Assessment and Development Centre Brochure

v3.0
# Contents Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A letter from Government Chief Commercial Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commercial Profession &amp; Professional Standards</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment &amp; Development Centre</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End to end process</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is assessed?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you assessed?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Assessors</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CommercialCapabilityManagement Platform</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Participant's Experience: The Development Centre</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Feedback Report &amp; The Scoring</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does my mark mean &amp; can I resit or appeal?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Participant's Experience: What Happens Next</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

UK central government spends £45 billion each year buying goods and services. Following a number of high-profile incidents involving government contracts, the National Audit Office (NAO) published the 'Transforming Contract Management' report in 2014. As a result of this report, Cabinet Office and HM Treasury conducted a series of Commercial Capability Reviews (CCRs) across the central departments. Both the NAO report and the departmental CCRs identified that substantial value and money has been lost in government, as a result of insufficient business acumen and capability within the commercial profession.

Building commercial capability is therefore a top priority for the Cabinet Secretary, the Chief Executive of the Civil Service & the Government’s Chief Commercial Officer. The Commercial Capability Programme has been established to reform capability across the commercial profession. The Assessment and Development Centre (ADC) is a key component of this work.

"Enormous value to the taxpayer can be created when government and the biggest suppliers to government come together in a strategic way. The Commercial Capability Programme advances this agenda substantially and, in so doing, provides commercial experts across government with the opportunity to gain the experience and expertise that can put them in a world class position."

John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service

"CIPS is pleased to have contributed and supported the new Commercial Function Assessment & Development Centre initiative led by the Cabinet Office, which provides a dynamic, robust and challenging approach to recruiting highly experienced and commercially astute professionals into the new Government Commercial Function."

"The UK Government commercial reform initiative is without question one of the most ambitious and extensive projects of its kind and one which we at IACCM regularly cite in our discussions around the world."

IACCM
International Association for Contract & Commercial Management

OUR VISION IS FOR THE GOVERNMENT COMMERCIAL FUNCTION TO BE THE BEST COMMERCIAL FUNCTION IN THE UK
"The Government’s Commercial Function will be the best commercial function in the UK. That means having capable people with the right skills in the right structure, with the appropriate personal development plans to grow for the future."

Gareth Rhys Williams

Dear Colleague,

I'm writing to you about the Assessment and Development Centre you're about to attend. I just want to share with you a bit of background to what we're trying to achieve.

First of all let me put this in context. We're trying to make the Government’s Commercial Function into the best commercial function in the UK. That means having capable people with the right skills in the right structure, with the appropriate personal development plans to grow for the future.

Many of you may know about the Blueprint work that is going on in each department; that's to determine the 'right structure' based on the commercial pipelines ahead of you. When the Blueprints are signed off you'll know the required organisation that will be sufficient to complete the task you face.

To ensure we have the capable people with the right skills populating the identified structure, we have introduced the Assessment and Development Centre to confirm where our specialist capability lies.

For those who want to pursue a career in Commercial we're also building a more comprehensive learning and development offer right across the function that you can benefit from with the appropriate personal development plans for the future.

There is no doubt that the commercial environment worldwide and especially in government has got much harsher and more demanding in the last few years. We need to rise to that challenge by making sure we have a cadre of true specialists that can thrive in this environment, and who command the respect, not only of our suppliers and partners, but also of our colleagues internally.

So we have a challenge ahead of us; but I want to emphasise that while those of you that pass should feel very proud, everyone who exits the Assessment and Development Centre wanting to pursue a career as a commercial specialist will have a discussion with their line manager or commercial director about a personal development plan designed to help you further your career in commercial. We want to invest in you and ensure we have the right opportunities in place to help you reach your full potential.

You should know that we're making every potential new joiner from outside the civil service go through the same process; I want to build a cadre of specialists who can all, wherever they work, be confident in each other's abilities and strengths.

