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Illustration by Priscilla Fung

How to prepare for an assessment centre

LCF Graduate Futures

What is an assessment centre

An assessment centre, or assessment day, are run by hiring companies to assess candidates' skills and suitability for a role. The assessment centre is a combination of tasks and activities. These focus on communication, teamwork, problem-solving, task management and leadership. Companies use a variety of different approaches through the session, testing your competency, strengths, technical skills and values. This can be conducted through groupwork, presentations, case studies and initiative exercises.

While companies would traditionally run these face-to-face, more and more are exploring virtual assessment centre platforms. Generally, you are assigned to a small group to complete your tasks, which allows assessors to observe. You will be briefed in advance and provided with a schedule, or any instructions for tasks to be completed before the event.

What to Expect

At the Assessment Centre, you will work on a variety of exercises, and may include an individual test. For example, numerical, personality, or logistical, dependant on the job role.

- **Case studies:** Scenario explanations
- **Group discussions:** Identify challenges and solutions
- **In-tray exercises:** Business related scenario and tasks to complete
- **Presentations:** In your group for the assessor to listen
- **Psychometric tests:** Online testing for a set time frame to complete
- **Roleplay:** Peer to peer behaviour and conduct
- **Social events:** Team interaction
- **Written tests:** Articulation and structure
- **Individual interview:** Usually with the hiring manager

Preparation

Preparing for an interview would be the same as preparing for an assessment centre. Here are tips to guide you:

- Contact the employer to clarify anything you don't understand.
- If you had a pre-screening interview, ask the company for feedback so you can reflect on your performance.
- Review your CV and application form and practice potential exercises.
- Give yourself time to practise and complete any preparation submission before the day.

- Revisit the job description to identify which skills and interests the company are looking for.
- Research the company, to share your views and ideas during the activities.
- Research the news, trends, competitors and history within the industry.
- Prepare your outfit, get plenty of rest before the day and arrive ten minutes early. This applies to both face-to-face and virtual assessment centres.
- If you are attending an office assessment centre, plan your journey
- If the event is digital, download all relevant documents and software. This information should be provided by the company before the event. Find a quiet place with good lighting, and ensure your camera and microphone are functioning.
- Check your internet connection and PC/laptop to avoid and issues.

Virtual Assessment Centre

A virtual assessment centre is usually managed by the Human Resources or recruitment team. You should receive a ‘welcome instruction pack’, providing instructions for the assessment centre. On the day, you will interact digitally with other candidates, uploading any preparation materials needed in a 'virtual room'. The company assessors will then join the platform to explore these documents.

Recorded interviews

You may be asked to attend a recorded video interview, up to 10 minutes, to answer some questions. This recording can only be completed in one sitting. Therefore, it is always advised to prepare and practice before you start. There is no right and wrong answer to the questions, this is simply for the assessor to gain an overview of you.

Stages

The online assessment platform provides stages that you are expected to complete. Most of the scenario tests are ‘blend testing’ which is about storytelling. You may also have scenario and numeracy tests combined, to enhance interactivity. The tests can take up to 25 minutes to complete.

Useful Links

- Prospects
- Practice Aptitude Tests Ltd
- Practice Reasoning
- SHLDirect
- Psychometric Testing
- Case study interview examples
- Assessment Day



Students working on laptop, © Ana Escobar