other parts of your application.
- If you wish to void your request before we provide a decision, go to “User Dashboard/Eligibility Information” and indicate that you do not need a reasonable accommodation. The application system will then allow you to take the assessment without an accommodation. **You will not be allowed to request an accommodation once you have begun the assessment.**

**STEP 2:** Submit any supporting documentation for each assessment 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). **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 closing date of the application announcement.

**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, we will contact you via [pmfapplication@opm.gov](mailto:pmfapplication@opm.gov) to communicate the final decision, next steps, or request additional information or documentation. Please ensure your email account settings will allow an email from a ".gov" email address. If not, the email may appear in a "Spam" or "Junk" folder.

- 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 within 3 business days after complete supporting documentation has been received.

## SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ON-LINE ASSESSMENT

Please check your computer for the following requirements BEFORE you begin the on-line assessment. These settings may be different than the system requirements needed to complete your application. 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. Help Desk coverage is provided from 8:30am to 6:00pm (ET), Monday through Friday, excluding holidays and weekends. Calls that go to voicemail outside of normal Help Desk hours will be responded to the next business day.

## NOTIFICATION OF THE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Candidates will be notified whether or not they are selected as Finalists via email and on the “Application Status” section of their applicant user account. Please refer to the timeline posted under the “Become a PMF\2017 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 mailbox will be monitored during the application and assessment process. Contact the Help Desk for any technical difficulties during the application and assessment process.

We are delighted that you are interested in being appointed into the Federal Government as a Presidential Management Fellow. The opportunities available to PMFs are as extraordinary as are the challenges facing our Nation today. The assessment process you are about to go through is rigorous, demanding, and highly competitive, helping us find top talent with strong management potential for this elite program. We wish you well in the assessment process and hope to see you on the other side!

Please be sure to check often for any updates to this Guide. Any revisions will be posted to the “Become a PMF\Assessment Process” section on the PMF website at [www.pmf.gov](http://www.pmf.gov). 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 few hours to take the on-line assessment as it will take up to 2 hours to complete in addition to any time needed to complete the rest of your application and essay.

**Please note that the PMF Program Office does not provide assessment results and you cannot appeal your assessment results.**