The British Psychological Society
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Division of Occupational Psychology
Applying the science of psychology to work

The Design and Delivery of Assessment Centres

A Standard produced by the British Psychological Society's Division of Occupational Psychology

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Acknowledgements

Notes from the Drafting Group

Our over-riding aim was to provide a document that could help raise the standard of Assessment Centre practice and in particular enable poor practice to be identified and improved. This concern very much influenced the decisions we made about the format of the standard and the way it was written. We are aware that there are many ways to support better practice, and in these notes we wanted to share with users of the standard some of our thinking in developing the document as we did.

The first issue was whether to develop a formal standard or to produce less formal guidance. We chose to develop a formal standard for a number of reasons. Firstly we felt that guidance is widely available from a number of sources. There are many practical books on implementing the Assessment Centre method as well as an extensive professional literature on what works and what does not. The British Psychological Society (BPS) published guidelines some 10 years ago and other organisations have provided similar documents. Secondly we felt that a well-defined standard would be a more useful tool in determining whether practice was appropriate. It would make it clearer whether a particular practice was appropriate and it would have a number of specific applications for which guidelines are less suitable. For example, a standard can be used to evaluate a particular implementation of assessment centre methodology; it would provide a specific indication of where the practice fell short; practitioners could use their conformance to the standard as a quality mark; a standard could underlie training or exercise design. We were informed by the model of test user standards. When that standard was introduced test publishers were free to determine their own rules for distributing test materials. With the introduction of the standard, and later the qualifications based on the standard there is a much broader consensus on the skills and knowledge required to use psychometric tests, levels of practice have improved and poor practice, such as selling tests to unqualified individuals is rarer and when it happens it is easier to recognise.

The decision to create a standard and not a guideline means that we do not usually explain why a particular practice is important or should be avoided. We have included notes within the standard that provide explanation of some points or discuss issues that a practitioner should be aware of but where it is not possible to formulate a clear standard on the basis of the current evidence or because what is acceptable will depend on the context or specific design of a Centre. We have also added a number of appendices which do provide some guidance on specific topics that we felt were important.

We were clear that the standard should be evidence based. It is the nature of our practice as occupational psychologists that we are informed by scientific findings to understand people and situations and to develop interventions. However, it does raise some questions. There are cases where the evidence is clear cut – such as the improvement in the quality of decisions when arithmetic rather than consensus based methods are used to collate the data collected at a centre. However, in other cases it is vaguer and a vague or ambiguous standard is of little value as it is impossible to tell whether it has been met. For example, while it is clear that the performance of assessors deteriorates as the cognitive demands on them build up, and that increasing the number of participants to be assessed, reducing the amount of evidence available, increasing the number of criteria to be measured and

reducing the clarity with which criteria are defined all increase the cognitive load, these are all difficult to quantify and they interact. To be useful a standard needs to specify how many criteria or participants an assessor can cope with effectively. In these cases we used our judgement based on both our experience as practitioners and the current state of the evidence to provide as specific a standard as possible. This may leave us open to criticism for being more specific than the evidence but our recommendations are always in line with the literature and by being more specific we feel the standard is more useful.

We often debated the level of detail that was required. We have tried to be specific enough that the standard will really substantiate the quality of practice but avoid the minutiae. We were informed by the research we commissioned on common areas of poor practice and ensured that these were well covered. Another issue was whether to reference the literature on which we have based the standard. We would have liked to have done this but we felt that it would make a very long document even longer, would date more quickly than the standard as better evidence and meta-analyses accumulate. More realistically it would have stretched our resources. However, the absence of a several pages of references does not detract from the evidence based nature of our work.

The form and structure of the standard were based closely on ISO 10667 – the International Standard on Assessment Service Delivery – and the standard can be considered as exemplifying in detail how ISO 10667 applies to Assessment Centres. We followed the ISO convention of using 'shall' to indicate a minimum requirement and 'should' to indicate a desirable one.

The process of developing the standard took over two years. A working group of the Division of Occupational Psychology (DOP) of the BPS, made up of highly experienced practitioners and academics undertook the project. The majority of the writing was completed by the Drafting Group but there were regular consultations with the full Working Group on matters of policy. In addition at several stages there were reviews on the work in progress, initially from the broader working group and in the final stages there was an open consultation to solicit comments from as broad a group of people as possible. We received comments both from members of the DOP and the broader assessment community including the CIPD, the UK Assessment Centre Group, and the Association for Business Psychology. We were gratified that while there were many comments and suggestions regarding specific standards, the vast majority of the responses we received were positive about the creation of a standard.

How to use the standard

We do not envisage that many people will want to read the standard from beginning to end. Rather we see it as a working document. Practitioners may wish to refer to the relevant sections for a particular activity they are undertaking, such as considering who should act as assessors or designing training. Someone commissioning a service provider might be particularly interested in the section on contracting, and whether the service provider adheres to the standard.

The standard could also be used to evaluate practice and is designed to supplement ISO 10667. While there is no formal accreditation body, a client or supplier could use the standard as a tool in understanding the strengths and weakness of their own practice or could seek certification from an independent standards auditor.

Centres are resource intensive assessment procedures and while the evidence shows they can be very effective, pressure on costs and resources can undermine this. This standard should provide useful support for the maintenance of proper levels of resource for a Centre.

We hope that this standard will help both those running Centres to improve their practice and those commissioning centres to select effective service providers. Most importantly we hope that the standard will increase the likelihood that participants in Centres have a positive experience and that they are assessed fairly and effectively with due concern for their rights and well-being.

Introduction

This standard defines good practice and provides guidance on best practice in employing Assessment Centre methodology to deliver Assessment and Development Centres in work related contexts. Good practice reflects a minimum acceptable standard of practice and is identified by 'shall' in the standard; best practice is an aspirational level of practice identified by 'should' in the standard.

This standard has been written to follow a similar format and structure to the International Standard for Assessment Service Delivery (ISO 10667-1 and ISO 10667-2). However, its content is more detailed and focused exclusively on the design and delivery of Assessment and Development Centres. It also incorporates responsibilities associated with Service Providers and Clients within a single standard.

Assessment and Development Centres (referred to collectively as 'Centres') may be run on an occasional as needed basis or as a regular recurring process (e.g. as part of an annual graduate recruitment procedure). They may be delivered for a Client by an internal or external provider as a single event or as part of an ongoing provision.

In all cases, there are those who are responsible for the design and delivery of the service. These entities are here referred to as 'Service Providers'. There are also those for whom the assessment service is provided. As well as employers, these entities can include organisations involved in recruitment and selection and those involved in post-hire development. These entities are here referred to as 'Clients'.

Clients are typically organisations wishing to assess individuals or groups within the organisation (e.g. making employment-related decisions such as recruitment, selection, development, promotion, outplacement, succession planning, skills audit and reassignment). Clients may also use Centres in the context of licensure and certification and in careers guidance.

Clients can be relatively distant from the details of the service provision when an external provider is used or closely involved as in cases where HR departments are engaged in the design and delivery of in-house Centres.

The present standard is intended to cover all these variations. Formally, Sections 1 through 9 constitute the Standard. Throughout:
1. Statements using the word 'shall' indicate minimum requirements for compliance with the standard and represent good practice.
2. Statements using the word 'should' indicate recommendations for best practice.

Where information is provided to help explain a statement, it is provided as a NOTE and does not form part of the formal standard.

Informative appendices are provided to assist in the implementation of the standard.

1. Scope

1.1   The standard relates to the occupational assessment of groups of people involving multiple methods and multiple Assessors to measure multiple work relevant assessment criteria.

1.2   Such assessments include those designed to provide multiple measures for each of the assessment criteria and involve a procedure for collating assessment data into a form that will support final outcomes or subsequent action planning.

1.3   Such assessments, typically referred to as Assessment Centres or Development Centres, are here referred to as Centres.

1.4   The standard covers:

  1.4.1   specifying the purpose and scope for the Centre;
  1.4.2   designing the Centre;
  1.4.3   the standards of competence and professional behaviour required of the different roles involved in the Centre process;
  1.4.4   preparing for delivery;
  1.4.5   implementing the Centre;
  1.4.6   data integration and decision making;
  1.4.7   appropriate reporting and feedback of Centre results;
  1.4.8   managing the data derived from the Centre including access, use and storage;
  1.4.9   evaluation of Centres.

2. Terms and Definitions

2.1 **Accommodation.** Adjustments made to the content, timing or administration procedures for the assessment of people with disability related and other needs. Includes, but not limited to, the legal requirement for reasonable adjustments.

2.2 **Actuarial Data Integration.** See Arithmetic Data Integration.

2.3 **Administrator.** See Centre Administrator

2.4 **Adverse Impact.** Adverse impact occurs when there is a significant difference in the success rates of members of different groups. The Centre is said to have adverse impact against the group that is less likely to succeed.

2.5 **Agreement.** A written record of what has been agreed between the Client and the Service Provider which specifies the nature of the Centre Products and Services to be provided to deliver the Centre, which can be in the form of a formal contract, service level agreement, a series of email exchanges, a project specification or any such combination.

2.6 **Arithmetic Data Integration.** Combination of ratings using a standardised algorithm, such as simple averaging, to provide a single score as the outcome of the Centre.

2.7 **Assessment Centre.** Multiple assessment process involving a number of individuals undertaking a variety of activities observed by a team of trained Assessors who evaluate performance against a set of pre-determined, job-related assessment criteria. The activities shall include Exercises and may also include, but not be limited to standardised tests, and structured interviews. It is likely to be used to support decision making in a selection, placement or promotion context with the Participants competing against each other.

    2.7.1   NOTE: In this standard an Assessment Centre is likely to have most, if not all, of the following features:

    2.7.1.1   more than one Assessor;

    2.7.1.2   multiple Participants; these may be external applicants, people already employed, or a combination of the two;

    2.7.1.3   multiple exercises;

    2.7.1.4   at least one exercise that requires Participants to display key skills or behaviours which simulate or are closely related to successful job performance;

    2.7.1.5   an exercise in which Participants interact with each other.

    2.7.2   Underpinning the design of the Centre will be a matrix of assessment criteria by assessment methods, which indicates the activities from which evidence about each assessment criterion will be collected.

2.8 **Assessment Centre for Development.** See Centre for Development.

2.9 **Assessment Criteria.** Those attributes or characteristics which the Centre has been designed to assess. These may be variously referred to as competencies or dimensions.

2.10 **Assessment Method.** Event or activity included in the Centre to allow evaluation of Participants. Includes but is not limited to: Exercises; interviews, aptitude or ability tests; personality questionnaires and other such instruments.

2.11 **Assessor.** An individual trained to evaluate performance observed in Exercises, with the aim of assessing a Participant's performance and providing appropriate Reporting and Feedback to Participants or the Client. Sometimes referred to as 'Observers', particularly on Centres for Development. Assessors may also act as interviewers or fulfil other roles and will need specific training in each area.

2.12 **BARS.** A behaviourally anchored ratings scale (BARS) is a scale where there is a clear behavioural description of the meaning of each point on the scale.

2.13 **Behavioural Indicators.** See Performance Indicators.

2.14 **Briefing Pack for Participants.** A set of information to be provided to the Participant which provides details about the Centre, such as the Policy Statement, advice on any appropriate preparation and more specifically the arrangements for attending the Centre.

2.15 **Candidate.** Another term for Participant, which is usually used when the purpose of the assessment process (of which the Centre is a part) is to make a selection recommendation.

2.16 **Centre.** The generic term referring to either an Assessment or Development Centre or some form of hybrid.

2.17 **Centre Administrator.** An individual who carries out administrative tasks at the Centre under the direction of the Centre Manager. These may include, but are not limited to, managing documentation, collating ratings and scores, and scoring standardised tests.

2.18 **Centre Designer.** An individual trained to put together a working plan, specify and, if appropriate, create the content of a Centre.

2.19 **Centre for Development.** A Centre similar to an Assessment Centre but the emphasis is on identifying training or development needs and establishing a development plan, as opposed to a pass or fail event. In some Centres for Development, often called Development Centres, development activities are integrated into the Centre process. Such development activities are not covered by this Standard.

2.20 **Centre Manager.** An individual trained to manage a Centre to ensure standards are maintained and the timetable and venue operate successfully.

2.21 **Chair of the Feedback Generation Meeting.** See Feedback Generation Meeting Chair.

2.22 **Client.** An individual, department or organisation who establishes an Agreement with a Service Provider to deliver the Centre(s) and all associated elements, in order to meet the specified requirements.

2.23 **Competence.** Possessing an adequate level of knowledge, skill and personal capacity to fulfil specified duties to a defined standard.

2.24 **Competencies.** Key behavioural attributes that exemplify successful performance within a job role (or group of roles). In this Standard these are referred to as Assessment Criteria. See also Dimensions.

2.25 **Consensus Meeting.** See Feedback Generation Meeting.

2.26 **Data.** Ratings, scores, notes and reports, based on the Participants' performance, which form the basis of the results. See also Personal Data.

2.27 **Data Controller.** Person or entity who (either alone or jointly or in common with other persons or entities) determines the purposes for which and the manner in which any personal data are, or are to be, processed.

2.28 **Data Integrator.** Person involved with integrating Centre scores.

2.29 **Data Integration.** The process of determining the degree to which the performance of a Participant meets the assessment criteria for the Centre.

2.30 **Data Processor.** Person (other than an employee of the Data Controller) or entity who processes the data on behalf of the Data Controller.

2.31 **Data Protection.** Procedures adopted to ensure that personal data is held securely and not made available other than to authorised personnel. Law relating to what may and may not be done with personal data.

2.32 **Designer.** See Centre Designer

2.33 **Development Centre.** See Centre for Development.

2.34 **Dimensions.** Sometimes used to refer to the aspects of performance being measured in a centre. In this standard these are referred to as Assessment Criteria. See also Competencies.

2.35 **Disability Related and Other Particular Needs.** Factors, including but not limited to disabilities, which may affect a person's ability to complete assessment Exercises independent of how well they meet the assessment criteria and for which accommodations should be provided where appropriate.

2.36 **End-user.** The stakeholder(s) who will use the Centre results to guide decisions regarding the selection, promotion, placement or development of the Participants.

2.37 **Evidence-based.** Inferences based on systematically collected empirical information and data which support the quality and relevance of the outcome.

2.38 **Exercise.** A task or activity which replicates or simulates the tasks that an individual does within a job role.

2.39 **Face Validity.** The extent to which some process, activity or other aspect of a Centre gives the appearance of being relevant irrespective of the extent to which it can be shown to be valid empirically.

2.40 **Facilitator.** Sometimes used to refer to the Centre Manager. See Centre Manager

2.41 **Fact-Find Administrator.** An individual trained to administer a Fact-Find exercise with Participants.

2.42 **Fairness.** Assessments are fair when they are made on the basis of objective evidence and free from intended or unintended biases that affect the accuracy of conclusions for some Participants.

2.43 **Feedback.** An oral or written process which provides information to the Participants about their Centre results.

2.44 **Feedback Generation Meeting.** A process within or sometimes subsequent to the Centre, at which each Participant's performance is discussed and their overall success, strengths and weaknesses are determined for the purposes of providing developmental feedback. Sometimes referred to as the 'Wash-up' or Consensus Meeting.

2.45 **Feedback Generation Meeting Chair.** Person who chairs the meeting to agree key points of feedback for participants.

2.46 **Feedback Generator.** Person who develops feedback for participants usually through participation in a Feedback Generation Meeting. Feedback Generators are typically also assessors at the Centre.

2.47 **Fidelity.** The similarity of the assessment to the job or role content and context.

2.48 **Informed Consent.** A decision to take part in a process or event based on sufficient prior information being provided regarding the detail of the event, conditions for taking part and the consequences of consent.

2.49 **Job Analysis.** A structured process for defining the key elements of a job, role, or job level, which specifically identifies a clear set of performance criteria, which are linked to successful performance.

