Assessment Centres

What is an “Assessment centre”?

An Assessment Centre is a process, not a specific ‘location’!

Assessment centres are a highly-structured, objective and standardised way of evaluating the potential in a number of applicants (often from 6-24 people), at the same place and time, and on the same criteria. They aim to analyse whether the candidates’ skills, experience and personal qualities will align with the company and its culture, and the job and its needs. Usually Assessment Centres are used by large companies.

Candidates have their performance in a variety of tasks rated based on a standardised scale, and their results are compared against what the company expects as a minimum and against other applicants.

Are all Assessment Centres the same?

No, Assessment Centres can vary greatly – this document describes some attributes of ‘typical’ Assessment Centres, but they can be quite unique, for example, one company runs theirs like ‘The Amazing Race’!

- Assessment Centres are specifically designed for the position, stream, or company
- Tasks may all be devised to assess a key skill (e.g. logic), or each task could focus on a different skill
- Sessions may be videotaped

Why are they conducted?

- Allows the company to see how a candidate might behave in a certain environment
- Less time consuming than individual interviews (which might be the next step in the recruitment process)
- Gives applicants an opportunity to demonstrate skills that they wouldn’t be able to in an interview or through online testing alone

How long is an Assessment Centre?

You may be required for a few hours, half a day, a full day session or even a few days. Be sure to read your invitation carefully.

Who runs the Assessment Centre?

Typically they are run by a professional recruitment company using trained ‘assessors’, or by the company you are applying to itself (at their offices, using their own recruitment team).

Assessors might be HR staff, professional recruiters, and/or psychologists. They may take notes and help with activities, while primarily assessing candidates.

When is an Assessment Centre conducted?

Usually after various initial short listing processes:

- Some companies conduct Assessment Centres early in the recruitment process (e.g. just after short-listing applicants’ résumés)
- Others use them later (e.g. after interviews like phone or face-to-face, and/or online tests)
## Types of tasks

You may be asked to perform tasks individually or in a group (unless otherwise stated*) – for example the Assessment Centre may start with applicants performing individual tasks and have applicants form groups at a later stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem Solving</strong></td>
<td>A large variety of problem solving exercises are used at Assessment Centres. Other examples can be found at the QUT library or by doing a Google search.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Oral Presentations</strong></td>
<td>You may be given a topic in advance, or be told on the spot. If you are given advance-warning, you may even be able to use visual aids. Focus on both content and presentation skills, adhere to the time frame, and keep your audience in mind. Aim to be convincing, speak clearly and concisely, be aware of your tone and body language, and plan your points. You may be asked questions at the end of your presentation, so try to anticipate these based on your content. If you get a chance: Practice!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work Simulations</strong></td>
<td>For this task you will be asked to participate in some form of business simulation activity. If you are working in a group setting, you may be given a work situation that you have to provide solutions to. These types of tasks assess how you would go in ‘real-work’ situations.</td>
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<td><strong>Written Assessment</strong></td>
<td>These could be in the form of short questionnaires, essays, etc. For example: You might be told about a problem facing the organisation and asked what solutions you would suggest. You might also be asked to complete other written or multiple-choice tests based on the role or type of work you would be doing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Case Studies</strong></td>
<td>Here you may be asked to analyse and understand a case/situation/scenario from a given perspective or from multiple perspectives, in order to solve problems, make recommendations, create a project plan, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Role-Plays</strong></td>
<td>Role-plays are designed to place you in a situation, where you have to react as you would if it were reality. You might be given a fictitious work situation or work role and asked to discuss issues with others, meet a target, etc. The other participants you will be role-playing with might be other graduate applicants, assessment centre facilitators, or even actors.</td>
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<td><strong>Games</strong></td>
<td>Often called “high impact” or “high stress” games, these are designed to test a range of things, so just contribute to the best of your abilities. An example of a high-impact game might be the “Tower Building exercise”, where you will be placed into a group and asked to design and build a tower out of building blocks following a set of rules (such as the height, a time-limit, number of blocks, etc). Your group will often be competing with other groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In-Tray Tasks</strong></td>
<td>This is a time-restricted exercise which requires you to read a range of documents, understand them, and then put them in order of importance. You will be given a ‘tray’ (e.g. phone messages, emails, memos) of tasks to either complete or delegate to others. Sometimes you are given a fictitious role in the organisation to go with your in-tray, and you might need to work with ‘co-workers’ or ‘customers’ (sometimes on the phone), as if you were really in that role. Don’t forget you might need to justify why you did things!</td>
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<tr>
<td><em><em>Group</em> Discussions</em>*</td>
<td>Also called “Leaderless Group Discussions”. You are given a topic (often controversial) to discuss, negotiate ideas about, analyse, or problem-solve in a group.</td>
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*Not every task can actually be completed in the time allowed. It’s about doing the best you can, with what you have.*

[www.careers.qut.edu.au](http://www.careers.qut.edu.au)
What can you do to improve your chances of Assessment Centre success?

