

# Character Assessment Readiness: An Audit Tool for College Admission Offices

Character Assessment In College Admission | Summer 2020

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# Character Assessment Readiness: An Audit Tool for College Admission Offices

This tool is intended to help admission office leaders reflect on whether—and to what extent—they are using best practices when assessing character in applicants.

On the following pages you will find the content included in the template. To use this in your office, download the editable spreadsheet template from our website at: <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-colleges/character-assessment-readiness-audit>

Please answer each of the following questions about your institution by checking “yes,” “no,” or “I’m not sure.” Please also reflect on the “evidence” for your answer—how you know the answer or what the answer looks like in your institution. E.g., If no, why not? What would it take to make this happen? If yes, what does it look like? How do you know the answer is yes?

QUESTION	YES	NO	I'M NOT SURE	EVIDENCE
<b>Identifying:</b> We (admission staff) can articulate consistently and reliably the specific skills or experiences that we seek in applicants.				
<b>Identifying:</b> We choose to consider specific skills/experiences in applicants because research suggests that they are related to student success and/or they are connected to the mission and values of our institution.				
<b>Identifying:</b> We do NOT merge skills/experiences together for assessment purposes (e.g., We assess “grit” specifically vs. assign a “character” or “personal” score broadly.).				
<b>Sharing:</b> We share our institutional values and the specific skills and experiences we seek in applicants explicitly on our website and in marketing materials.				
<b>Sharing:</b> Where possible, we ask questions in our application that address the specific skills and values we seek in students (e.g., in essays, LOR, etc.).				
<b>Defining:</b> We explicitly define the skills we seek in candidates and our definitions are based in research.				
<b>Defining:</b> We develop examples of how these skills might present in an application for readers. Our examples are intentionally inclusive of applicants of all backgrounds.				
<b>Implementing:</b> We do not allow readers to evaluate character skills based on a “gut” feeling; we require readers to integrate evidence and/or use rubrics when they consider character skills.				
<b>Implementing:</b> As much as possible, assessment tools and processes are chosen and developed based on available research.				

QUESTION	YES	NO	I'M NOT SURE	EVIDENCE
<p><b>Implementing:</b> We provide high quality training to staff about character assessment. Ideally, training explains why this work is important, explores bias, and provides opportunities for practice using new tools.</p>				
<p><b>Implementing:</b> We collect data as we consider character (e.g., applicant “scores” or tags and/or feedback from staff about any tool or process used). This data helps us as we evaluate and refine our own tools and processes.</p>				
<p><b>Evaluating (our own work):</b> As much as possible, we work with research scientists and/or subject matter experts to conduct our evaluation work.</p>				
<p><b>Evaluating (our own work):</b> We evaluate and refine our measurement tools and processes over time by seeking informal and formal feedback from readers about their experience using the tools and the utility of the information collected.</p>				
<p><b>Evaluating (our own work):</b> We evaluate and refine our measurement tools and processes over time by considering how character skill scores/tags are aligned with other admission metrics important to our institution (e.g., standardized test scores, GPA, demographics, etc.).</p>				
<p><b>Evaluating (our own work):</b> We evaluate and refine our measurement tools and processes over time by reviewing how character skill scores are aligned with enrolled student metrics over time (e.g., Do we see any associations between character skills and academic achievement or leadership on campus?).</p>				
<p><b>Improving:</b> We are genuinely open to new ideas about character assessment (e.g., new forms of questions, processes, etc.).</p>				
<p><b>Improving:</b> We seek involvement with related groups and researchers doing this work.</p>				

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QUESTION	YES	NO	I'M NOT SURE	EVIDENCE
<p><b>Improving:</b> As reasonable, we share our experience and data with others in admission to improve the broader character assessment field.</p>				

Access the template as a word document here:  
<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-colleges/character-assessment-readiness-audit>

Last reviewed July 2020.

From Ross Anderson, T. & Weissbourd, R. (2020). Character assessment in college admission: A guide of best practices with accompanying resources. Retrieved from <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu>

Access our full suite of character assessment in college admission resources: <http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-colleges/character-assessment-college-admission-guide-overview>

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