    2.49.1   NOTE: Successful performance in any job is likely to be founded on a combination of things, such as: disposition, attitudes, particular skills that have been developed over time, energy levels, ways of thinking or problem-solving and knowledge. One of the objectives of a job analysis is to determine which of these things are most important in the target job – particularly in the future. Other aspects of appropriate job analysis include understanding the context that behaviour takes place in and the level of difficulty of common problems encountered in the job.

2.50 **Overall Centre Rating (OCR).** A single score, derived arithmetically from Centre ratings which represents the Centre outcome for a Participant. (Not to be confused with Overall Assessment Rating (OAR) which can refer to a final outcome derived from a consensus discussion.)

2.51 **Observer.** Another term used for an Assessor often used in Centres for Development, where the emphasis of the role may be less about assessment and more about development.

2.52 **ORCE.** Acronym for the best practice assessment or observation strategy of *Observing* and *Recording* behaviour, *Classifying* against Assessment Criteria and *Evaluating* using an agreed evaluation system.

2.53 **Participant.** An individual who participates in a Centre in order to be assessed, so that their performance can be evaluated in keeping with the purpose of that particular Centre.

2.54 **Performance Criteria.** Measures of work performance or outcomes used in assessing the effectiveness, predictive value or utility of the Centre results.
    2.54.1   NOTE: The word criteria is sometimes used to refer to the dimensions or competencies measured at the Centre. In this standard these are referred to as Assessment Criteria.

2.55 **Performance Indicators.** Examples of required behaviours when using behavioural criteria or examples of required outputs when using task based criteria.

2.56 **Personal Data.** Any information that is identifiably related to a particular person.

2.57 **Personal Development Plan.** An action plan usually developed by the Participant, sometimes with input from Assessors, Observers, Coaches or Line Managers, which aims to help the Participant tackle some of the identified development needs.
    2.57.1   NOTE: Such plans are more commonly associated with Centres for Development, although they can be produced after Centres for Assessment, particularly with successful hires or internal Participants.

2.58 **Piloting.** Checking the logistics of a centre by conducting a practice run of the event.

2.59 **Policy Statement.** A document which clearly sets out the purpose of the Centre and explains in broad terms how it will be run, how the data will be used and who has access to it, how feedback will be given and what appeal procedures will apply.

2.60 **Post-Centre Review.** Evaluation of the extent to which the Centre met its objectives, including the requirements set out in the Agreement between the Client and the Service Provider, together with identification of any lessons learned and opportunities for future improvements.

2.61 **Professional.** Acting in a manner consistent with conduct and practices, including where applicable a code of ethics, adopted by or associated with the assessment profession, requiring systematic knowledge and proficiency, and being aware of one's limitations and not acting outside one's area of competence.

2.62 **Psychometric Test Administrator.** An individual competent to administer psychometric tests.

2.63 **Psychometric Test User.** An individual competent to select, administer and interpret psychometric tests.

2.64 **Quantitative Analysis.** Examination of measurable and verifiable numerical information, often using statistical techniques.

2.65 **Qualitative Analysis.** Examination of non-measurable data such as feedback and observations from individuals involved in the Centre.

2.66 **Reliability.** Consistency or accuracy of an assessment measure or process. More reliable measures are less subject to measurement error.

2.67 **Reports.** Information about individual Participants or collective results provided in paper or electronic form to relevant third parties.

2.68 **Resources.** Includes but is not limited to: personnel; materials; equipment; rooms and general facilities at the venue.

2.69 **Role-player.** An individual trained to interact with Participants in a defined role within an Exercise to elicit behaviour on which assessments will be made.

2.70 **Security.** Protecting access to Centre materials, scores, reports and other confidential information, to ensure an appropriate level of privacy and data protection is maintained and that Participants do not gain unfair advantage by prior knowledge of Exercises.

2.71 **Service Provider.** The person or organisation that supplies Centre services on behalf of the Client. May be an external contractor or direct employee of the Client.

2.72 **Services.** Covers any or all of the following: designing the Centre, the Exercises or other assessments; providing resources in the capacity of Centre Manager, Assessor, Role-player, Trainer or Administrative Support.

2.73 **Simulation Exercise.** See Exercise.

2.74 **Stakeholders.** People or groups who have some interest in the outcome of an assessment centre. Includes but not restricted to: Participants; Assessors; Line Managers; Coaches; Board Members; Union Representatives and other interested parties.

2.75 **Standardised Procedures.** The extent to which Centre procedures are based upon detailed rules and specifications, including all administrative guidance from the Centre Designer or Manager, in order to maintain a uniform assessment process, scoring and interpreting of results, so that the conditions are comparable for all Participants.

2.76 **Trialling.** Testing the efficacy and measurement properties of individual exercises to ensure they are fit for purpose.

2.77 **Utility.** The added value to the Client of using a Centre, taking into account the benefits accruing (better selection decisions, improved development of staff) and the costs associated with its delivery.

2.78 **Validity.** The extent to which the data from the Centre (or elements of it) are fit for purpose and measure what they are intended to measure. This may include the extent to which the process predicts subsequent job or training performance, or whether the process reflects key job behaviours or traits.

    2.78.1   NOTE: Different forms of validity are recognised. These include but are not limited to: face validity (whether an Exercise looks relevant), content validity (whether the Exercise reflects relevant role demands), criterion-related validity (whether scores relate to performance criteria) and construct validity (whether the Centre measures what it was intended to measure). Measures of criterion-related validity can be predictive or concurrent.

2.79 **Virtual Centre.** A Centre in which Participants participate, interact or are assessed remotely, through the use of technology.

2.80 **Wash-up.** See Feedback Generation Meeting.

3.   Contracting and Scoping

This section defines the standard for the process of defining the scope of the Centre or set of Centres and the process Service Providers and Clients should follow in agreeing a contract for the Centre provision.

3.1   In selecting a Service Provider (whether internal or external), the Client should consider the evidence supporting the provider's competence to carry out the required services and the ability of the Service Provider to comply with all legal and regulatory standards and requirements relating to the design and delivery of Centre procedures and the management of Participant data.

3.1.1   NOTE:

3.1.1.1   In order to reach an agreement, it is important that the Client communicates clearly what the assessment needs are and that the Service Provider understands these needs in order to provide a Centre which is fit for purpose.

3.1.1.2   The Client needs to be able to take advice from the Service Provider regarding technical and ethical matters and the Service Provider should provide advice to the Client on these matters even where the Client does not explicitly ask for this. In particular it is for the Service Provider to ensure that the agreed service is to proper professional and ethical standards.

3.1.1.3   The final agreement may need to be developed in stages. For example at an initial meeting the Client may agree to contract with the Service Provider and specify the context and assessment need. The Service Provider will then take some time to design an appropriate Centre and submit this to the Client for approval. There will typically be some negotiation regarding the detail of the design before a fully specified plan can be documented and agreed by both parties.

Specification of purpose and scope

3.2   The Client shall discuss its assessment needs with potential or currently contracted Service Providers and provide supporting documentation where this is available.

3.3   The Client and the Service Provider shall agree on the purpose of the Centre and details of the services required to deliver the Centre.

3.4   The Service Provider shall advise the Client where a Centre may not offer the most appropriate response for the proposed assessment need.

3.4.1   NOTE: Such occasions could include:

3.4.1.1   When an alternative approach offers a more cost-effective and valid approach.

3.4.1.2   When there is insufficient time or other resources to undertake all necessary stages to implement a Centre.

3.4.1.3   When there is little or no managerial commitment to the Centre process or outcomes.

3.4.1.4   When assessing for redundancy where there is no change to the job role.

3.5 Both the Client and the Service Provider shall consider issues such as the purpose of the Centre, the demographics of the Centre Participants, relevant biographical data, and how final outcomes will be made and reported.

3.6 The specification of purposes and scope shall include the service to be delivered and the respective roles and responsibilities of all the parties in the process.

3.7 The purpose of the Centre shall be clearly defined, including whether it is for use in a selection procedure, succession planning, personal development or other purpose.

3.8 The scope of the Centre shall be clarified including the range of assessment criteria that need to be assessed, and the range and types of methods and instruments required for the assessment.

3.9 Limitations and constraints shall be identified including time and logistic constraints on the delivery of the Centre or Centres.

Service Provider responsibilities

3.10 The Service Provider shall take an evidence-based approach to Centre provision and should provide Clients with access to documentation supporting the validity of the approach.

3.11 The Service Provider shall identify and address ethical, professional and legal issues in the design, implementation and review of the Centre. Relevant legal considerations shall be considered for the Centre including equality and data protection legislation.

3.12 The Service Provider shall assume responsibility for ensuring that all those who contribute to the Centre in any capacity are competent to do so. Where such people are employed by the Service Provider, it shall ensure their competence through appropriate training and, where relevant, qualification. Where such people are employed by the Client or third parties, the Service Provider shall provide clear specifications of the competence required to the Client or other parties.

    3.12.1 NOTE: Members of the Client's staff are often involved in administrative or Assessor roles. Where this is the case, the Client is responsible for ensuring adequate levels of competence while the Service Provider is responsible for specifying the competencies and experience that arerequired. Provision of appropriate training to employees of the Client who will be involved in the Centre may be part of the contract between the Service Provider and the Client.

3.13 The Service Provider shall work to current accepted technical and professional standards and ensure all those who work for it are suitably qualified and are competent in their respective areas of practice.

Client responsibilities

3.14 The Client shall ensure that the Service Provider has the capability to deliver the service before contracting.

3.15 The Client shall be responsible for determining the assessment need and ensuring that the Centre addresses an appropriate and legitimate aim.

3.16 The Client shall comply with ethical, legal or professional requirements raised by the Service Provider.

3.17 The Client shall ensure that Centre Participants are provided with appropriate information about the process such that they are able to give informed consent for their participation and use of the assessment data generated in the Centre.

3.18 The Client shall only use the assessment data within the bounds of the informed consent provided by Participants.

Evaluation and Monitoring

3.19 The Client and Service Provider shall agree procedures for monitoring the progress of the Centre and evaluation of the Centre. These procedures shall include but not be limited to the collection of demographic data from Participants for monitoring purposes, monitoring of the performance of Assessors, adherence to specified practices and procedures, provision for the capturing of comments and feedback from Participants, escalation procedures for coping with unexpected events or situations and convening Post-Centre evaluation meetings (see Section 9).

   3.19.1   NOTE: Demographic data from Assessors is an example of additional data that could be collected to help in understanding the evaluation and monitoring outcomes.

Supplementary research

3.20 Whenever possible the opportunity should be taken to use the data from Centres for purposes of improving the quality of future Centres. Clients shall be encouraged to include in their agreement with Service Providers post-Centre procedures such as validation studies, applicant reaction studies and evaluations of the impact of the Centres on business outcomes.

Sign off on design, resourcing and implementation

3.21 Prior to any work on the implementation of the Centre, the chosen Service Provider and the Client shall reach agreement on the detailed specifications of the service to be provided including all practical, administrative and logistical details.

3.22 The agreement shall include, but not be limited to:

   3.22.1   a justification for the inclusion of each of the proposed methods or procedures of assessment;

   3.22.2   provision for accommodations that may need to be made for people with disability related and other needs;

   3.22.3   an explanation of how the results of each procedure should be brought together to produce an overall Centre rating, where relevant;

   3.22.4   a risk assessment of relevant issues, such as data security and privacy, ensuring consent and legal compliance.

3.23 The agreement shall also cover, but not be limited to, some or all of the following:

   3.23.1   the objectives for the process (e.g. assessment for selection, promotion, succession planning or development);

   3.23.2   specification of the number and duration of the Centres;

3.23.3   project start and end dates where relevant;

3.23.4   details of the Centre procedures that will be used and how they relate to the assessment criteria;

3.23.5   competence requirements for assessors and other Centre personnel and provisions for the supply of their training;

3.23.6   procedures for managing and combining the data obtained and for reporting results;

3.23.7   how issues of data security and data privacy will be managed;

3.23.8   compliance with relevant Client policies and with professional, legal and regulatory requirements;

3.23.9   the procedures to be followed to ensure the informed consent of Centre participants and what provisions will be made for providing them with feedback on their performance;

3.23.10   identification of costs and resource requirement including personnel, equipment and space;

3.23.11   procedures for conducting post-Centre reviews.

3.24 The agreement shall balance budgetary constraints, with the need to ensure that the recommended approach will achieve its intended aim without compromising standards. Where an alternate assessment method has been proposed to meet budgetary constraints, the Service Provider should include empirical evidence demonstrating its efficacy.

3.25 The Service Provider shall ensure that the agreement is documented, recording the Client's agreement to the terms and conditions of the service that is to be provided including financial arrangements. The document should clearly set out the respective roles and responsibilities of the Client and the Service Provider.

3.25.1   NOTE: The documentation may be in the form of a formal contract, service level agreement, a series of email exchanges, a project specification or a combination of these. In cases where the Service Provider is under an ongoing contract with the Client to provide Centre services, the documentation should be maintained and kept up-to-date with the Client being informed of any proposed changes or modifications to the provision.

3.26 The Service Provider shall, with the Client, agree and document a detailed plan for the Centre including the assessment rationale, the scope of the assessment criteria to be assessed, the methods and procedures to be used, the management of data and reporting, the resources required in terms of personnel and facilities and the timing and scheduling of procedures and other logistics.

3.27 The plan shall form part of the agreement. The plan should be updated as and when design and development activities are agreed.

3.28 The Client and Service Provider shall consider the possible impacts of the Centre on Participants and other stakeholders and include in the agreement procedures to optimise the positive value of these impacts (e.g. effective hiring decisions, Participants' personal development, etc.) and to mitigate any risks associated with negative impacts (e.g. legal challenges to the process, unfair discrimination, etc.).

3.29 The Service Provider and the relevant representatives of the Client shall work to establish a commitment amongst relevant stakeholders (e.g. board members, managers, potential Participants and Assessors) for implementation of the process.

3.30 The Service Provider and the Client shall agree on procedures for notification and agreement to changes in the initial specification that may arise due to changes in requirements and circumstances.

4. Design and Planning

This section defines the standard for the design of Centres and for the planning procedures that need to be considered prior to implementation.

4.1 The Service Provider shall recommend the design and format of a Centre to meet the stated needs of the Client having explored these needs carefully with the Client and considered alternatives.

Identification of Assessment Criteria

4.2 The identification of assessment needs shall be based on an analysis of the relevant job demands to identify the behaviours or activities that discriminate between the performance of good and poor job incumbents. These job-related behaviours or activities will be used as the Assessment Criteria.

4.2.1 NOTE:

4.2.1.1 Areas of job-related behaviours are variously referred to as attributes, dimensions, criteria or competencies.

4.2.1.2 The skills required to undertake job analysis are discussed in Appendix 2.

4.2.1.3 The Assessment Criteria should take account of known and anticipated changes that may affect the role.

4.3 Provision shall be made for job analysis to be carried out if the relevant data do not already exist.

4.4 The job analysis shall clearly demonstrate the link between assessment criteria and effective performance in the target job.

4.4.1 NOTE:

4.4.1.1 In Centres for development the assessment criteria may be more generic rather than related to a specific job. However, they should still be based on a structured analysis related to the organisational need.

4.4.1.2 Where a competency framework already exists, it is still necessary to establish the link with the current assessment need and additional performance indicators may need to be created.

4.5 The number of assessment criteria shall not be greater than can be effectively assessed within the confines of the Centre design.

4.5.1 NOTE:

4.5.1.1 Effective measurement becomes more difficult as the number of areas to be assessed increases.

4.5.1.2 The research evidence suggests that the maximum number of assessment criteria for effective assessment lies between 6 and 12.

4.5.1.3 The number of exercises and length of the centre will need to be increased to accommodate the effective assessment of a larger number of criteria.

4.6 The assessment criteria shall be formulated to maximise independence and minimize overlap between criteria.

    4.6.1   NOTE: Where previous rating data for the criteria is available, consideration should be given to merging any pair of criteria which correlate more than 0.7.

4.7 The assessment criteria shall be clearly defined to enable a common and consistent interpretation. A clear set of performance indicators shall be produced from the job analysis for each of the assessment criteria.