Listed below are some of our tips to get the most out of your time at an Assessment Centre. Make sure you read these tips in advance to be able to really make the most of them!

BEFORE

• Re-read any information they send you
• Pre-read anything that they ask you to
• Do your research! Evaluate and understand:
  o The company, its values and its industry
  o The role, job description and selection criteria
  o Required/desired competencies
  o Your own application and your strengths
• Practice interviews with friends/family/QUT Careers & Employment (see bottom of page)
• Familiarise yourself with the types of tasks on the previous page
• Check in advance if you can bring any tools to use
• Sharpen your problem-solving abilities by completing puzzles, crosswords or number games
• Practice your presentation skills
• The following sites offer free practice tests:
  o http://www.psychometricinstitute.com.au
  o http://www.practicepsychometrictests.com

DURING

Read / listen to ALL instructions very carefully!

• Ask questions and take breaks if you need to
• Be aware of any time constraints
• Define and plan how you are going to tackle a task
• Double check that you have been provided all of the required items listed
• Work on problems as if they are real, not just a ‘test’
• Make sure to contribute (but remember: it’s about what you say, not how much you say). Show that you are interested in the role. If you are contributing and you make a mistake, don’t give up. Keep being involved – it’s about giving it a go and showing that you have perseverance
• Listen to others
• Don’t try to guess what a test is measuring as this may affect your focus, performance and/or participation
• Stay on task - don’t get distracted

Try to suggest a creative solution if you know innovation is valued

• Always back up your responses (‘yes’ or ‘no’ alone is not going to showcase your skills/knowledge)
• Keep in mind that the solution may not be as important as how you got there
• Remember to breathe
• Be courteous to others
• Speak articulately
• Don’t leave without showing someone the items that they asked you to bring

Don’t waste the day comparing yourself to others.

• Remember, it is not a competition; it is about fitting the right person to a job
• Interact with the facilitators/assessors
• Thank the facilitators at the end
• Be honest, enjoy the day, and above all, be yourself!

MORE HELP IS AVAILABLE!

*See the Interview Questions and Selection Tests information sheets by scanning the QR code on the next page, or go to http://www.careers.qut.edu.au/student infosheet.jsp or you can pick one up from the Careers & Employment office.

PRACTICE!

*Book in for a Mock Interview with QUT Careers & Employment, or practice with friends and/or family.

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What qualities might companies be looking for during an Assessment Centre?

There are a multitude of skills, capabilities and personal qualities that a company might be looking for in a candidate in any given task. Some general examples might be:

- Communication skills
- General aptitude
- Resilience
- Company culture fit
- Interpersonal skills
- Teamwork
- Company knowledge
- Leadership ability
- Technical skills
- Creativity
- Logic
- Time-management
- Decision-Making
- Organisational skills
- Understanding of role
- Engagement
- Personality
- Written ability
- Enthusiasm
- Problem-solving ability
- Ethical behaviours

**REMEMBER:**
It’s OK to be nervous, but don’t try to judge what a company might be looking for - just be yourself!

Company A might want you to be a studious team-player.

Company B might want you to be very outgoing and a leader.

What else might occur at an Assessment Centre?

While at an Assessment Centre, you may not necessarily be doing task after task in quick succession. You may have some waiting or ‘free’ time; you may be given time where you can ask the recruiter questions (so go prepared with anything you want to know); there may even be a presentation by the recruiters where they provide information about the company.

**Remember:** You may be being assessed at any time.

Assessments Centres may also involve:

**Functions:** This could be a sit down lunch, or you may be invited to a dinner/cocktail event. Remember to wear appropriate clothes, don’t drink too much, and above all, be professional. See our **Networking** information sheet for more tips on making the most of these situations.

**Interviews:** These could be held one-on-one or panel-style, with the interviewers being recruitment consultants, HR staff or managers. They are designed to discern skills, competencies and previous experience. Your responses will be noted so that they can be referred back to and/or rated, so don’t worry if they are writing while you are talking.

Have a look at the information sheet on **Interview Skills** for more assistance with interviews.

**Psychometric Assessments:** These can occur before, during or after an Assessment Centre. “Psychometric assessments” are tests which evaluate applicants’ knowledge, aptitude, personality, and interests, etc. See our information sheet on **Selection Tests** for further information and examples.