

Assessment Centres

An Assessment Centre is a process designed to evaluate a person's capability to perform in a job. Candidates participate in a number of exercises designed to capture the activities of the position they are being selected for. The exercises are chosen based around the requirements of the position and the critical competencies that someone will need in order to be successful in the position.

Exercises can include the following:

- job specific activities, including word processing a document, "in-basket" exercises, setting up equipment for a routine laboratory practice
- job simulations, role plays, counselling simulations, problem analysis exercises
- group activities and discussions
- situational interviews
- leadership exercises and leaderless group discussions
- report writing and analysis
- oral presentations, such as mock lectures or seminars, mock press conferences, briefing sessions
- psychological assessment.

Any test conducted as part of an assessment centre must be in relation to the requirements of the position and must not disadvantage any candidate unfairly on equity or diversity grounds.

The benefit of an Assessment Centre is that it allows the candidates to demonstrate their skills through a number of job relevant situations, in which they are required to adopt behaviours similar to those that will be required in the position. As the candidates are put through a number of exercises, it is possible to view their performance from more than one angle. Trained assessors are utilised to provide an objective and comparative assessment of the candidates' capacity to effectively perform "on the job". It is recommended that members of the Appointment Committee attend Assessment Centre activities and observe candidate's performance also.

Assessment Centres tend to be time consuming – they typically run from half a day to two days – and they are resource intensive and expensive. They are therefore most effective for senior management positions or large scale recruitment efforts.

Assessment Centres are best used in conjunction with other selection tools such as interviews and reference checking.