4.8 Where the assessment criteria are behaviourally based, performance indicators shall consist of examples of behaviours taken from the job analysis. Performance indicators shall include positive and should include negative indicators.

    4.8.1   NOTE: Negative indicators should reflect behaviours which are contrary to or inconsistent with good performance as well as the absence of good performance.

Centre context (work and job context, Participant pool)

4.9 The Centre design shall represent and take account of the type of work, work activities, the work context and the systems and processes used in the work setting of the target job or role.

4.10 The Centre design shall enable all suitable potential Participants to equally access and be able to demonstrate their capabilities against the assessment criteria in each of the Exercises and other assessment methods and within the logistical arrangements of the Centre.

    4.10.1   NOTE:

    4.10.1.1   Traditionally Centres involve bringing a group of people to be assessed together in a physical space. However, Centres can also take place in cyberspace, sometimes referred to as Virtual Centres, with Participants and Assessors in contact through electronic means such as video conferencing and web-based tools.

    4.10.1.2   Where participants have been previously assessed or may be assessed more than once during a programme of Centres, prior exposure to the Exercises should not confer an unfair advantage.

    4.10.1.3   Centre designers should take into account factors which could differentially impact on the performance of both individuals and groups, such as familiarity with the content and design of exercises, familiarity with technology, the make-up of participant groups, the diversity of assessors and other Centre personnel and accessibility issues.

4.11 How the assessment methods relate to the relevant work context should be documented.

Identify types of Assessment Methods

4.12 Proposals for types of assessment methods shall cover the range of key activities and contexts from the target job or role, as identified by the job analysis, such as one-to-one and group meetings, reporting, people management, problem solving, selling and analysis activities as well as different forms of communication.

    4.12.1   NOTE: At this stage types of exercises will be specified at a high level in terms of the number of participants, the objectives, whether Role-players are used, the type of information presented etc.

4.13 The Service Provider shall make recommendations to the Client regarding the type and range of assessment methods, required to meet the agreed scope.

Selecting or developing specific Exercises

4.14 The Service Provider shall make recommendations to the Client for selecting or designing specific Exercises that will provide evidence against the assessment criteria for the target job or role as identified by the job analysis.

4.15 Each assessment criterion shall be assessed by at least two different assessment methods, at least one of which shall be an Exercise and ideally each assessment criterion should be assessed by at least two different Exercises.

4.16 The design of the Exercises shall take account of the capacity of the Assessors who will be observing the Participants or evaluating Exercise outputs.

    4.16.1   NOTE:

    4.16.1.1   Evidence suggests assessing fewer dimensions in an exercise reduces cognitive load. Factors which will affect assessor capacity include but are not limited to:

    4.16.1.1.1 The number of criteria;

    4.16.1.1.2 The complexity of the criteria;

    4.16.1.1.3 The number of performance indicators;

    4.16.1.1.4 Exercise duration;

    4.16.1.1.5 Exercise complexity;

    4.16.1.1.6 The experience of the assessors;

    4.16.1.2   The number of criteria should be limited to four unless there are particular factors in the Exercise design (such as those listed above) that enable the assessment of more criteria.

4.17 The design of the Exercises shall take account of the capacity of Role-players who will be interacting with Participants and Assessors.

    4.17.1   NOTE: People are not effective when they exceed their capacity such as an assessor being asked to simultaneously focus on too many assessment criteria or a Role-player with an over long and complex brief.

4.18 The chosen Exercises and other assessment methods shall enable the evaluation of Participants' performance across the methods in terms of the assessment criteria as well as a Participant's overall performance.

4.19 The design of any one Exercise shall not allow performance in that Exercise to restrict or enhance a Participant's ability to perform well against the assessment criteria in another Exercise.

4.19.1 NOTE: Where the Exercises in a Centre are integrated in a common context such as 'A day in the life', it is important that the individual Exercises remain essentially independent even though based on some common information. Poor performance on any one Exercise should not put a Participant at a disadvantage in subsequent Exercises.

Minimum standard for Exercises

4.20 Exercises shall be designed to provide opportunities, in combination, to collect evidence on all performance indicators within the assessment criteria.

4.20.1 NOTE:

4.20.1.1 Exercises can be custom designed for a specific Centre, purchased off the shelf from a publisher or adapted from existing exercises.

4.20.1.2 It is desirable for Exercises to closely reflect the role, sometimes referred to as Fidelity. The desirable degree of Fidelity is a function of the Centre's purpose. It is desirable for Fidelity to be high. However, there are a number of occasions when Fidelity may be relatively low, for example, in Centres used for early identification or selection, where the participants cannot be expected to be familiar with the detailed nature and content of the role; or where there is the risk that some of the participants will have differing levels of familiarity with the nature and content of the role. It is important to balance the effective measurement of the assessment criteria with Exercise fidelity.

4.21 Exercises shall use appropriate job or role processes for outputs from Exercise activities, for example,written, spoken, email, etc., as identified in the job analysis.

4.22 Exercise design shall not unfairly aid or disadvantage any sub-group within the pool of Centre Participants.

4.22.1 NOTE: Exercises can differentially aid or disadvantage where there is benefit to having information that not all participants are party to (e.g. internal applicants with a better understanding of organisational issues) or skills that are not directly related to the performance criteria (e.g. using particular equipment).

4.23 The type and level of difficulty of an Exercise shall be consistent with the type and level of challenges in the job, as identified through the job analysis. Job content experts such as current job holders and job managers should be used to review the types and levels of challenges proposed for Exercises.

4.24 Exercise specific examples of performance indicators should be provided to aid Assessors in classifying and evaluating evidence.

4.25 Role play briefs shall include a 'Role-player character' brief to ensure consistency in style and approach across Participants and between Role-players. Roles shall represent the types and level of role that are encountered by holders of the target job.

4.26 All Exercises shall contain all necessary instructions and Exercise specific information to enable completion of the Exercise, for example, timing, materials, the objective, if an output is required, by when and in what format.

4.27 Assessment Methods which are not Exercises (e.g. tests, questionnaires and interviews), if included, shall be chosen to be relevant to the assessment criteria and appropriate for the Participant group.

4.28 Where existing Exercises are used or adapted, they shall meet the same standards as specially designed Exercises.

Rating Scales

4.29 The rating scale used to assign scores to assessment criteria for each Exercise and for rating overall Centre performance shall reflect the level or levels of performance identified as being required.

4.30 The same rating scale shall be used for all Exercises and other assessment methods within the Centre design.

4.31 Descriptive anchors shall be provided for at least two points on the rating scale to ensure consistent interpretation of the scale by all assessors. A fully defined behaviourally anchored ratings scale (BARS) should be used where possible.
    4.31.1   NOTE: Evidence suggests that rating scales with between five and seven points are optimal.

4.32 A procedure shall be established for converting the results from assessment methods that are not Exercises onto the same rating scale used for the Exercises.

Logistics (assessment materials, location, timetable and other resources, etc.)

4.33 Processes and plans shall be produced for managing the logistics of the Centre, to include the following:
    4.33.1   Methods to be used for the design, production and maintenance of assessment materials shall prevent unauthorised access or exposure to those materials by potential Centre Participants.
    4.33.2   Venue type and facilities should not distract those involved from their participation or roles in the Centre.
    4.33.3   Venue staff should be briefed regarding the Centre process and how they can contribute to its success and avoid hindering the process.
    4.33.4   The Service Provider shall prepare an outline timetable for all roles in the Centre which will support the development of specific timetables when the Centre is run.
    4.33.5   Assessment data and other Participant information shall be managed and stored securely and used in line with data protection requirements.
    4.33.6   All Participants and other individuals involved in the Centre shall be asked if they have any disability related or other needs that must be met to enable them to attend and take part in the Centre. A process shall be designed to track the collection of this information and actions taken.
    4.33.7   The Service Provider and the Client shall agree the process for dealing with requests for accommodations for Participants with disability related and other needs and how accommodations will be determined and arranged.

4.33.8 Travel and residential arrangements should be communicated to all Participants and other individuals involved in the Centre in time to enable prompt arrival at the venue at the required time.

4.33.9 All Participants and other individuals involved in the Centre should be familiarised with the venue layout, timetables, materials and other logistical arrangements prior to starting the assessments.

Specify data integration procedures (see Section 7)

4.34 The process for data integration shall be agreed and documented in the design specification.

4.35 The data integration procedure shall describe how final ratings will be determined.

Trialling and Piloting

4.36 Exercises shall be checked for: content validity, face validity, Exercise timings, level of complexity, benchmarks for ratings, clarity and relevance of instructions, comprehensiveness of materials and that adequate and appropriate evidence can be collected for the assessment criteria.

4.37 Exercises which are new for a particular Centre shall be trialled where there are sufficient individuals representative of the intended Participants, but who will not themselves be Participants.

4.37.1 Note: Consideration should be given to over-representation of some groups where there are ongoing issues around diversity in the organisation.

4.38 Following trialling and finalising materials, the Centre process should be piloted to ensure and enable refinements to be made to roles, integration and logistics.

Centre manuals

4.39 A Centre manual shall be produced that contains all documentation relating to the Centre, including documentation of all procedures and briefing materials.

4.40 Operational manuals compiled from the relevant contents of the Centre manual should be produced for each of the Centre operational roles.

4.41 A process shall be designed for the secure maintenance and distribution of all manuals.

Role competence

4.42 There shall be a specific role profile for each of the roles to be adopted within the Centre, including but not limited to the Centre Designer, Centre Managers, Centre Administrators, Assessors, Role-players, Fact-Find Administrator, Psychometric Test Administrators and Users.

4.43 Feedback Generators and a Feedback Generation Meeting Chair shall also be required where Centre outcomes include qualitative feedback not based solely on arithmetic decision rules (e.g. Centres for development).

4.44 These role profiles shall address the following requirements:

4.44.1 **Centre Designer:** Designers shall be competent in: approaches to job analysis, selecting or designing appropriate Exercises, and timetabling the Centre.

4.44.1.1 NOTE: Centre Designers are those who put together the working plan for and specify the content of the Centre. Often they will be an occupational psychologist.

4.44.2 **Centre Manager:** The Centre Manager shall be competent in venue management and timetabling and in Centre monitoring and quality control.

4.44.2.1 NOTE: The Centre Manager has the task of managing the Centre process operationally, that is, on the day or days when the Centre is run. This may involve the Centre Manager delegating various tasks within the role to suitably competent personnel.

4.44.3 **Centre Administrator:** Centre Administrators shall have a general understanding of the Centre processes and be competent to carry out the tasks they undertake.

4.44.3.1 NOTE: Centre Administrators undertake tasks assigned to them by the Centre Manager and their training should be appropriate for the tasks they undertake. For example, this could include escorting and briefing Participants, psychometric test administration and scoring, management of documentation including data collation and assuring data security is appropriately maintained.

4.44.4 **Assessors:** Assessors shall understand the principles of effective assessment, and be competent in the specific methodologies used in the Centre.

4.44.4.1 NOTE: In many cases this will require training in the Observe, Record, Classify and Evaluate (ORCE) process, and its application in the particular Exercises that are used. See further discussion of training in Appendix 2.

4.44.5 **Role-players:** Role-players shall understand the overall process in general terms and their part in helping to elicit behaviour; be familiar with the particular material of the Exercise and the role in which they operate; know how far to adhere to the prepared 'script' and where they are expected to use discretion, for example in following through a novel line of discussion raised by a Participant.

4.44.6 The same person shall not simultaneously act as an Assessor for an Exercise where he or she is a Role-player.

4.44.7 **Fact-Find Administrators:** Fact-Find Administrators shall understand the overall process in general terms and their part in helping to elicit behaviour; be familiar with the particular material of the Fact-Find Exercise and be fully conversant with their administrative role.

4.44.8 The same person should not simultaneously act as an Assessor for an Exercise where he or she is a Fact-Find Administrator.

4.44.8.1 NOTE: Performing two roles simultaneously can be distracting for the Candidate and reduce the capacity of the Assessor to carry out both roles effectively.

4.44.9   **Psychometric Test Administrators and Users:** They shall be competent to the standard specified by the relevant BPS qualifications (Level 1, 2 or 3 in occupational testing) as well as meeting any additional test publisher requirements.

4.44.9.1 NOTE: This role is required where a Centre uses standardised psychometric instruments.

4.44.10   **Feedback Generators:** When developmental recommendations are arrived at by consensus, some of or all the people who were involved with the process of data collection shall act as Feedback Generators working under the Feedback Generation Meeting Chair. Feedback Generators shall be aware of the status of the particular Centre in which they are involved, in terms of its role in informing recommendations about the Participants.

4.44.11   **Feedback Generation Meeting Chair:** When developmental recommendations are arrived at by consensus, the Chair of the Feedback Generation Meeting shall understand the principles of the Centre process and be aware of the status of the particular Centre in which they are involved, in terms of its role in informing recommendations about the Participants.

4.44.12   **Ancillary Roles:** Any other roles required for the Centre shall be identified and the required competencies specified. These can include but are not limited to, Participants' line managers, Client representatives and venue staff.

Providing a Policy Statement (see Appendix 3):

4.45   The Client shall ensure that their organisation has a Centre policy statement which covers, but is not limited to, the following issues: Ethics, diversity, security, the briefing of Participants, Participant rights, data protection, provision for feedback, handling appeals, Centre staff training and competence issues, quality assurance and evaluation and monitoring.

4.46   The Service Provider shall assist the Client in the development of a Centre policy statement where one does not already exist.

4.47   The policy statement shall be provided to all stakeholders associated with the Centre including Participants.

4.48   The policy statement should provide the basis for integration of the Centre within the Client organisation's human resources policies and procedures.

5.   Preparing for Centre Delivery

This section covers what needs to be done in order to run a Centre once all aspects of the Centre Design (see Section 4) have been completed. It is applicable every time the Centre runs as these items need to be addressed for each iteration.

It covers the implementation of the policy statement; procuring all necessary resources; preparing all Centre personnel; timetabling, scheduling and resource allocation; and registering and preparing Participants.

Participant rights and the Centre policy statement

5.1   In accordance with the Centre policy statement (see Appendix 3), the Service Provider and the Client shall each ensure that:

   5.1.1   Participants' rights are recognised and respected.

   5.1.2   Participants are treated in a fair and consistent manner and in accord with any legislative requirements.

   5.1.3   Centre results and personal data are treated according to applicable requirements regarding data privacy.

   5.1.4   Procedures and timelines to initiate and resolve complaints and formal appeals are established and documented; these may be specially devised for the particular Centre process, or may be drawn from wider grievance procedures within the Client organisation.

   5.1.5   Due consideration is given to the nature and extent of feedback to be provided to Participants.

   5.1.6   Participants have been provided with sufficient information prior to the Centre to make an informed decision to consent to participate.

   5.1.7   Participants have given their consent before feedback is shared with other specified parties.

Data Protection

5.2   The Service Provider shall ensure that the data from the Centre is managed in accordance with all professional, legal and regulatory requirements.

   5.2.1   NOTE: Appendix 4 lists relevant legal frameworks current at the time this standard was last revised.

5.3   The Service Provider shall only use the data for the agreed purpose of the Centre.

5.4   The Service Provider shall maintain the necessary level of security for personal data.

5.5   The Service Provider shall ensure that:

   5.5.1   there are clear guidelines as to how long identifiable personal data (including any audio recordings, video material, data from remote assessments, etc.) are to be kept on file;

   5.5.2   access to Participant data is limited to those with a right to know (including data kept on file systems, so that only those who have a right to access can obtain it);

   5.5.3   the relevant consent is obtained before releasing data;

5.5.4 names and other personal identifiers are removed from the Centre results (e.g. test data, individual reports, notes made by interviewers, Assessor notes, comments and ratings) to make them anonymous for research or statistical analysis purposes when no longer needed.

5.6 The Client and Service Provider should recognise that judgments need to be made about what materials Participants may legitimately have access to prior to or following the Centre.