I hope you enjoy the day; having done the day myself I can say that it's intended to be challenging, but also to give you the opportunity to shine.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Rhys Williams

Government Chief Commercial Officer
The Commercial Profession & Professional Standards

The commercial profession consists of approximately 4000 individuals across central government. It is estimated that just over 900 of these are at Grade 7 and above.

The Commercial Profession is defined in terms of Specialists and Practitioners.

1. Senior Commercial Specialists (typically SCS2)
2. Commercial Specialists (typically SCS1)
3. Associate Commercial Specialists (typically Grade 6)
4. Commercial Lead (typically Grade 7)
5. Practitioner Professionals (typically HEO-SEO)
6. Developing Professionals (typically AA-EO)

The development of a set of professional standards in early 2015 has been an important step for the Commercial Capability Programme. These standards clearly define, using a common language, what is expected of our commercial professionals at each of the different levels. It is these frameworks that form the basis of the Assessment & Development Centre methodology.

The Frameworks:

Specialists: The GCF People Standards for the Profession set out the standards expected across the profession at the most senior levels (Grade 7 equivalent and above).

Practitioners: The standards expected at the more junior levels (SEO and below) are covered in the Commercial Skills and Competency Framework for Developing and Practitioner levels.

Both frameworks are the responsibility of the Government’s Chief Commercial Officer and are maintained by the Government Commercial Function.
Assessment & Development Centre

The Assessment & Development Centre has been designed by occupational psychologists in accordance with the British Psychological Society’s Standard on Assessment Centre design and delivery. The ADC provides two services for Departments:

1. An Assessment Centre - to be used to support recruitment and selection into commercial roles at the specialist levels (equivalent to Grade 7 and above).

2. A Development Centre - to identify the commercial expertise, experience and capability of existing Civil Servants (Grade 7 and above) whose work is primarily commercial; and set out where development should focus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Centre</th>
<th>Development Centre (for incumbents only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What does it do?</strong></td>
<td>Assesses a participant’s commercial expertise, skills and capability against the GCF People Standards for the Profession framework and accredits a participant at a specific specialist level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How is it used?</strong></td>
<td>Departments can choose to use the Development Centre to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To inform final panel interviews for departments that are recruiting into commercial roles at specialist levels (Grade 7 and above).</td>
<td>1. Identify capability gaps for individual staff and collectively for the department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the output?</strong></td>
<td>2. Increase the effectiveness of learning and development by making it tailored to address capability gaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A report that provides expert insight into a participant’s areas of development to help inform final panel interview questions.</td>
<td><strong>What is the output?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the benefits?</strong></td>
<td>1. A report that provides expert insight into the areas a participant can develop to best support their career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the participants: Expert insight into areas they should develop to best support their career.</td>
<td>2. A one to one feedback session that jointly elicits development points to help inform development plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the department: A robust, objective and independent assessment of their staff and prospective new recruits, against the GCF People Standards for the Profession, which can help inform resourcing and organisation challenges.</td>
<td>For the Government Commercial Function: A baseline of capability and specialisms that exist within the profession, which can be used to help shape the future of the commercial function.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
End to End Process

By the end of the process, the ADC team are committed to ensuring that each participant will have:

- Been fully briefed and feel well prepared for what to expect on the ADC Day (videos briefings are also available - please refer to Q9 in the FAQ section of this brochure for details)
- Had a positive and constructive experience on the Assessment and Development Centre day.
- Received a detailed report providing expert insight into their capabilities and areas of development against the GCF People Standards for the Profession framework.

Internal Civil Servants will then all have the opportunity to:

- Have a constructive one-to-one feedback session which has reflected on overall mark, scoring and performance and mutually agreed any areas for development.
- Discuss those areas of development with a career manager and received expert input in to your personal development plan that will help you progress and develop in your commercial career.

