Assessment Centre Hints and Tips

An assessment centre is usually made up of a small group of candidates and involves a variety of tasks and activities to assess your suitability for the role. They can last from a few hours to a couple of days and are usually the last stage in the recruitment process for large businesses.

What to expect at an assessment centre?

Assessment days differ greatly and are often hosted at a variety of locations, such as an employers' office or hotel. The tasks will be completed on an individual basis or within a group and may involve:

- Presentations
- Psychometric tests
- Written tests
- Networking events
- A formal interview
- Case studies
- In-tray exercises

It is difficult being judged for a long time on your performance, but assessment days often allow you to counteract weaker results in one task by succeeding in another.

How will you be assessed?

Employers assess how you interact with others, approach tasks, find solutions, and handle time management and pressure. They want to see if you will fit into their company culture and how you behave with all members of the team. In group exercises, they are generally looking for someone able to offer a solution, contribute to the discussion and work as a team. Key skills employers search for are:

- Teamwork
- Time-management (volunteering to be the person who watches the clock in group activities can demonstrate this)
- Organisation and planning
- Negotiation and communication
- Listening skills
- Analytical skills
- Decision-making
- Leadership
- Commercial awareness
- Adaptability

There may be numerous assessors present, including employees from HR, recruiters and line managers, and they will score your responses according to the key skills and values the job requires.

How to prepare for an assessment day

Thoroughly prepare for an assessment day as though you would for an interview.

- **Company Research** - Research the values of the company, learn about the job you are applying for and the industry you will be operating in, e.g. the company's website, LinkedIn, wider reading in industry press, talking to people working in the field, career researching websites: https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/job-profiles/home
- **Prepared Questions** - Research employees you know will be present on the day and prepare questions to show your interest, e.g. what do they like most about working at the business? How could you impress them within the first sixth months of working there?
- **Psychometric Tests** - Practice psychometric tests online and re-cap basic mathematics skills, including percentages, fractions, decimals, currency conversions and ratios.
- **Improvements** - Reflect on the previous stages of the recruitment process and think about how you can perform even better; contact the company for feedback to identify potential improvements.
- **CV and Application Form** - Revisit your CV and application form to make yourself aware of your key points.
- **Uncertainties** - Contact the recruiters if there is something you are unsure of.
- **University Advice** - University Career Centres often provide additional employability advice and host mock assessment centres and interviews.
- **Student Review Websites** – Student review websites often have lots of information about what to expect at an assessment day with specific companies and can help you with your research. However, these sites are only an indication of what to expect, so don't solely prepare according to what you read there.

Hints and Tips

- Make sure your working methods are clear to the assessors.
- Invite others into group discussions and appear approachable.
- Participate in conversations, including those during lunch breaks and the initial meeting.
- Continue to be friendly and polite to everyone during the assessment centre.
- Be confident during the exercises and try to demonstrate your skills.
- Try not to dwell on exercises you don't think have gone well and instead focus on excelling in the next round.
- Try to be yourself and express your true personality as assessors want to see your originality.