5.6.1 NOTE: Centre materials and scoring guidelines will typically be privileged information to which Participants (especially those involved in selection Centres) should not have access. Assessor report forms and other records of performance may be accessible under Data Protection or Freedom of Information legislation.

5.7 Consideration should be given to the appropriate 'shelf life' of Centre data and reports.

5.7.1 NOTE: Data that is more than 12 months old may be misleading about the Participant's current skills and competencies.

5.8 Informed consent from Participants prior to participation in the Centre should include the retention of the data for follow-up validation or research in addition to the initial Centre purpose.

Planning the Feedback

5.9 All Participants shall be informed of decisions made based on performance at the Centre. Participants should be provided with an opportunity to receive qualitative feedback about how they have performed during the Centre.

5.10 The agreement between the Service Provider and the Client shall specify whether Participant feedback is provided, the nature of that feedback, and how, where and by when it is to be provided.

5.11 Participants shall be told if and how they will receive feedback, prior to attending the Centre (see Section 8).

5.12 Participants shall be informed if and how the information will be used to make decisions and when they are likely to hear about the decision.

5.13 Participants shall be advised who will receive reports from the Centre and asked to agree to this before attending the Centre.

5.13.1 NOTE: Where the Centre is for development consideration should be given to involving the Participant's line manager in any feedback discussions.

Procuring personnel resources

5.14 The Service Provider shall make recommendations to the Client regarding the appropriate quantity and quality (see Section 4: Role Competence) of resources required to fulfil the different roles to deliver the Centre. These roles shall include most, if not all, of the following: Centre Manager; Centre Administrator, Assessor; Role-player, Fact-Find Administrator, Psychometric Test Administrator and User, Feedback Generators and Feedback Generation Meeting Chair.

5.15 The actual quantity of resources required for each role shall be determined by the schedule of the Centre, which should take into account the number of Participants, Exercises and related activities across the allocated time-frame.

5.16 A Centre shall have at least one Centre Manager and one Centre Administrator.

5.17 The Centre shall have a Psychometric Test User whenever Psychometric Tests are used as part of the process.

5.18 A Centre shall have more than one Assessor assessing each Participant.

5.19 When there are a series of Centres, there should be a clear process in place to assure consistency across Centres.
  5.19.1 NOTE: Including at least some Assessors from previous Centres allocated to subsequent Centres can help maintain continuity and standardisation.

5.20 The Service Provider shall ensure that the number of Assessors, Role-players and Fact-Find Administrators is adequate for the number of Participants, so that the Assessor, Role-player and Fact-Find Administrator workload is not too great and they can perform their tasks effectively.
  5.20.1 NOTE:
  5.20.1.1 A Centre will usually require multiple Role-players to operate effectively when role play Exercises are included and similarly multiple Fact-find Administrators when Fact-Find Exercises are used.
  5.20.1.2 It is possible for the same individuals to be used as Role-players and Fact-Find Administrators, provided the person is trained in both roles.

5.21 There shall be at least one Assessor for every three Participants as a minimum. Ideally there should be at least one Assessor for every two Participants. Where the Centre design allows a lower ratio the reasons why this is appropriate should be explicitly noted in the Centre documentation.
  5.21.1 NOTE: Factors such as the number of assessment criteria being assessed in each Exercise which impacts on the complexity of the Assessor's task and the amount of time for Assessors to complete their work will impact on the number of Assessors needed and this will sometimes be as much as one Assessor for each Participant. The resources can be provided by the Service Provider or the Client or a combination of the two.

5.22 The Service Provider shall confirm that all Centre staff have demonstrated competence against their role profiles in advance of the Centre commencing.

Environment

5.23 When planning the Centre the Service Provider or Client shall procure a suitable venue which can accommodate the demands of the Centre, taking into account the number of people (Participants and all supporting personnel), number of appropriate rooms required and other necessary facilities such as lavatories, tea or coffee, dining and lounge areas for relaxation, etc.

5.24 The venue should be conducive to the nature and demands of the Centre, namely an environment which is free of noisy distractions, well lit, accessible to all and provides good quality air, thus enabling the Participants to relax and focus on the tasks at hand.

Materials

5.25 The Service Provider shall prepare a checklist of the materials required for the Centre, which should include, but not be limited to:

5.25.1   Centre manuals.

5.25.2   Participant materials (personal timetables, Exercise briefs, tests, etc.).

5.25.3   Assessor materials.

5.25.4   Role-player materials.

5.25.5   Stationery (Pens, pencils, highlighters, paperclips, staplers, name tags, etc.).

5.25.6   Technology requirements (laptops, printers, cabling, USBs, video-cameras, etc.).

5.25.7   Any equipment or materials needed to provide agreed adjustments for people with disabilities or other needs.

5.26 The Service Provider shall ensure that all necessary materials are procured and delivered to the venue in advance of the start of the Centre and early enough to allow Centre staff to check they have everything they need and that it is in working order.

5.26.1   NOTE: Where the event is hosted by the Client, the Service Provider may delegate provision of some or all material to the client.

Stakeholder involvement

5.27 When there is stakeholder presence at the Centre, such as having a senior Client representative open or close the event, or attend in the capacity of a passive Observer, the Service Provider shall ensure that such stakeholders are properly briefed as to their role and instructed how to behave, so as to avoid disturbing the effective implementation of the Centre.

Contingency planning

5.28 The Service Provider shall have a contingency plan based upon a risk assessment to deal with unexpected events in order to minimise disruptions to the Centre.

5.29 In dealing with contingencies the Service Provider shall endeavour to maintain the safety and wellbeing of participants, act in a fair and reasonable way towards all concerned and maintain the integrity of the assessment process.

5.29.1   NOTE: Centres by their very nature are complex events and things can sometimes go wrong or something unexpected can happen. It is useful to have additional resources on standby who can help out in an emergency. Common disruptions include:

5.29.1.1   needing to adapt the timetable quickly when one or more Participants do not turn up;

5.29.1.2   having to reallocate the workload when any person is unable to fulfil their role at the Centre;

5.29.1.3   failure of IT or other equipment;

5.29.1.4   a Participant becoming ill;

5.29.1.5   any event such as a fire alarm disrupting the schedule.

Technical Support

5.30 The Service Provider shall ensure that there is an adequate level of technical support to tackle any likely technical problems for any equipment in use in the Centre.

    5.30.1   NOTE: This may entail having an IT specialist or technically competent person attend the Centre, or having access to remote technical support.

5.31 The Service Provider shall ensure that appropriate measures are in place to minimise the risk of performance data loss in the event of an IT malfunction.

Preparing Centre personnel

5.32 The Service Provider shall identify how many people are needed for each role included in the design (see Section 4) and allocate these roles.

    5.32.1   NOTE:

    5.32.1.1   In many cases the Client will need to be consulted on these decisions.

    5.32.1.2   Diversity considerations should be taken into account in allocating people to roles. For example, enhancing ethnic and gender diversity among Centre staff.

5.33 The Service Provider shall ensure that appropriate and relevant briefing documentation is prepared and provided to all personnel undertaking each role. Appropriate security measures shall be followed when documentation includes confidential materials.

5.34 The Service Provider shall provide the necessary initial training or refresher training, so as to ensure that all personnel satisfy the level of role competence required to fulfil their role, as specified in Section 4.

Timetabling, scheduling and resource allocation

5.35 The Service Provider shall prepare the following scheduling documentation:

    5.35.1   Centre timetable showing the sequence of events (Exercises, interviews, tests, etc.).

    5.35.2   A matrix allocating Participants to Assessors (and Role-players and Fact-Find Administrators, if used) across Exercises.

    5.35.3   A master timetable combining both of the above with room allocations.

    5.35.4   Individual timetables for Participants, Assessors and Role-players and Fact-Find Administrators, indicating what they are doing, with whom, where and when.

    5.35.5   Timetables shall not compromise the performance of anyone involved in or attending the Centre.

    5.35.6   NOTE: Timetables need to allow for the time to move between Exercise locations, breaks and allow adequate time for Assessor and administration activities.

5.36 The Service Provider shall ensure that schedules avoid conflicts where Participants are seen by Assessors, Role-players of Fact Find Administrators who are known to them.

5.37 The Service Provider shall take account of the diversity of Participants and the purpose of the Centre in allocating Participants to Centres and groups within Centres. The rationale for the approach should be documented.

    5.37.1 NOTE: Typically allocations are made to ensure a similar balanced mix of demographic, geographical and functional characteristics of Participants within each group to ensure a fair and equitable process for all. On some occasions it may be more in line with the purpose of the Centre to have groups which are homogenous on some factors, for example, a positive action Centre for Development purposes might be single gender.

Registering and preparing Participants

5.38 The Service Provider shall prepare a pack of materials as part of the joining instructions for Participants.

    5.38.1 NOTE: The Service Provider should agree with the Client what will be included in the pack and the Client may take on the responsibility of providing some of the content to the Service Provider for provision to the Participants.

Informing Participants

5.39 The pack of Centre materials shall provide all necessary practical information including dates, times and locations of the Centre, and all the information necessary for Participants to make an informed decision to consent to participate.

5.40 The Service Provider should ensure that packs are sent out sufficiently in advance for Participants to make the required preparation for the Centre.

    5.40.1 NOTE: It is helpful for Participants to receive their pack two to three weeks before the Centre in development contexts and as soon as is practical before the Centre in selection contexts.

5.41 The pack shall be in line with the Centre's policy statement (see Section 4), and include, but not be limited to:

    5.41.1 a clear statement of the purpose of the specific Centre;

    5.41.2 what the Participants will be expected to do;

    5.41.3 how they can prepare for the Centre, including information on access to practice materials;

    5.41.4 how the Centre results will be used;

    5.41.5 what recommendations or decisions will be made;

    5.41.6 how long the Centre results will be kept;

    5.41.7 if and how results may be used in validation and research after the Centre;

    5.41.8 how to request reasonable adjustments or accommodations.

Obtaining Consent

5.42 The Client shall have a clear procedure for obtaining informed consent from the Participant for the use of their personal data. This should take the form of a signed written consent form, or a reply to an email which explicitly states that a reply will be deemed informed consent.

5.43 Participants shall be provided with details of a contact person in case they have any queries.

5.44 Participants shall be informed about how they can raise any issues, problems, or concerns before, during and after the Centre.

Disability related and other needs

5.45 The briefing provided shall be sufficient for Participants with disability related or other needs to anticipate if they need to request accommodations.

5.46 The Participants shall be asked to notify the Client in advance if they have any particular requirements or disability related needs.

5.47 The Service Provider shall ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate Participants with disabilities or other needs.
    5.47.1   NOTE:
    5.47.1.1   Provision of accommodations for Participants with disabilities or other needs may create additional resourcing requirements. For example, accommodations can include individual assessment of Participants. The Client may need to be consulted where additional resources are required. A longer discussion of managing Participants with disabilities is provided in Appendix 5.
    5.47.1.2   Where Participants are not primary speakers of the language of the Centre, consideration should be given to the appropriateness of their participation in the Centre, and what support they may need if they do participate, such as additional time or access to language support.
    5.47.1.3   The language requirements of the job and the potential for improving language competence through formal study should be considered along with the specific needs for participation in the Centre.

Grievances and concerns

5.48 The Client shall ensure that there are clear procedures to accommodate grievances or appeals against Centre results or outcomes.

5.49 The Client shall communicate to the Participants how they can raise any concerns they may have relating to the Centre, how they have been treated, or to query or challenge the results or outcomes of the Centre.
    5.49.1   NOTE: Responses to Participant queries and concerns should be as open and informative as possible while maintaining the integrity of the assessment process, the security of the materials and data protection requirements.

5.50 Re-assessment shall be re-arranged as soon as practically possible if the need arises (e.g. due to disturbance or illness during the Centre).

6. Centre Delivery

This section describes the requirements to ensure that the Centre is carried out according to the design and operational decisions specified in Sections 4 and 5.

6.1　The Service Provider shall assign responsibility to the Centre Manager for the implementation of the Centre in line with its design and this standard.

Centre facilitation, assessment delivery and management

6.2　The Centre Manager shall ensure that all required Centre staff are present onsite or available online in the case of a Virtual Centre. Reserve staff should be called up in the event of unexpected absence. Only staff deemed competent by the Service Provider shall be used (ref [5.3]).

6.3　The Centre Manager shall confirm that all planned venue facilities, equipment and documentation is ready for use prior to the Centre commencing.

6.4　The Centre Manager shall provide clear and consistent briefings for all Centre staff and Participants, including logistics, timetabling, role requirements and confidentiality.

6.5　The Centre Manager shall ensure that Participant briefings make it clear when they are, and when they are not, being assessed.

6.6　The Centre Manager shall ensure that all Centre staff and Participants are aware of the necessary health and safety requirements of the venue, and that appropriate first aid and welfare facilities are available.

6.7　The Centre Manager shall ensure that all agreed procedures (as outlined in the Centre manual) and timetables are followed. All necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the standardised delivery of the process. Where multiple concurrent physical or virtual sites or successive delivery occasions are used, appropriate systems of control and communication should be used to ensure on-going consistency of delivery.

6.8　The Centre Manager shall ensure the effective handling of unscheduled events (e.g. room changes, timetable changes, fire alarms, technology failures, Participant illness, adverse weather). Where possible, pre-agreed contingency plans for unscheduled events should be implemented (e.g. alternative timetables, emergency procedures). Resultant actions should aim to maintain the integrity of the Centre, while prioritising the safety and well-being of the Participants and staff.

Record keeping, security, confidentiality

6.9   The Centre Manager shall ensure security of assessment materials and Participant records is maintained throughout the delivery. Appropriate systems should be in place to ensure secure retention and accounting of all assessment materials, and Participant records should be maintained confidentially.

6.10   The Centre Manager shall maintain a record of any events occurring during Centre delivery which may impact on the assessment process including how these were dealt with.

   6.10.1   NOTE: Records can be used to verify any later challenge to the Centre delivery, and will also inform enhancement of future delivery processes.

Quality assurance

6.11   The Centre Manager shall ensure that Participants and Centre staff have the means of raising issues and concerns that have arisen during the Centre. Participants and staff should be informed of the process by which such concerns will be considered and addressed, and reassured that issues will be escalated to an appropriate individual or forum for consideration.

6.12   The Centre Manager shall ensure that quality assurance systems are effectively maintained throughout the delivery. This should include structured monitoring of performance of Centre staff (Assessors, Role-players, etc.), and clear procedures for dealing with staff performance issues. Records should be maintained of evaluation made.

6.13   The Centre Manager shall ensure that any performance issues of Centre staff (e.g. Assessors, Role-players, administrators, etc.) are promptly and effectively addressed (e.g. through replacement, or onsite development as appropriate) to ensure minimal impact on the overall effectiveness of the Centre.

7.   Data integration

This section contains standards with respect to integrating the data from the Centre to determine final results, support development recommendations and to provide feedback to Participants and other stakeholders, which may inform decision making.

7.1   The Client shall be responsible for all decisions about Participants that arise as a consequence of the Centre procedures and outputs.

    7.1.1   NOTE: Output from a Centre in the form of an Overall Centre Rating or recommendations for development should be differentiated from operational decision making. For example, in a Centre to support the selection of people for a job, the Centre will identify the degree to which the Participants meet the job requirements based on the data collected at the Centre. The final selection decision will use this data but may take other factors into account such as previous experience, availability etc. In practice both recommendations and decisions may be made in the same session by the same people but often the Centre outcomes will be reported to the final decision makers.

Overall Centre Rating

7.2   The data integration procedures adopted shall follow the approach specified in the Centre design (see Section 4).

7.3   Rules for determining the Overall Centre Rating shall be defined based on the standards required in the job or role as identified through the job analysis. Differential weighting of assessment criteria ratings, if used in determining outcomes, shall be as identified through the job analysis or additional job performance research.

7.4   Arithmetic approaches shall be used to determine the Overall Centre Rating whenever the Centre is designed to facilitate selection decisions.