Process for internal staff:

1. Commercial Director confirms involvement with ADC process and communicates to staff
2. Assessment and Development Centre team brief participant
3. Participant completes self-assessment form and line manager validates it
4. Feedback report is released to participant
5. Feedback report is sent to line manager
6. Participant attends Assessment or Development Centre day
7. Assessment and Development Centre team hand-over to the Talent and Teach teams by sharing outcome of the one-to-one session and agreeing a learning and development approach
8. Talent and Teach team agree a tailored learning and development plan with the participant and line manager
9. Line manager, participant and Talent and Teach team agree new Development Centre date (if required)
10. Talent and Teach team review progress at 3 and 6 month check in points
What is assessed?

The Assessment & Development Centre is designed to evaluate a participant’s skills, experience and capability against the attributes defined in the GCF People Standards for the Profession framework.

- The 10 Judgement & Leadership attributes are assessed in 4 of the 5 exercises. These attributes are split into;
  a) Business Acumen & Commercial Judgement (5 attributes)
  b) Leadership Skills & Capability (5 attributes)
- Technical Expertise is assessed in 1 exercise.

How your ADC day is broken down:

**Technical Expertise** is assessed in 1 exercise.
A participant will select between 1 and 3 of the areas of commercial expertise (depending on level assessed). Current options include:
- Strategy and Policy Development
- Understanding Needs and Sourcing Options
- Procurement Process
- Contract and Supplier Management
- Complex Deals

*The Complex Deals module is a combination of attributes from each of the other 4 commercial life cycle areas and are only relevant for those people either working in, or applying for, roles in the Complex Transactions team.

**Judgement & Leadership** is assessed in 4 out of the 5 exercises.

The 10 Judgement & Leadership attributes are broken down in to:

**A) Business Acumen & Commercial Judgement:**
- Risk Mindset
- Manages Complexity
- Market Insight
- Commercial Focus
- Decisive

**B) Leadership Skills & Capability:**
- Resilient
- Assertive
- Political Insight
- Builds Relationship
- Coaching Manager
How are you assessed?

The Assessment & Development Centre uses a range of interviews and simulated exercises to assess the commercial expertise, skills and capability of individuals against the GCF People Standards for the Profession framework. It takes place across the course of one day, and adopts a multi-trait, multi-exercise and multi-assessor methodology to ensure robust, consistent and objective assessment of individuals.

The specific exercises included in any one ADC day are dependent on the level being assessed but will be a combination from the list below (see colour coding):

**Exercises designed to evaluate the 10 x Judgement & Leadership Attributes:**

- **Judgement and Leadership Interview** 🌟🌟🌟🌟
  
  A one-to-one interview lasting 60-70 minutes.

- **Group Exercise** 🌟🌟🌟🌟
  
  Participants have 20 minutes to review information before entering in to a 45 minute group discussion (with up to 5 other participants).

- **Supplier Meeting** 🌟🌟
  
  A 20 minute one-to-one role-play exercise linked to the outputs from the Group Exercise.

- **Executive Briefing** 🌟🌟🌟🌟
  
  A 20 minute one-to-one role-play exercise linked to the outputs from the Group Exercise.

- **Case Study and Briefing** 🌟🌟🌟🌟
  
  The participant will have 60-85 minutes (depending on level) to individually review a range of information in advance of a one-to-one role-play exercise where the participant is required to brief a Director General or Permanent Secretary (dependent on level). This exercise is designed to evaluate the 10 Judgement & Leadership attributes.

- **Situational Judgement Interview** 🌟🌟🌟🌟
  
  The participant will have 20 minutes to review a number of short scenarios before being joined by an assessor for a 60 minute exercise which explores the participant’s best response to each scenario.

