



At the Assessment Centre

Assessment or Selection Centres consist of a series of tasks and activities that are structured around a one or two day period to assess your suitability for a job.

Assessment Centres assess your performance in a range of situations and are generally used as the second or final stage of the selection process after preliminary interviews have taken place.

The exercises are likely to be designed around the job competencies. With this in mind, as with interviews, good preparation is vital. Think about the job competencies and analyse how you might match your own skills, interests and experiences in relation to the job.

Assessment Centres may consist of some of the following:

Icebreaker exercises

These will be designed to help participants become more comfortable talking and working with each other. Exercises may consist of tasks where you learn about and introduce each other, tasks where you are asked to discuss a given topic in pairs and feedback to the group or exercises where you share ideas such as your 5 favourite movies of all time. Whilst you will be assessed for your participation this tends to be a more relaxed part of the day.

Group exercises

This may be a case study or a problem which you are given to solve as a group. You may have an overwhelming amount of material to look at or very little. You will be given a brief verbally or in writing and a timeframe in which to reach a consensus of opinion regarding a solution. You may be assessed during the discussion period in addition to the presentation period. Exercises such as this look at how you work as part of a team. Assessors can only mark on what they see and hear so it is important to participate. All graduate jobs require you to fit in and interact with many different people, such exercises are a good test of your ability to do this.

In tray exercises

In tray exercises are simulated business exercises where you play the role of a team member who needs to decide the order and priority to be given to the tasks of a busy day. You will be given a

selection of letters, emails, reports and memos in either paper or electronic format, similar to information someone doing the job might find in their in box first thing in the morning.



Participants need to read each item, decide on the action to be taken, the priority to be allocated to it and complete any related tasks such as answering emails or drafting a report. There is a time constraint on exercises such as this. This type of exercise usually addresses time management skills, writing skills, accuracy and attention to detail, ability to process large amounts of information, reactions under pressure, decision making and prioritizing.

Presentations

Presentations at assessment centres may take a variety of formats. You may be asked to prepare a 5 minute presentation on the day from a set topic or a topic on a list. Alternatively you may be asked to do a longer presentation that you prepare in advance and for which you may need to bring visual aids.

Psychometric testing

Whilst you may have already taken a series of psychometric tests prior to the assessment centre, you may be asked to complete another series on the day. These may include numerical, verbal, inductive reasoning, abstract reasoning, logical, situational or psychometric tests. Good sites to try out and find out about such exercises include www.shldirect.com and www.assessmentday.co.uk

Role play exercises

Role play exercises are an assessment activity where candidates act out an imaginary scenario that closely mirrors a situation that could occur in the job they have applied for. You will be given a briefing document that outlines the scenario, told your objectives for the exercise and given 20-30 minutes to prepare. This is not a test of your acting skills but how you deal with people in difficult situations.

Further assistance and resources

Attend Career Development Centre workshops. Come to a drop-in session to see an adviser. Check our website for further details of events – www.otago.ac.nz/careers

View our DVD - At the Assessment Centre

Useful websites

- www.targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice
- www.agcas.org.uk