    7.4.1   NOTE:

    7.4.1.1   Research indicates that arithmetic combinations of scores (e.g. averaging) are associated with much higher validities than consensual methods of determining final scores through discussion by Centre staff.

    7.4.1.2   Scores can be combined using a simple average or by requiring a minimum score on one or more assessment criteria before averaging.

    7.4.1.3   Arithmetic approaches can be supplemented by qualitative information for feedback and developmental purposes.

7.5   The Client shall ensure when making decisions using Centre outcomes, that the decision makers are supported by a person who is appropriately trained and understands the meaning of the assessment data.

7.6   A record of the Centre outcomes shall be made. Where final decisions deviate from the Overall Centre Ratings, the Overall Centre Ratings should still be documented with an explanation of why the decision deviates from the Centre outcomes.

Developmental Feedback

7.7 The Service Provider shall ensure that qualitative data is collected whenever the Centre has a developmental purpose.

7.8 Where developmental feedback is to be presented to Participants, the data recording process shall include procedures for recording relevant qualitative information about the Participant's performance.

    7.8.1   NOTE: Information on performance can be taken directly from forms completed by Assessors or obtained through discussion between Assessors after each Exercise or at the end of the Centre.

7.9 A Feedback Generation Meeting should be held whenever qualitative developmental feedback to Participants is provided.

7.10 The Chair of the Feedback Generation Meeting shall ensure that data integration complies with the agreed design.

7.11 The Chair of the Feedback Generation Meeting shall ensure that evidence is heard from all Assessors.

    7.11.1   NOTE: Meetings may be virtual and some or all assessors may contribute via e-mail or remote links to the meeting.

7.12 The Chair of the Feedback Generation Meeting shall ensure that feedback is determined on the basis of relevant evidence from the Centre.

7.13 Where Assessors differ in their evaluation of Participants against the assessment criteria the Chair of the Feedback Generation Meeting should encourage discussion of the divergence to try to reach consensus.

Use of external information

7.14 Clear guidance shall be provided on the degree to which, if at all, external evidence may be considered in arriving at a Centre outcome.

    7.14.1   NOTE: Centre outcomes are typically based only on evidence collected within the Centre. There are clearly good reasons for doing this, such as: avoidance of differing standards that may be used in the workplace, over-positive or negative assessments by the Participants or their line managers, prejudice and fixed opinions, work design limitations such as not having the opportunity to demonstrate certain behaviours, etc. However, there are occasions when it is appropriate to include external information e.g. recommending development activity. Each case needs to be considered on its merits.

7.15 External evidence shall only be considered in Overall Centre Ratings if relevant data exists for all Participants; can be mapped against the Assessment Criteria used in the Centre; and has been collected with care to ensure validity.

7.16 Where it is agreed that external evidence be used, a clear framework for integrating external data shall have been established during the design of the Centre.

7.17 The Centre Manager shall ensure that external evidence is only presented when it has been agreed that this is relevant.

7.17.1   NOTE:

7.17.1.1   Where external evidence is not available for all participants, the Client may still wish to take it into consideration in decision making.

7.17.1.2   If external information is considered outside the Centre, this may occur at an entirely separate meeting or may take place immediately following the data integration for the Centre.

7.17.1.3   In Centres for development the main focus of integration is the construction of action plans for Participants to develop their skills. These action plans need to take into account the current work performance and situation of Participants as well as their performance at the Centre.

8.   Communicating outcomes

This section refers to how outcomes are communicated to Clients, Stakeholders and Participants through reports and feedback.

8.1   The Service Provider shall report the outcomes of the Centre as agreed with the Client in the Centre service provision agreement (see Section 3.5).

8.2   Any report of the outcomes of the Centre should clearly state that decisions using the information are the responsibility of the Client.

8.3   Assessment outcomes shall be communicated to Participants as part of the feedback process either during or following the Centre. In addition Participants should be provided with qualitative feedback on their performance at the Centre.

8.4   Clients should seek guidance from the Service Provider about how information and results can be used and interpreted.

    8.4.1   NOTE: Careful consideration of the appropriateness is required before using the results of a Centre for a purpose other than that specified in the original scope (see Section 3). In particular where a Centre has been designed for developmental purposes it is usually inappropriate to use the information collected for selection, promotion or redundancy decisions.

Use of reports

8.5   The Service Provider shall ensure that reports (whether presented orally or in writing) are provided as soon as possible so that they can properly inform Client decision-making and development action planning.

8.6   The Service Provider shall ensure that the reports are accurate and conform to the agreed style and format.

8.7   The reports shall be in a form that consistently and appropriately details the ratings and scores and provides sensible and justifiable interpretations of the data collected. Reports should be presented in forms that are understandable by each category of end user.

8.8   Reports shall be independently verifiable, in that there will be evidence that relates the conclusions in the report to the Centre data and the qualities of the assessment methods.

8.9   All reports shall explain the risks of making final decisions based on the available data.

8.10 Computer-generated reports shall be checked for accuracy before being made available to participants or other approved recipients.

8.11 The Service Provider shall provide access to the reports to each designated end user, as agreed with the Client.

8.12 The Service Provider shall ensure that all reports include an explanation of how the information they contain may be used, its limitations and technical qualities.

8.13 The Participant's express permission shall be sought before providing reports to people other than those mentioned in gaining initial consent to the use of the data.

    8.13.1   NOTE: On some occasions the need to provide a report to an additional person may arise. Such additional people may include a line or hiring manager, development adviser, coach or mentor.

Provision of feedback

8.14 Where the purpose of the Centre is development, feedback to Participants shall be provided.

    8.14.1   NOTE: Where the Centre is for development, consideration should be given to involving the Participant's line manager in any feedback discussions.

8.15 Where the purpose of the Centre is assessment, feedback to Participants should be provided.

8.16 The feedback should be comprehensive and provided as soon as possible following the Centre.

    8.16.1   NOTE:

    8.16.1.1   Ideally feedback should be provided within two weeks of the Centre and not more than four weeks unless exceptionally in a selection context where decisions are dependent on an ongoing assessment process.

    8.16.1.2   Feedback may be given during the Centre (e.g. after each Exercise) in a Centre for development.

    8.16.1.3   Feedback can be provided in either written or oral form.

Providers of feedback

8.17 The person nominated to provide the feedback shall have training in providing feedback and be familiar with the Centre including its purpose and content.

8.18 Those providing feedback shall be trained to provide feedback in a sensitive, supportive and constructive manner.

    8.18.1   NOTE: Different people may provide feedback on different elements of the Centre.

Mode of feedback

8.19 Any feedback provided shall be clear, accurate and appropriate for the Participant's level of understanding (i.e. language should be non-technical and no assumptions should be made about prior knowledge and expertise).

8.20 Where written feedback is provided Participants shall be provided with a contact name to direct any questions or concerns they may have about their feedback.

8.21 Where oral feedback is provided Participants should be provided with a written record of what has been discussed.

8.22 When the Centre is for development purposes feedback should contain an oral element to allow Participants to work with someone to better understand the implications for development of the findings.

Content of feedback

8.23 The content of the feedback shall include one or more of the following:

  8.23.1.1   Brief written summary of assessment criteria ratings and overall outcome

  8.23.1.2   Detailed written report describing assessment criteria ratings with information describing evidence for those scores obtained from one or more Exercises.

  8.23.1.3   Oral feedback on assessment criteria ratings and related evidence from feedback-trained Assessors.

  8.23.2   NOTE: The level of detail and style of feedback will vary with the precise Centre function, for example, whether for selection or development.

8.24 The person providing the feedback shall have access to the qualitative and quantitative evaluations from the Centre.

9. Post–Centre Review

The purpose of the Post-Centre Review is to ensure that the learning points from the Centre are collected and used in improving future practice. Changes based on the Post-Centre Review need to be considered in the light of all standards.

Evaluating the Centre process

9.1   Following completion of the Centre, any learning points for the future shall be collated including both elements that went well and those that did not. This should include both the assessment process itself as well as matters such as Participant perceptions, acceptability and use of outcomes.

9.2   All Centre personnel shall be asked to provide the Centre Manager with their feedback on the Centre. The feedback shall be collated and consulted when designing future Centres.

9.3   Participants should be asked for their evaluation of the Centre.

9.4   Where IT is used directly in the delivery of Exercises, a specific IT review should be undertaken to evaluate whether the technology is and remains fit for purpose.

9.5   The cost of the Centre in both resources and monetary terms should be calculated and evaluated in the light of the benefits of the Centre.

Long-term evaluation

9.6   The long-term plan for the evaluation of the Centre shall be carried out.
    9.6.1   NOTE: The plan may be invoked when a certain number of Participants have been assessed, at the end of a set time or when some other assessment goal has been achieved.

9.7   The Client may commission the Service Provider or another independent entity to carry out the evaluation.

9.8   An on-going series of Centres should be evaluated at least annually. A major review and revaluation should be undertaken every three to five years or whenever the context of the assessment has undergone substantial change.

9.9   The evaluation plan shall address the reliability, validity, diversity and participant impact and utility of the Centre and should include qualitative and quantitative approaches.
    9.9.1   NOTE: Reliability relates to the accuracy of the assessments, validity to their effectiveness, diversity impact relates to the relative performance of different groups, participant impact relates to the effects on participants wellbeing and utility is the contribution of the Centre to the intended outcomes typically considered in cost benefit terms.

9.10 The number of Participants assessed should be taken into consideration in deciding on the quantitative elements of the plan. Where a sufficient number is available quantitative analysis should be undertaken. The evaluation should consider the likely power of any quantitative analyses in deciding what analysis to undertake.

    9.10.1   NOTE: Statistical power is the probability of statistically significant findings emerging when there is a real effect. For example in a validation study the probability of finding a statistically significant relationship between Centre scores and later measures of performance when a strong relationship between the two exists, will depend on the number of Participants. Typically 100 or more Participants are required for reasonable power in a validation study.

9.11 Quantitative evaluations should be undertaken by professionals with appropriate knowledge and skills in research methodology and Centre good practice.

9.12 The results of the quantitative analysis should be included in the final evaluation of the Centres and any decisions regarding maintaining or altering their design.

9.13 The recommendations from the evaluation shall inform any decisions regarding the maintenance or alteration of the design of the Centre.

    9.13.1   NOTE: Where evidence of adverse impact is found, while this might reflect real differences in performance between groups, the Service Provider should seek to understand which facets of the Centre process (Exercises, Assessors, assessment criteria, etc.) are the source of the impact, pay particular attention to the evidence for the validity of the Centre and investigate alternatives with less impact.

10. Appendices

The following Appendices are not part of the standard but provide information and guidance on important topics in designing and running effective Centres in a professional manner.

Appendix 1. Example Centre Contract

Appendix 2. Training Issues

Appendix 3. Developing an Organisational Policy Statement

Appendix 4. Legal Issues

Appendix 5. Accommodating Participants with Disability Related and Other Needs

Appendix 6. Impact of Information and Communication Technology in Centres

Appendix 7. Piloting a Centre

Appendix 1. Example Centre Contract

This is a contract agreed between the Service Provider and the Client Organisation.

Details of Project, Roles and Responsibilities

Overview

The Client Organisation will appoint the Service Provider to deliver the design and implementation of an Assessment Centre process for external recruitment of graduates.

Background

The Client Organisation wishes to recruit up to 30 graduates next year for a new graduate development programme.

This contract is for the design and delivery of an Assessment Centre process for selection on to the graduate programme.

Graduates undertaking the Assessment Centre will have been identified through an online test, application form and telephone interview process delivered by the Client Organisation.

All activity will be in line with the corporate Policy Statement on Assessment Centre use and associated legal and professional requirements.

Project Specification

This specification details the Client Organisation's requirements for the design and delivery of a graduate level Assessment Centre process after consultation with the Service Provider. The Client Organisation will have a senior lead for this AC project referred to here as the Client.

The following stages comprise the mutually agreed contracted work to be managed by the Service Provider:

Design overview
The Service Provider shall provide the following services:
● Project manage the AC project;
● Conduct job/role analysis research;
● Design the AC including Exercises, rating forms and other supporting materials;
● Run a trial AC;
● Train all personnel involved in the AC;
● Support the running of the ACs;
● Support decision making;
● Provide guidance on data storage;
● Provide candidate feedback;
● Evaluate the centres against quality standards;
● At a later stage perform a validation exercise for the AC.

Project Manage the AC

It is expected that six Assessment Centres will be undertaken in [MONTH] comprising up to 12 Candidates at each centre, to identify 30 suitable Candidates for the graduate programme, including a reserve of five to six Candidates to account for withdrawals and those rejected at reference/security vetting point.

The Service Provider will work closely with the Client in producing an overall detailed project plan covering the stages identified in this contract and agree realistic timescales for key stages. Each stage will have a plan that will be signed off by the Client. The Service Provider will also include support to the Client with key aspects including communications, sourcing and booking venues and contingency planning.

The Client will identify relevant stakeholders to be consulted at each stage of the project.

Conduct Job/Role Analysis Research

The Service Provider will conduct research with key individuals (previous and current job holders, line-managers, senior personnel, and organisational Subject Matter Experts, and use supporting information to produce Assessment Centre behavioural criteria.

Design the AC

1. Exercise development

The Assessment Centre simulation exercises will include aspects identified from the job analysis, that is, will draw out the behaviours and elements of specific challenging situations which could be experienced by those on the graduate development scheme. The Client and Stakeholders will be consulted. The exercises are likely to include a written exercise, a role play and a briefing exercise to a senior manager. At the end of the design stage the exercises will be trialled using recent entrants to the existing graduate programme. The Service Provider is responsible for the quality control of revisions made to exercises throughout the process. All exercise materials must comply with best practice assessment principles, equality and diversity standards and policy requirements.

2. Rating Forms and Other Supporting Materials

The Service Provider will develop an AC that can run effectively and design all supporting documents, that is, the Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale and Rating Forms for each exercise; scoring protocols and score integration algorithms; timetables for Candidates, Assessors, Centre Managers, Centre Administrators and Role-players.

All necessary documentation will be provided by the Service Provider at each stage of the process. Electronic copies will be provided to the Client in a secure format before commencement of the process. Appropriate adjustments to materials to meet the needs of Candidates with disabilities and other needs should be considered and made available as required.

Run a trial AC

The Service Provider will support the Client organisation to run at least one AC trial. The trial will be used to determine the effectiveness of all exercises and the wider AC process. The Client will work with Stakeholders to identify and provide suitable participants,

for example, recent graduates no later than five working days after an individual trial has been completed, the Service Provider will deliver to the Client a brief report summarising the main findings and recommendations following the trial. The Client will if necessary organise a Review Panel to assess and review the findings from the trial or trials.

This review will consider potential equality and diversity issues and should collate trial results and subsequent analysis highlighting trends and areas of concern.

The Service Provider will as appropriate amend exercises and any AC process in the light of any Review Panel findings.

Train all personnel involved in the AC

All Assessors, Centre Managers, Centre Administrators and required Role-players will be trained to ensure their competence in their roles.

Assessors, identified by the Client from within the organisation, will be fully trained by the Service Provider in line with best practice assessment principles, with a clear focus on equality and diversity. Trained assessors will be asked to mark already evaluated candidate written exercises to calibrate their scoring and to provide feedback on marking effectiveness.

The Centre Manager, Centre Administrators and required Role-players will be sourced and vetted directly by the Service Provider who will ensure they have been given full training regarding their role, centre objectives, ethical and appropriate delivery standards.

Support the Running of the ACs

The Service Provider will support the running of the ACs and will provide a Centre Manager, Centre Administrators, and Role-players as appropriate. Additional Assessors can be provided by the Service Provider if required. The Service Provider will work closely with the Client to achieve effective and early resource planning with the aim of sourcing all Assessors from within the client organisation if possible.

Support Decision Making

The Service Provider will guide the Client on where the pass mark is set. At completion of each Assessment Centre, assessment ratings will be combined using a pre-agreed algorithm to provide a single score for each Candidate which will be compared to the pass mark. Where more Candidates pass than there are vacancies available Candidates will be offered positions in rank order.