**Exercises designed to evaluate Technical Expertise:**

- **Technical Interview** 🌟🌟🌟🌟
  
  A one-to-one interview lasting 30-60 minutes (depending on level), designed to explore a participant's experience and knowledge in relation to the technical experience area(s)* selected:

  - At Senior Commercial Specialist level, the participant is expected to demonstrate a broad/high level knowledge across 3 of the technical areas 🌟
  
  - At Commercial Specialist level, the participant is expected to demonstrate a more detailed understanding across 2 of the technical areas 🌟
  
  - At Associate Commercial Specialist and Commercial Lead level, the participant is expected to demonstrate a detailed understanding of 1 of the technical areas 🌟🌟

* Senior Commercial Specialist
* Commercial Specialist
* Associate Commercial Specialist
* Commercial Lead

- **External applicants at SCS and CS level will not take part in the group exercise.

- **Technical expertise areas are subject to ongoing review with departments, and additional modules may be added on request.**
The Assessors

One of the critical lessons learned from the pilot in July 2015, was that the success of the Assessment & Development Centre was highly dependent on the quality of the assessors. In order to hold challenging and informed discussions, assessors must have deep commercial experience gained across a significant number of years in industry.

As a result, only the most senior and experienced individuals are invited to join the pool of assessors. The current pool consists of Crown Representatives, Partners and Directors from Professional Services Companies including EY, PWC and KPMG as well as senior leaders from some of Government’s largest suppliers such as BT, ATOS and CGI.

All assessors go through a rigorous selection and training process before supporting an ADC day:

1. Interview with a Senior Civil Servant to assess their suitability and assessment level.
2. Assessors attend a full-day training session delivered by Occupational Psychologists.
3. Assessors take part in first ADC day and receive feedback on performance at the end of the day
4. All assessors are subject to on-going performance review.
The Commercial Capability Management Platform

The Assessment & Development Centre is managed through an online portal called the Commercial Capability Management Platform (commonly referred to as the CCMP).

The CCMP can be accessed here: https://gcf.onmats.com/w/webpage/807

Participants can register, set up a profile and complete a Self-Assessment Form on the CCMP. Participants can also access a wealth of useful information about the Commercial Capability Programme, the GCF People Standards for the Profession and the Assessment & Development Centre. The booking process is all managed through the CCMP and it is here where participants must register any special requirements or reasonable adjustment requirements.

Once a participant has registered on the CCMP, they can log in here: https://gcf.onmats.com

The Self-Assessment Form:

All staff are required to complete a Self-Assessment Form before attending a Development Centre. The Self-Assessment Form does not form part of the formal assessment, but it is intended to help participants prepare by starting to think about their personal skills, capabilities and experience in line with the GCF People Standards for the Profession framework. The Self-Assessment Form will be validated by a participant’s Line Manager and will be used to inform the content of the technical interview which takes place on a Development Centre day. The results of the Self-Assessment DO NOT count towards the overall result but it is an important and mandatory part of the process.

IMPORTANT:

Participants should elect to be assessed at the Specialist Level that is most aligned to their current Civil Service grade. Only in exceptional circumstances, and where pre-agreed with the department, would exceptions to this rule be considered. It is advised that participants read the Professional People Standards Framework before completing their Self-Assessment Form.
Hi there,

I went through the Development Centre in May 2016 at Commercial Specialist level and would like to share a bit about my experience with you and hopefully give some useful advice and tips.

The first thing I always say to people is that it really isn't anything to worry about. It is professional and well run with credible, yet testing, exercises and assessors. Yes; it's tough, but I actually enjoyed it, and hopefully you will too.

Mind-set is key. Take this for the opportunity it is – a chance to showcase your skills and understand your development needs. If you approach this with a positive attitude then I'm sure you'll enjoy the process a lot more and potentially come out with a better result. Trust the process and believe in the fact that this will help you develop your commercial career. The ADC team will look after you and I really felt like the assessors were trying to get the best out of me during all of the exercises – they're not there to trip you up.

Treat the ADC as a full day. It's important that your team know that you will be out of the office and unreachable for the entire day. You will need to fully focus on the task in hand. My advice is to not book in any meetings after as well! You'll want the time to relax and unwind after what is a very thorough and demanding day. It is important to be prepared for a long day; treat it as a full day and try not to lose focus halfway through - the last exercise of the day is just as challenging as the first and it should be given the same attention and effort.

Keep your energy levels up. Hot drinks and lunch are provided but it's a good idea to take some snacks – chocolate, nuts, cakes; whatever works for you! Remember to get some fresh air during your breaks as well – take a ten minute walk to clear your head and refresh your energy, it really makes a world of difference.

Know your timings. Try to get your head into the 'rhythm' of the day. Think about the timings of each exercise and how you're going to divide your time. Make sure that you give yourself a few minutes before each exercise to think about what is being asked of you - so for example, before going into the group exercise think about how you are going to achieve your objectives – don't just rush in straight from the reading the preparation materials!

Preparation is critical. I thought about my commercial experiences from the last five years. I considered how they would showcase my skills against each of the attributes being assessed. I had a few complex but clear examples in mind and I linked them to the ten Judgement and Leadership attributes. Also; prepare for the amount of reading that is required. You know you're going to get given material to read, so don't be overwhelmed when that happens.

I hope this has been helpful. Prepare, Relax and try to enjoy. Good Luck

Paul Carter,

Deputy Director, Rehabilitation Services, Ministry of Justice
The Feedback Report & Scoring

All participants will receive their personal feedback report within 1 week of attending a Development Centre. This report will provide participants with a score against each of the attributes assessed as well as an overall mark.

An extract from a sample report is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Above Threshold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Need for development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Significant need for development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your overall rating (above) is derived from the scores received against each of the areas below. Participants must score at or above the threshold (3.0) in EACH of the main areas tested to be above the threshold overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JUDGEMENT &amp; LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>Threshold</th>
<th>Max. Available Score</th>
<th>Year Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Business Acumen &amp; Commercial Judgement</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Leadership Skills &amp; Capability</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TECHNICAL EXPERTISE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Strategy &amp; Policy Development</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Understanding Sourcing Needs</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Procurement Process</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Contract &amp; Supplier Management</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The marks for each of the ten attributes shown in the above bar charts are the average scores awarded across each of the four J&L exercises for each attribute. So for example, "builds relationships" has an overall score of 3 in the bar chart above. This score of 3 is the average from the four measures taken across the four J&L exercises. So, a participant might have scored a 2 in the group exercise for "builds relationships", a 4 in the briefing, a 3 in the J&L interview and a 3 in the SJL. These four marks are averaged to give an overall score of 3 for "builds relationships".

To pass the ADC (i.e. to achieve an A), participants require an average score of 3 across the 5 x Acumen and Judgement attributes and an average of 3 across the 5 x Leadership attributes (as well as reaching the relevant benchmark in the technical interview, which varies depending on specialist level).

The feedback report will also provide commentary for each score as well as expert insight from the assessors in to a participant's areas for development. Having received the feedback report, participants are encouraged to have a one-to-one feedback session with the ADC team to discuss the report, and scoring and mutually agree any development areas to build in to their development plan.
What does my ADC mark mean and can I resit or appeal?

There are 3 marks that can be awarded after attendance at an Assessment or Development Centre:
A: Meets Threshold = Accreditation
B: Need for Development = working towards accredited status
C: Significant Need for Development.

Those participants applying for a role in the Government Commercial Function through a recruitment campaign

- must achieve an A (or in exceptional cases, B) to be invited to attend a final panel interview.
- must be found appointable at a final panel to be offered a role in the commercial function.
- are automatically accredited at the level they were assessed at, and all levels below if they achieve an A at the Development Centre.
- will retain their accredited status for 18 months (external candidates) or 5 years (internal candidates) and can attend future final panel interviews if short-listed but must secure a commercial role at that level within these timescales to retain their "accredited" status.
- will not be eligible to resit the Assessment Centre for at least 6 months at either the same specialist level, or any level above, if they did not achieve accreditation on their first attempt.
- are only eligible to resit the Assessment Centre (at the same specialist level) a max of once in a 24 month period.