Guidance on Data storage

The Service Provider will provide guidance and support as appropriate on secure data and assessment materials storage. Data will be used in line with legal data protection requirements and only for the reasons specified in advance to Candidates.

Candidate feedback provision

Qualitative feedback on performance strengths and development areas will be offered to Candidates. The Service Provider will make this available immediately the AC campaign has been completed.

Evaluation

The Service Provider will maintain relevant implementation standards at each centre and will record and report all problems and issues arising to the Client on an on-going basis.

The Service Provider will build in quality checks at each stage. After each AC a review will be conducted.

Evaluation is an on-going continuous process. However, it is important to run all ACs as a consistent and fair process therefore the Service Provider in consultation with the Client might agree some improvements but decide not to implement them immediately in order to maintain consistency of the ACs for this campaign.

After the campaign the Service Provider will analyse all the data from the ACs and provide a preliminary AC Evaluation. It will provide indications on how well exercises are working, any potential issues with Assessor ratings, decision algorithms, equality and diversity, etc. Learning will be used to improve the AC for the next campaign.

Validation

The Service Provider working with the client will collect job performance data from the successful and appointed Candidates in two years' time and conduct a predictive validation study. This will provide useful evidence to identify how effective the overall

AC is in predicting real job performance and also inform us how well each individual exercise may be predicting different aspects of job performance. The analysis is not restricted to the AC and it will also look at all the recruitment interventions (tests, telephone interview, interview, application form screening, etc.).

Project Cost Profile TEMPLATE		
The project cost is profiled as follows:		
Activity	Consultant and activity (days)	Cost (£)
1. Project manage the AC project		
2. Conduct job/ role analysis research		
3. Design the AC including Exercises, rating forms and other supporting materials		
4. Run a trial AC		
5. Support the running of the ACs		
6. Support decision making		
7. Guidance on data storage		
8. Candidate Feedback		
9. Evaluation		
10. At a later stage to validate the AC		
Total:	Total:	

Appendix 2. Training Issues

In the process of ensuring the competence of those involved in the design and administration of effective Centres, it may be necessary to provide training. This appendix provides guidance on best practice in this area.

Roles that may require training

A number of roles need to be considered in terms of training requirements for Centres. The key roles are as follows:

- Assessors (sometimes referred to as Observers);
- Centre Managers (sometimes referred to as Facilitators);
- Centre Administrators;
- Role-players;
- Fact-Find Administrators;
- Centre Designers;
- Feedback Generation Meeting Chair.

These are not necessarily distinct in practice, for example, an Assessor may also function as a Role-player, but separate training in key competence areas may be required for each role undertaken.

Assessors

Assessors are those charged with evaluating the behaviour demonstrated in the exercises. Training of assessors needs to include the following:

- Centre principles and approach to administration;
- procedures relating to data integration and Centre outcomes;
- specific materials, exercises and assessment criteria to be used;
- principles of accurate assessment and the avoidance of biases;
- skills, techniques, formats and templates to be used for the processes of observation, recording, classification, and evaluation of evidence (ORCE);
- providing Participants with feedback on performance and information about the outcome processes;
- the organisational context in which the Centre is to operate, the risks associated with assessment based recommendations and decision making (e.g. risks of discrimination), the purpose and rationale for the centre, the stakeholders for the outcome of the Centre, etc.;
- information about relevant company procedures, policies and legislation such as equal opportunities legislation;
- equal opportunities issues in assessment such as rating the behaviour of people from different backgrounds, unconscious bias and the understanding of the impact of psychological processes on the accuracy of observations and interpretation of evidence;
- confidentiality.

Where the Centre's emphasis is on development rather than assessment more training may be given on feedback and coaching skills.

Supplementary training may be given to Centre Managers who may take on the role of providing oversight and expert guidance for a team of assessors and who often Chair the Feedback Generation Meeting.

Training should be given for each different Centre that an Assessor takes part in. This can take the form of a 'walk through' where there are only small changes to the content of exercises.

The training should usually consist of a mixture of instruction, walking through exercises and practising ORCE on simulated exercises. The Piloting of the Centre can be a useful opportunity for Assessors to apply their skills in a safe environment. If training can be provided before the Pilot Centre then skills can be practised and lessons learnt.

In a Centre for Development it is likely that the feedback will be followed by development planning activities, which may or may not involve the same Assessors. The Assessors should be made aware of at least the broad content and scope of these activities.

Where an Assessor will be required to participate in Feedback Generation Meetings or provide feedback to participants they should understand the relationship between the assessed exercises, assessment criteria and performance development.

They should be able to position feedback so that it can act as a bridge between the assessed exercises and the development planning. For example, they should be able to indicate the general type of activity that would support development for a particular assessment criterion (competency). They also need to understand and be able to respond, at least in outline, to questions on organisational implications of participant needs for development, for example, what organisational support can be provided.

Assessor training for novice or inexperienced people will typically last at least two days and be largely interactive. Some of this time may, however, be fulfilled by pre-work, for example, completing an in-tray or analysis exercise in advance.

If possible, Assessors should carry out their role in a Centre within two months of their training or else undertake refresher training.

Any Assessor who has not assessed for a year should undertake refresher training.

Centre Managers

Centre Managers have the task of managing the Centre process operationally, that is, on the day or days when the Centre is run. This will involve three main roles (separate people may fulfil these roles):
● Centre monitoring and quality control;
● time-tabling and venue management;
● hosting and Participant management.

Centre Managers will need to be trained assessors and training in:
● hosting the centre, making sure Participants are appropriately briefed, provided with refreshments and understand the timetable for the Centre;
● monitoring the performance standards of all Centre staff to ensure an appropriate level of quality control that delivers the expected outcomes in line with professional and ethical standards including diversity and fairness;

- the purpose and context for the Centre, for example, what part of the development or assessment process it forms and what the information generated is used for;
- timetabling of the Centre to ensure smooth running, in collaboration with the Centre Designers;
- planning contingency to manage risks during the delivery of the Centre;
- effective identification and management of events that may impact on the effective delivery of the Centre, for example, lateness, no-shows, interruptions;
- familiarisation with the layout of the venue and room allocations;
- how to work with venue staff to ensure that all involved receive appropriate support, refreshments and materials throughout the day;
- the secure management of Centre documentation and confidential materials.

Centre Administrators

Centre Administrators are there to support the Centre Manager and must, therefore, have a general understanding of the Centre processes and relevant logistics. Their responsibilities can vary from one Centre to another but could include some, if not all, of the following, for which they will require appropriate guidance and training:
- greeting and hosting Participants throughout the Centre;
- administering exercises;
- administering psychometric instruments (where suitably qualified);
- liaising with venue staff as required;
- managing and collating documentation, including participant scores;
- Implementing data integration algorithms;
- preparing Participant feedback reports;
- diversity awareness.

Role-players

Role-players are those who interact with Participants so as to generate behaviour to be assessed. This is often done on a one-to-one basis with a separate Assessor present.

Role-players will need training in:
- the overall process for the Centre in general terms and their part in helping to elicit evidence of particular assessment criteria;
- the particular material of the exercise and the role which they will be adopting for the purposes of the exercise;
- the extent to which they need to adhere to a prepared 'script' and where they are expected to use discretion, for example in following through a novel line of discussion raised by a Participant;
- the expectations of, and process that will be used to check for, consistency of standards;
- how Participants and Role-players will be debriefed following the role-play and the Role-player's role in contributing supplementary evidence;
- equal opportunities issues in assessment such as rating the behaviour of people from different backgrounds, unconscious bias and the understanding of the impact of psychological processes on the accuracy of observations and interpretation of evidence;
- confidentiality.

Fact Find Administrators

Fact-Find Administrators are those who interact with Participants when conducting a Fact-Find Exercise. This is generally done on a one-to-one basis with a separate Assessor present.

Fact-Find Administrators will need training in:
● the overall process for the Centre in general terms and their part in helping to elicit evidence of particular assessment criteria; the particular material of the exercise and their administrative role in conducting the exercise;
● following a standardised approach to how they provide answers to the participant's questions, how they handle the participant's presentation of his/her recommendation and the process they should follow when challenging the participant's recommendation;
● the expectations of, and process that will be used to check for, consistency of standards;
● how Participants and Fact-Find Administrators will be debriefed following the Fact-Find and the Fact-Find Administrator's role in contributing supplementary evidence;
● equal opportunities issues in assessment such as rating the behaviour of people from different backgrounds, unconscious bias and the understanding of the impact of psychological processes on the accuracy of observations and interpretation of evidence;
● confidentiality.

Centre Designers

Centre Designers are those who put together the working plan for and specify or design the content of the Centre. Often these will be Occupational Psychologists.

Centre Designers' training should include the following:
● approaches to job analysis;
● selecting appropriate exercises;
● time-tabling the Centre;
● exercise design and writing.

If the Centre Designer is an Occupational Psychologist and has recent and regular experience of Centre design then their skill level can be assumed. For someone without this experience to become proficient in design, significant training and practice may well be necessary.

In practice, for some Centres, job analysis will have been undertaken as a separate activity, which may support other initiatives such as performance management. In some Centres, all exercises will be drawn from external publishers, or commissioned from authors separate from the staff otherwise involved in the Centre. In these cases the Centre Designers will have a reduced task, but should still be trained to understand the principles of job analysis and exercise writing respectively.

Job analysis training should enable Centre Designers to identify a core set of assessment criteria for any role, which will be fundamental for effective performance. It should cover a sufficient range of techniques to allow rich and comprehensive information about a job to be elicited. This might include some or all of the following approaches:

- questionnaires;
- focus groups;
- repertory grid technique;
- critical incident technique;
- content-analytic methods;
- visionary interviews.

Training in selection of appropriate exercises should focus on:
- matching exercises to job requirements as defined by the job analysis;
- fundamental principles, for example, the need to cover each assessment criterion in more than one exercise, the need for exercise type to reflect activities in the job concerned, etc.
- issues of validity and reliability in relation to different types of exercise;
- quality requirements for exercise selection. Training in time-tabling the Centre includes:
- a broad understanding of basic best practice in overall Centre design;
- how to plan for the appropriate number of assessors, Role-players and administrative staff;
- production of individual Assessor-Participant allocations and schedules;
- issues relating to contact time, rest breaks and managing staggered Participant starts and end times;
- scheduling adequate time for Assessor classification and evaluation;
- identification of accommodation requirements.

Training in exercise writing should include:
- understanding how to write clear and unambiguous instructions for Participants and Assessors;
- writing exercises that can be conducted properly within given time constraints;
- writing standardised scenarios as well as customised exercises for a client;
- how to ensure that appropriate indicators of the assessment criteria are elicited by the exercises generated by the Centre Designer;
- how to write additional information and scripts for Role-players, not given to Participants;
- techniques for generating data from organisational analysis that can be used in exercises (e.g. critical incident technique);
- design of supplementary forms and templates for recording and reporting and in-tray exercises.

Feedback Generation Meeting Chair

The Chair of the Feedback Generation Meeting will require training in:
- Centre principles and approach to assessment;
- procedures relating to development recommendations and Centre outcomes;
- the organisational context in which the Centre is to operate, the purpose and rationale for the centre, the stakeholders for the outcome of the centre, the purpose of the developmental feedback, etc.;
- confidentiality;
- running an effective meeting;
- effective decision making.

Quality of Training Provision

Training in any of the roles defined above should be designed and delivered by a subject matter expert, preferably with significant experience of the design, administration and delivery of Centres. The Training should be designed in collaboration with the clients for that training to ensure that it is relevant to the type of Centre that the trainees will be involved in, and is tailored to the skill, experience and knowledge level of the trainees.

High quality Centre training would normally be considered right from the onset of the design of the Centre, would normally be integrated into the pilot phase of the design process, and would be delivered to ensure that skills and knowledge are fresh and recently practiced at the time of the delivery of the Centre.

In practice, training may be provided by the Centre Manager or Centre Designer where they have the necessary knowledge and skills to train less experienced people involved in the Centre. The efficacy of this approach is partly dependent upon the skill and experience of these people as trainers. Any trainer involved in a Centre design project should consult closely with the Centre Designers to ensure content is relevant.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of this type of training is important, and processes should be put into place to ensure that trainees leave training events with the right levels of skill, knowledge and confidence to be effective in their role in the Centre.

Appendix 3. Developing an Organisational Policy Statement

Developing a Policy

Integration of Centres within the organisation's human resource strategy is likely to enhance the overall effectiveness of the Centres. This integration can be clarified within an organisational policy. The sections of this policy may reflect the following.

Purpose

The reasons why the organisation is using Centres should be identified. These could include any combination of external or internal selection, placement and promotion, diagnosis of development needs in the current role, identification of potential, succession planning or skills auditing. This could also include a statement of the intended benefits to the organisation and the Participants.

Participants

The target population from which Participants are drawn should be specified. The means by which Participants are selected from this population should be described. It should also be made clear whether participation is voluntary or compulsory. Where appropriate, the alternatives to participation, the consequences of not participating and the circumstances in which re-assessment is undertaken should be made clear.

Briefing of Participants

The organisation's policy on advance briefing of Participants should be outlined and detail of the contents of such briefing should be specified. For Centres for Development, briefings for managers of the Participants should be included as this is critical to the success of the Centres. Where decisions are made based on Centre outcomes, Participants should be informed of the relevant appeals procedure.

Assessors

Minimum standards of eligibility to operate as an Assessor should be set down. This should include training and certification requirements, frequency of assignment as an Assessor, organisational level in relation to that of Participants, and arrangements for evaluation of performance. Selection of Assessor groups should specify the importance of diversity within that pool where possible (in terms of ethnicity, gender, age and disability).

Where external consultants are used as Assessors, their experience and qualifications to undertake the role should be specified.

Assessment materials and procedures

Standards for the design, development and validation of the process should be specified.

Use of information

It should be clearly specified what happens to information collected about Participants. This should include: what records are retained by the organisation; whether they form part of the Participant's personnel records or are maintained separately; who has access to the information and for what purpose; whether the records can be used for any purpose other than that specified for the Centre; and for how long the records are regarded as valid for organisational decision-making. In the case of internal selection and promotion, it should be specified how information is combined with other data in reaching decisions.
The process for obtaining informed consent from participants for the specified information uses should be stated.

Feedback to Participants

Arrangements for feedback to Participants should be specified. This should include the level of detail (e.g. summary of conclusions vs. comprehensive feedback on each exercise), the medium (e.g. written report, face-to-face or telephone), who delivers the feedback, and the maximum time elapsed from the conclusion of the Centre.

Quality assurance

Procedures for on-going monitoring and validation of Centre practices to ensure adherence to best practice should be specified.

Appendix 4. Legal Issues

The Centres discussed in this standard are carried out predominantly in the context of an actual or potential employment relationship and therefore will be governed by current employment law. In addition, because data about individuals (personal data) is generated, Data Protection requirements will affect practices before, during and after a Centre. Freedom of Information provisions will be relevant in the public sector. It is beyond the scope of this appendix to review all the possible legal concerns and the content is intended for general guidance only. The notes here relate predominantly to the equality and data protection legislation current in the UK at the time of writing and are only intended as guidance. Those running Centres should be aware of relevant legislation current at the time a Centre is being designed and run and the particular context and place in which it is being used and seek legal advice if necessary.

Equality and Diversity

While all employment law may be relevant to Centres equality and diversity legislation will almost invariably be relevant whether the Centre is part of the process for gaining employment or promotion or whether it provides development opportunities that might aid career progression. The Equality Act 2010 specifies nine protected characteristics. These are Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation. The Equality Act does not apply in Northern Ireland but similar legislation is in place and in addition there are particular requirements with respect to religious and political discrimination.

In general terms, the law outlaws both direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination relates to cases where people in different categories are treated differently and to their detriment because of their group membership. Examples of direct discrimination are employees over 50 years of age not being allowed to participate in a Development Centre that might improve their chances of promotion or women attending a Centre being given different exercises to do than men.

More common and more difficult to identify is indirect discrimination. Where a policy or practice is applied to everyone but is more likely to have a negative impact on members of some protected groups than others, this will be indirect discrimination unless it can be objectively justified. For example not providing a vegetarian option when food is served at the Centre could be detrimental to Hindus who are more likely to be vegetarian and may not perform as well as others afterwards because they are hungry and have low sugar levels.

In selection, some groups may find it more difficult to meet some of the requirements or to perform well on the exercises. For example, a group exercise in an Assessment Centre for promotion in a roadside assistance company is based around an engineering theme and requires an understanding of quite a technical brief. People who do not understand engineering may be disadvantaged. The women Participants are more likely to have worked in the customer service, HR and accounts functions whereas the male Participants are predominantly from an engineering background working on service delivery. The men's technical knowledge is likely to give them an advantage. This is not necessarily

indirect discrimination. If the requirement can be objectively justified in terms of the needs of the job, that is, a knowledge of engineering is an important performance criterion then this may not be indirect discrimination.

However, if the technical knowledge is no more relevant to the senior roles than a knowledge of customer service it would not be justifiable. Care should be taken not to include requirements, or features of exercises which require knowledge or competencies some groups of Participants are less likely to have which are not clearly job relevant and justifiable.

Another example of indirect discrimination might be a requirement to have amassed a certain level or type of experience before being allowed to attend a development Centre. If the practice in the organisation leads to fewer people from certain groups achieving that experience, then the requirement might constitute indirect discrimination. For example, managers have to have worked for a period at each of the company's facilities before being allowed to attend a Development Centre.

However, some ethnic minority managers are reluctant to work on two of the sites situated in areas with very little diversity where they feel uncomfortable. This means that fewer non-White managers reach this criterion.

The law does allow employers to take positive action to try to redress any imbalance in the workforce, but not at the point of selection. It is possible to take actions to encourage or prepare people from underrepresented groups for selection or promotion. For example, an organisation might note that although there are many people of Bangladeshi background in entry level jobs, there are few reaching managerial positions. Analysis shows that Bangladeshi employees are often lacking confidence and not putting themselves forward for more senior positions. A development programme could be designed specifically aimed at the Bangladeshi group including a Development Centre to help them develop their managerial potential.

To avoid discrimination against different groups the following should be considered in designing and implementing a Centre:

1. Review all exercises and other assessments to ensure that the content is appropriate for all groups of applicants. Ideally this should be undertaken by those with expertise in fairness and diversity. Ensure that relevant groups are adequately represented in trials and consider over-representing minority groups to ensure that any difficulties that exercises may present to a specific group will be identified.
2. Make sure that the language requirements of the Centre do not exceed those of the job. In particular instructions and written briefings should be as clear as possible and avoid unnecessarily complex or idiomatic language.
3. Ensure that training for assessors and other Centre personnel includes issues around fairness and avoiding discrimination. In particular assessors should be aware of cultural differences in behaviour and of their own potential biases in order to consciously avoid unfairness in ratings.
4. Consider how to make someone from a minority group feel at ease at a Centre. This might include ensuring that they are not the only one from their group at a Centre or using a more diverse group of assessors.

5. Monitor the impact of overall Centre outcomes and particular exercise ratings for differences between groups. Where one group consistently performs less well on an exercise or the Centre as a whole consider what changes can be made to redress this without affecting the effectiveness of the Centre.

Further information is available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission website, www.equalityhumanrights.com.

Disability

In the case of a Participant with a disability, as well as the general requirement for fairness, there is a duty to provide reasonable adjustments, including in arrangements for assessment, to make sure that the person can fully participate in the Centre. It is not necessary to design and implement every Centre in a manner that would be accessible to a person with any type of disability, but thought should be given at the design stage into how the Centre might be adapted, should a person with a disability be among the people to be assessed. For example, it would not be necessary to fit a loop system to the Centre venue in case a hard of hearing Participant who could use such a system might attend. However, it would be appropriate to investigate alternative venues that could be used, or where the equipment could be obtained, in case someone would benefit from it.

Employers are not required to make adaptations when they are not aware of a disability, equally job applicants do not have to disclose a disability and many will avoid doing so unless necessary to avoid discrimination. However, it is important to provide Participants with enough information prior to the Centre so that they can determine whether they are likely to need any adjustments to demonstrate their capability effectively and make this known. For example, a hard-of-hearing Participant that thought he or she were only attending an interview might feel confident enough to lip read the questions, but would not be able to cope with a group exercise this way. In addition to providing information about what the Centre entails it is good practice to provide a named contact with training in disability issues for Participants to contact if they want to request an adjustment.

In determining appropriate adjustments, disabled Participants should be consulted first about how they perceive their needs. After this it may be necessary or useful to seek advice from the Centre Designer or experts in the Participant's disability area to find appropriate accommodations. Often Participants with disabilities will need extra time. For example, a Participant with dyslexia might need more time to read the exercise briefing; a member of the Deaf community using a sign language interpreter will need more time to communicate. The timetable for the Centre will need to be adjusted to accommodate these extended times. Scheduling events that need extra time before and after a break allow a Participant to start their preparation a little earlier or finish the assessment later without holding up other Participants. Where a Participant has mobility difficulties consideration should be given to minimising the distance between different exercises.

It can often be helpful to provide a Participant with a disability with a helper who can accompany them and ensure that their needs are met at all times, whether this is passing on instructions, checking that special equipment and aids are available, or providing help moving around the venue.

Thought should also be given to briefing other Participants to accommodate Participants with disabilities. For example, in a group discussion with a hard-of-hearing Participant, other Participants should try to face the person when speaking and avoid speaking over others or covering their mouth when speaking; with a visually impaired Participant other Participants should be reminded to identify themselves before speaking and to describe any visual material they refer to.

In making decisions regarding Participants with disabilities, it is not sufficient to ensure that the same standard is applied to all. Consideration should also be given to how a disabled Participant might perform with appropriate adjustments to an intended role. This might include an extended training period, the use of additional aids and equipment and the assignment of some minor duties to others.

Further information is available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission website, www.equalityhumanrights.com

Data Protection

In the UK, the Data Protection Act 1998 as amended provides the legal framework for the use, including collection and storage, of data about other people. Other relevant regulatory frameworks may include the European Union Directive on Data Protection and the US Safe Harbor Privacy Principles where assessment is carried out on an international basis. The Freedom of Information Act applies to public bodies and provides a duty to release information which is held to the public in response to requests.

A Participant in a Centre has a right to have the data collected about them used appropriately. Participants should understand what data is being collected on them, how it will be used and they should have given their consent for its use. In the context of Data Protection, data is deemed to be used if it is collected and stored. Therefore, it covers information collected about Participants that is not used in developing Centre outcomes such as monitoring information or contact details. A good briefing about a Centre will provide Participants with the necessary understanding of how their data will be used. While attendance and participation in the Centre could be deemed implicit agreement to the use of the data, it is important to remember that in an employment context an individual may feel constrained to allow the collection and use of data that he or she is not fully comfortable with.

The UK law sets out a number of principles which should be complied with in using personal data. These include that data should only be used where the individual has implicitly or explicitly agreed to their use. Certain personal data such as ethnic origin is considered sensitive and needs to be treated with even greater care, with explicit permission provided for its use. The data should be used for the purpose originally set and should be appropriate for that purpose. Steps must be taken to ensure that any data held is accurate and kept up to date. The data should not be used for additional purposes not originally specified without seeking the consent of the individual. For example, data from a Centre for Development should not be used for making other decisions (e.g. relating to promotion or redundancy) without gaining the consent of the individual concerned.

Data must be held securely and only those entitled to should be allowed access to it. The data should be destroyed once it has served its purpose and not held indefinitely. Where data is kept for monitoring and research purposes data consideration should be given to anonymising the records so that it is no longer personal data. In a selection context, data on unsuccessful Participants should only be held until the period for legal challenge to selection decisions has passed. Data should be destroyed with due regard to its sensitivity.

Individuals have the right to make 'Subject Access Requests' to see any data held on them. It is always good practice to provide Participants at a Centre with feedback on their performance, and this can reduce the number of Subject Access Requests made.

Assessors should be trained not to make any notes that would not be appropriate to share with the individual concerned. It is not professional to make informal notes or to use derogatory language in describing individuals or observations. Using language that could be shared with the individual is good practice, even when the individual is unlikely to see what is written.

The Data Protection Act 1998 differentiates certain roles with respect to the management of data. The Data Controller is the person or organisation which determines the purpose and manner in which personal data are processed. In the case of a Centre this will be the Client. The data generated in the Centre is done so at the behest of the client and for their benefit. Data controllers are responsible for ensuring that all data is processed in compliance with the law. It is their duty to respond to subject access requests. Data Controllers in the UK must be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office.

A Data Processor is anyone who processes the data on behalf of the Data Controller. Employees of the Data Controller are not considered Data Processors but an external Service Provider will be a Data Processor. Data processors must process the data only for the purpose and in the manner determined by the Data Controller

Further information is available from the Information Commissioner's Office website, www.ico.org.uk.

Selection for Redundancy

Where the intended the purpose of a Centre includes informing redundancy decisions, relevant legislation should be consulted. If a proportion of incumbents in a role are to be made redundant, using a Centre to determine who is to be retained is not appropriate. Where decisions are to be made based on role competence this should be determined based on the individual's actual performance in the role.

Where information about performance is not already available, procedures should be implemented to collect relevant data.

It may be appropriate to use a Centre-based approach when staff whose jobs are redundant have the opportunity to be re-employed in new roles. Where their past performance does not cover all the requirements of the new roles an Assessment Centre may be a useful way of determining whether they meet the additional competencies required in the new role.

Appendix 5. Accommodating Participants with Disability Related and Other Needs

In the design and delivery of Centres, an important consideration is the provision of accommodations or adjustments for those Participants with specific requirements (e.g. a medical condition, Specific Learning Difficulty).

An accommodation can be considered as a specific change (or changes) to the delivery or presentation of the Centre, designed to ensure that the Participant is not unfairly disadvantaged due to their disability or condition.

The need for accommodations

In considering the provision of accommodations, the Service Provider and Client should be familiar with the requirements of relevant equality legislation (e.g. Equality Act 2010 in the UK), and areas in which there is a legal obligation to provide 'reasonable adjustments' for a Participant, for example, because of a disability. There may also be requests to provide accommodations for a Participant who does not have a recognised disability, but who has particular circumstances which may affect their performance at the Centre (e.g. a short-term injury, broken limb, religious observances).

Accommodations can take a variety of forms. They can include flexibility in scheduling, accessibility of venues, appropriate seating and lighting, use of aids such as loop systems or magnification equipment or allowing or providing a support person. Other accommodations will more directly affect the assessment exercises such as additional time or alternative presentation formats for Centre materials (print font size, colour of paper, etc.). Some accommodations may have an impact on other participants (for example, asking participants in a group exercise to identify themselves by name before speaking for the benefit of a participant who is visually impaired).

The underlying principle of providing accommodations is to ensure that no participant is disadvantaged by the format of the assessment and all will have the same opportunity to demonstrate their capability. Where the design of the Centre is likely to disadvantage a Participant unfairly, the Service Provider should adapt the format to try to overcome the disadvantage. However, the accommodation, in itself, should not significantly change the standards against which the Participant is being assessed, or provide the Participant with an unfair advantage within the assessment process.

Under the Equality Act 2010 there is a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities. Adjustments can be made to the way things are done (e.g. adjusting the time limits for an exercise), to overcome physical barriers (e.g. running the Centre at a venue with wheelchair access) or by providing additional equipment (e.g. large type exercise briefings). The law does not define what constitutes a reasonable adjustment. In determining what is reasonable a number of factors should be considered; equality of opportunity in the assessment, cost, practicality, and the effectiveness of the adjustment in reducing or eliminating the anticipated disadvantage for the Participant. For example, what is practical will depend on the time available to organise the adjustment. If the need for an adjustment is only discovered on the day of the assessment it is unlikely to be

possible to organise specialist equipment or change the venue, but it might be possible to provide an additional person to support the Participant in accessing the standard venue or equipment. However, if the Participant has advised of a particular need well in advance it is more likely to be reasonable to expect the Service Provider and Client to provide an accessible venue or specialist equipment.

Procedures for providing accommodations

In planning Centres the Service Provider should consider accessibility and accommodations. This does not mean that the chosen venue and process should be adapted for every possible disability, however, thought should be given as to how requests for adjustments would be met. So, for example, if the most convenient location for the Centre is not wheelchair accessible, it could still be used, provided an alternative location was identified which could be used at short notice if it later transpired that a wheelchair user would be one of the Participants or Centre staff.

Similarly it is not necessary to procure specialist equipment or produce alternate format materials in advance, however the Service Provider should be aware of how to procure these at short notice should they be needed.

It is important that in notifying Participants about the Centre, sufficient information is provided to allow them to determine whether they might need an accommodation or adjustment. This should include information about the types of exercise and the reading and communication requirements as well as the physical location and facilities. Briefing documents should indicate a willingness to make adjustments and include details of how to contact a named person so that Participants can check whether they are likely to encounter any problems and discuss their needs.

Providing briefing information well in advance of the Centre will maximise the time available to understand a Participant's needs and organise suitable adjustments.

The Service Provider will need to establish procedures for the management of accommodation applications. Information on these procedures should be readily available to Participants in advance of their attendance so they are fully familiar with their rights, and how to proceed with a request for accommodation. Making the procedures as simple as possible will ensure that they do not in themselves present a barrier to requesting and receiving appropriate adjustments.

The Client and Service Provider should agree what type of evidence of the existence of the disability or other need will be required of Participants when requesting accommodations. The simplest approach is to accept the statement of the Participant that the need exists. Given the discrimination that people with disabilities routinely encounter in the world of work, they are more likely to conceal a disability than make a false claim. This makes a simple declaration a reasonable form of evidence. In other contexts there may be more reason to doubt Participants' claims without supporting evidence.

Where a requirement for supporting evidence is in place, consideration should be given to the type of evidence required. It should be remembered that many people will have little concrete evidence of their disabling condition and that it could take some time and expense to obtain appropriate evidence. For example, obtaining an up-to-date medical

certificate or psychological assessment can take several days if not weeks and will typically entail a fee which could be tens if not hundreds of pounds. It is important not to make the requirement for evidence in itself a barrier that could be discriminatory. Where the Client feels that Participants should supply such evidence, it could be collected after the Centre at the Client's expense, with sanctions on the Participant (e.g. withdrawal of job offer or development support) if the claim was not substantiated.

Determining what adjustment is required

The high resource requirement of assessment via Centres means that they are predominantly used in contexts where Participants will be capable individuals who can manage themselves and their disabilities. For this reason they will often be well able to describe the difficulties they are likely to have with a process and suggest accommodations that have worked for them in similar situations in the past. When it is practical and reasonable to provide the accommodations the Participant suggests this is a simple solution, particularly where the accommodation relates to attending and participating in the Centre. When adjustments relate to the assessment itself or where the candidate is not able to suggest appropriate adjustments expert advice will be needed. In some cases a carer or advocate of the Participant will be in a position to suggest appropriate adjustments even when the Participant cannot.

Where adjustments relate to assessment exercises or further information is required to determine an appropriate adjustment, guidance and recommendations from an expert is advised. Two kinds of expertise are relevant. Expertise in the area of disability or difference is required to understand what issues the Participant may have in attempting the exercises. For example, with a specific learning difficulty an expert diagnosis can specify which functions are affected and to what extent and how this is likely to impact performance. Experts in the condition will also be able to suggest how the difficulties can be best addressed.

The second form of relevant expertise relates to the assessment process. This type of expertise may be found in those who design exercises or often with the publishers of off-the-shelf materials. It is important in adapting assessments to ensure that the quality of the assessment is maintained. An appropriate adjustment will improve the assessment information from the Participant. For example, if the Participant has a slow reading speed due to a visual impairment, dyslexia or some other condition, the standard preparation time for an exercise may be insufficient for him or her to assimilate all the briefing information which might impair performance on the exercise. The impaired performance will lead to assessor ratings which will underestimate the person's capability. By increasing the preparation time for the Participant, performance is more likely to reflect the true level of competence.

In adapting assessments it is necessary to differentiate between measurement relevant and measurement irrelevant features of an exercise. For example, in a letter writing exercise Participants are required to read a simulated letter from a client and write an appropriate response. If what is being assessed is the Participant's ability to communicate in a clear and client friendly manner, whether the response is handwritten, typed or dictated to an assistant will not interfere with the assessment. However a dictated response will not allow the Participant's ability to spell correctly to be assessed and a typed response will only do so if the software provided does not automatically detect spelling errors.

Where the Centre is using simulation exercises which replicate the requirements of a target role, it is helpful to consider whether the difficulty would occur in the workplace and whether the proposed accommodation would be replicable in the workplace.

This will help to determine whether provision of the accommodation within the Centre format could be considered reasonable, bearing in mind that the legislative requirements for reasonable adjustments apply to both the workplace itself and also the related assessment and selection processes.

Example accommodations

The following list provides examples of accommodations that can be helpful. It is not exhaustive but provides illustrations of the type of accommodations often required. The impact of even the same type of disability can vary from person to person, so it is always important to check whether an adjustment is appropriate in any particular case.

1. Access and Mobility
    a. Arriving at the venue
        i.   Where the disability or condition makes using public transport difficult, providing a taxi or direct transport.
        ii.   Provision of parking close to the venue entrance.
        iii. Providing level access to the venue.
    b. Moving around the venue
        i.   Choosing a venue with wheelchair access.
        ii.   Selecting a venue with level access to all rooms.
        iii. Scheduling activities in rooms that are close together without the need to walk extended distances.
        iv.   Providing a guide or helper for moving around the venue.
        v.   Scheduling all activities for a Participant in the same room.
        vi.   Allowing the Participant to arrive early and familiarise themselves with the layout of the venue.

2. Comfort and convenience
    a. Provide appropriate seating facilities, for example, adjustable seating, higher or lower seat height.
    b. Provide adapted table or desk, for example, wheelchair users may prefer a higher than standard desk height, a visually impaired person may require a larger table space for documents in order to lay them out in an ordered manner or to use Braille or other equipment.
    c. Provide appropriate lighting. Participants with light sensitive epilepsy may not tolerate rooms with fluorescent lighting, participants with visual impairments may benefit from stronger light.
    d. Allowing additional breaks. Participants may need additional or carefully timed breaks to take medication, Participants with concentration difficulties may need longer or more frequent breaks.
    e. Scheduling assessments over a longer period (e.g. on an additional day) to prevent fatigue.

f. Where food and drink is provided, accommodate dietary requirements whether for medical or religious reasons. Try to provide food that is easy to manage with visual impairments or reduced manual dexterity. Offer to serve the Participant food or drink where the usual self service access would be more difficult.

g. Ensure that there are no extraneous sources of noise for people with hearing impairments.

3. Communication

a. Use a hearing loop system – either pre-installed or mobile to facilitate people with hearing impairments who use hearing aids.

b. Provide both information in both written and oral form, for example, written versions of briefing information usually provided orally.

c. Provide a sign language interpreter.

d. When communicating with someone with a hearing impairment, face the person when speaking, do not cover your mouth when speaking, speak clearly but do not shout, do not talk over other people, avoid background noise. Have a notebook handy to supplement or replace verbal communication.

e. Allow Participants to use technological aids such as speech recognition or text to speech software.

f. Allow additional time in timetables for briefing and other communication related activity to allow for communication difficulties.

g. Provide written documents in alternative formats – Braille, Large Type, Electronic, etc.

4. Written Assessments

a. Allow extra time to complete exercise.

b. Provide a laptop for typed rather than handwritten responses.

c. Provide a scribe to document responses.

d. Allow Participants to record oral responses rather than writing them.

e. Allow the use of text to speech software to access the assessment brief and review response.

f. Provide a reader and/or typist.

5. Psychometric Tests

a. Allow extra time to complete the exercise.

b. Provide alternative response completion modes.

c. Provide alternate format materials– Braille, Large Type, etc.

d. Provide a reader for test materials.

N.B. In all cases where alterations are to be made for psychometric instruments, advice should be sought from test publishers or other appropriate experts.

6. Interviews

a. Allow extra time for communication.

b. Provide questions in written form.

c. Ensure that interviewers are appropriately briefed regarding Participant's needs.

d. Communicate via sign language interpreter.

e. Communicate via speech interpreter.

f. Conduct interview with hearing loop active.

    g.   Conduct interview in well lit room.

    h.   Train interviewers in clear communication skills.

7.   Role Plays

    a.   Allow extra time for communication.

    b.   Allow extra time to assimilate briefing material.

    c.   Provide briefing material in alternate formats.

    d.   Adapt communication mode to one suitable for Participant.

    e.   Adapt communication mode to that Participant might use in job.

8.   Group Exercises

    a.   Allow extra time for communication.

    b.   Allow extra time to assimilate briefing material.

    c.   Provide briefing material in alternate formats.

    d.   Conduct exercise with active hearing loop.

    e.   Adapt communication mode to that Participant might use in job.

    f.   Brief other Participants regarding disabled Participant's needs, for example, for a visually impaired Participant ask others to identify themselves when speaking and to describe any visual aids; for a hard of hearing Participant ask other participants to avoid talking over others, not to cover their mouths when speaking, etc.

The provision of many accommodations will require advanced planning. For example, if a Participant requires additional time for some exercises, this is likely to require revisions to the Centre timetable, and may also warrant the scheduling of a separate, specific exercise administration for the Participant. In such circumstances, the implications of Assessor and Centre staff availability will need to be considered, as well as the knock-on effects on the subsequent Centre timetable. Scheduling some individual exercises for the Participant on a separate day can help resolve timetabling difficulties as well as reduce the load on the Participant who might otherwise be working when other Participants were enjoying a break.

More detailed information on providing accommodations, and the associated legislative requirements, can be obtained from organisations with expertise in equality legislation.

In the UK, the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) offers a number of guidance documents aimed at employers (www.equalityhumanrights.com).

Organisations with specific relevant expertise (e.g. British Dyslexia Association, www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk , Dyslexia Action, www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk) will also be able to provide guidance on obtaining an SpLD assessment.

Test publishers should be able to provide guidance on adapting their psychometric instruments appropriately and general guidance is provided on the BPS Psychological Testing Centre website (http://www.psychtesting.org.uk/the-ptc/guidelinesandinformation.cfm).

Appendix 6. Impact of Information and Communication Technology in Centres

Overview

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the internet and other advances are challenging the way that Centres are performed.

Information technology is used to manage the administrative burden of designing and running a Centre, to automate the presentation of exercises to the Participant and to automate the scoring once the Participant has responded. In using technology in the Centre process the following should be considered:

● Whether computers are used to ease the administrative burden or as a medium for the delivery of exercises the same quality and ethical criteria must apply to the process and content as for traditional methods.

● Most people are very familiar with the use of ICT in their daily work, therefore the use of ICT in Centres may well provide a better replication of the 21st century work environment, which in turn may enhance face validity. However, it is important that the technology used does not place irrelevant demands on Participants, which may affect their ability to demonstrate evidence of a job specific assessment criterion, for example, a requirement for knowledge of the functioning of a specific piece of software over the ability to analyse and make conclusions from a set of data.

● Automated scoring mechanisms have advantages in terms of speed and reliability, so far as routine, frequently occurring or mainly predictable responses are concerned. However, it is important to validate the effectiveness of any automated scoring procedures and particularly confirm their ability to deal appropriately with unusual but valid responses.

● Scoring support systems also exist which leave the Assessor to assign scores but provide assistance such as displaying the appropriate elements of the Participant's response, scoring guidelines, example scores or adding up the behaviour check list items ticked. These can aid Assessors but should not be used in place of training (see Appendix 2).

The following sections explore the use of technology in more depth.

Specific uses of ICT

ICT in Job Analysis

There are a number of computer-enhanced job analysis, competency profiling and competency definition systems available commercially. They have potential advantages over more conventional, interview-based job analysis techniques:

● They can support a balanced view of the job and help avoid omissions by providing a well-researched and comprehensive set of behaviours or other elements on which to base the job analysis.

● They may make prioritisation of the assessment criteria or other requirements more effective. The computer can be instructed to force the respondent to choose which assessment criteria or requirements are essential, rather than merely desirable.

- They enable electronic data collection, and this reduces the administrative burden of wide-scale sampling to large numbers of respondents.
- They save the data in electronic format, which is easier to store and recover.
- Effective technology will not replace the need to ensure that the respondents have a good understanding of the job being analysed.

Computer Administration of Simulations

Computers are increasingly used to schedule, present and administer Centre simulations. This approach may enhance the exercise's face validity for the Participant and also reduce the administrative burden for the organisation. As with all such interventions, the psychometric content and measurement integrity of the exercises must be maintained irrespective of the medium in which they are presented. They should always be:

- Relevant to the content of the jobs.
- Simple to understand.
- Fair to all groups.
- Able to predict future performance.

It is important to only use a computer-based approach for the presentation of the simulation where this accurately replicates the nature of the task.

Use of Online Psychometric Test Administration in a Centre

Many psychometric tests are now administered on line. A reputable test publisher will provide full advice and guidance on the efficient and ethical use of such tests. When using online tests as part of a Centre the following should be considered:

- The administrative advantages of Participants taking online tests unsupervised prior to the Centre should be weighed against the need to minimise the risk of collusion. Some online test publishers offer short supervised verification tests and most provide password-protected access to tests. These measures, alongside proper communication about the use of results from such tests, may help to minimise the temptation to collude.
- The Participant experience should also be considered. While most online tests are easily self-administered, difficulties in completing such unsupervised tests may increase Participant anxiety unnecessarily, and impact on the client organisation's image.
- It is wise to use credible online test publishers, who provide a high level of Participant and client support as well as provide the usual validity and reliability assurance for the particular tests.
- Online ability tests often use an adaptive approach. Whilst this means that tests are shorter and can measure a very broad range of ability, this may result in a more stressful Participant experience. This needs to be understood, and communicated, to ensure that this does not adversely affect a Participant's performance across other exercises in the Centre.
- Participants should not usually have automatic access to their test results before the Centre. Arrangements for feedback of results should follow the usual BPS standards.

Recording Participant evidence

Assessors may benefit from using technology in their own, conventional assessment process. Behavioural checklists and note pads on portable devices may save a significant amount of redrafting in the assessment and data integration processes.

The same standards of recording evidence should be applied whether this is done electronically or by pen and paper.

Assessment of Participant responses

The use of ICT can increase the objectivity, efficiency and accuracy of some aspects of the assessment process in terms of evaluating Participant responses, as long as:

● The Participant's responses are entered in a way that is recognised by the software package that is being used.

● There are only a certain number of options available to the Participant, all of which can realistically be pre-determined in advance. Where judgement is involved, the programming load increases dramatically and many of the advantages are lost.

Report Writing

Report writing from Centres for feedback or decision-making purposes is an extremely time consuming and resource hungry activity. Computer-based expert systems, behavioural statement checklists and other labour-saving devices are all ways of reducing the task to manageable proportions. As with other aspects of the process, care must be taken to ensure that such short cuts do not miss out on the rich details that make Centres beneficial to an assessment or development process. Ideally the reports should be used in combination with a one-to-one feedback discussion and should be validated with both typical and unusual score profiles to ensure their output is appropriate.

'Virtual' Centres

The 'Virtual' Centre in which Participants operate remotely through technology is likely to become an increasingly well-used approach because of the obvious practical advantages for Participants and organisations alike. At its core is the concept that for many of the components of a Centre, there is no particular requirement for all Participants to be in a single location. However, the efficacy of a Virtual Centre is dependent upon the following conditions:

● Good technology infrastructure that allows Participants to communicate with the Assessors and perhaps each other in a seamless manner, in real-time.

● Quiet, standardised environmental conditions.

● Relevant levels of security (are the people working alone, etc.).

● Good logistical organisation and a willingness to be flexible in the hours that the Centre runs.

With these components one can interview, conduct most simulations, score and provide feedback to Participants remotely. This is a rapidly developing area and it is difficult to provide specific guidance. Practitioners may find it useful to consult guidance on technology based remote testing such as that produced by the International Test Commission (www.intestcom.org).

Considerations when using new technology

Whilst the case for the use of ICT in Centres is strong, the advantages should be weighed against possible disadvantages when considering their use. These may include:

● Participants may prefer, and behave more naturally in more face-to-face interaction The 'social process' involved in face-to-face assessment would be lessened through technology.

● This may be relevant where social skills are being measured.

● The opportunities for the client organisation to manage their image is lessened, and an impersonal image could be conveyed.

● Some processes (such as group exercises or role plays) where interpersonal interaction is being observed do not lend themselves readily to technology.

● Over-reliance on technology at the exclusion of proper contingency planning. Technology failures can cause major disruption and cost implications for Centre Managers.

Appendix 7. Piloting a Centre[1]

Piloting a Centre entails checking the logistics by conducting a practice run of the event, so as to test and evaluate every aspect of how the centre runs. Please note that trialling of the exercises is a separate process, which should have already been completed. Following trialling and finalising materials, the Centre process should be piloted to ensure and enable refinements to be made to roles, integration and logistics. Piloting, therefore, focuses on how the Centre operates in entirety.

The best practice approach to Piloting is to conduct a 'dry run' or 'dress rehearsal', where there is no need to make any genuine selection decisions. This means choosing participants whose incentive for attending is usually the offer of beneficial developmental feedback. However, this approach is not without its difficulties, as it isn't always easy to find suitable individuals, who are willing to give up the necessary time to participate in the pilot Centre and who can be trusted to respect the confidentiality of the event. Clearly it is not appropriate to use any people who are likely to subsequently go through the full process.

The piloting of the Centre can also be a useful opportunity for assessors to further practice their skills in a safe environment.

A less effective way of Piloting a Centre is to use the first 'live' running as a pilot event and to be prepared to make subsequent amendments, based on a review of the effectiveness of the Centre. The problem with this approach is that not all participants will receive the same treatment and this could give rise to concerns regarding equal opportunities, which would clearly be much more serious in the case of a Centre run for selection purposes than one run for development purposes. Thus this approach should generally be avoided unless the Centre is being run purely for development purposes.

Objectives of the Pilot Centre

Before running a Pilot Centre, it is essential to be clear what the objectives are. Possible objectives might include, but would not be limited to:

● Testing the process and all of its components, for example, timetables, schedules, room layouts, timings, venue facilities, etc.
● Identifying any issues that might have a bearing on equal opportunities or might create potential adverse impact, or disability discrimination concerns.
● Testing the effectiveness of briefing and guidance materials.
● Testing the effectiveness of any training given to centre personnel.
● Reviewing the scoring, decision making and information management systems in place to ensure that they are robust, fair and fit for purpose.

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[1] With thanks to Pearn Kandola LLP for permission to adapt and use their material.

Selecting Participants for the Pilot Centre

It is important to adopt an appropriate approach to the selection of participants for a Pilot Centre. In addition to ensuring that a sufficient number of participants are included in a pilot Centre (usually enough to equate to one to two fully-attended Centres) there is a need to pay attention to two specific issues:

- Participants should be at the target job level, as this will provide useful benchmarking of standards for the tools used and realistic achievement guidelines for Assessors.
- Participants should be a representative mix of the target audience due to attend the Centres to detect any relevant issues. It may sometimes be useful to over represent minority groups to identify potential diversity issues.

The collation of feedback

Consideration needs to be given to the most appropriate feedback processes. Feedback needs to be collected from Participants, Assessors, Role-players and any other staff associated with the process to determine any areas for improvement. The most obvious tools for collecting feedback data are questionnaires, interviews and, if appropriate, focus groups. Some of these feedback tools can also be integrated into an ongoing review and evaluation of the Centre.

Notes:

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