Those existing Civil Servants, in scope to transfer to the Government Commercial Organisation (GCO):

- are eligible to transfer to the GCO if they achieve an A or a B at the Development Centre.
- are eligible to access GCO Terms and Conditions if they achieve an A at the Development Centre.
- are automatically accredited at the level they were assessed at and all levels below if they achieve an A at the Development Centre.
- are expected to work towards accreditation through a structured development plan, and resit the Development Centre if they do not achieve accredited status on their first attempt.
- are eligible to apply for an Accreditation Status Review (ASR) through the Accreditation Board if they score within 0.1 of the A/B boundary.
- will not be eligible to resit the Assessment or Development Centre for at least 6 months at either the same specialist level or any level above if they did not achieve accreditation on their first attempt.
- are only eligible to resit the Assessment or Development Centre (at the same specialist level) in a max of once in a 24 month period.

All appeals in relation to the Assessment & Development Centre should be made directly to the Assessment & Development Centre team through the Government Commercial Function in Cabinet Office.

* provided there are no unresolved performance concerns
A Participant's Experience: What Happens Next

John Michalski (Deputy Director of DWP) went through the Development Centre at Commercial Specialist level in August 2016. In is letter below, he explains how the Talent Team helped develop his career, after passing the Development Centre.

As Head of Employment Category at DWP, I was responsible for £1 billion p.a. of contracted spend and for putting in place contracts to assist people with disabilities and/or long term unemployed people into work. This involved working closely with Policy colleagues and operations to design and procure a variety of contracts. The role was highly rewarding and a great opportunity for the commercial profession to assist in developing policy intent into a commercial proposition the end result having a very real and visible impact on the lives of some of society’s most vulnerable people.

I went through the Development Centre earlier this year and found the exercise challenging from a technical and leadership perspective.

I passed the Development Centre and I found the process encouraged me to take a step back and think about what areas I enjoyed, want I should be doing to develop my career and what I’d like to do next.

Whilst I certainly enjoyed working in DWP, I always considered myself to be a procurement professional rather than dedicated to a single department. So I was keen to see what other departments were doing and explore the possibility of contributing to other challenges and expanding my own knowledge. This led to several conversations with the Talent Team to explore other opportunities in different departments.

The number of potential opportunities across central government was really exciting, and with the assistance of the Talent Team we focused on opportunities that fitted my desired career path with the right department.

The Talent Team put in me in touch with DfE and, after a couple of meetings and discussions with both the CCO, DWP and DfE, I was offered a great opportunity to move to another department. As a consequence, I joined the DfE on secondment as Deputy Director of Schools Commercial to lead on a commercial exercise to drive value for money from the £10 billion schools non-pay budget. The DfE was very welcoming and appreciated the commercial expertise gained from working in other areas but faced many of the commercial challenges that DWP faced. For me, the Talent Team provided an opportunity to help plan and structure my next move and to link me to areas where I could make a contribution my own skills and experience.

Most importantly, I felt that there was a real attempt to invest in my career. For anyone looking for their next challenge and to develop their career I would certainly recommend speaking to the Talent Team.
Feedback

The ADC team are continually reviewing and refining the process based on feedback received. To enable this and to maintain a high quality activity, participants are asked to give feedback after they have attended an Assessment or Development Centre day.

This section gives you an insight into the overwhelmingly positive feedback received since Oct 2015 (from 173 participants)

Overall Rating of the Assessment and Development Centre

4.24
Average rating

Comments from participants:

“Everyone who is offered the chance to attend should grasp the opportunity”

“A well thought through test of capability”

“Interesting, challenging and well worth the time invested.”

“Rigorous interviews, fair and reasonable questions, credible interviewers.”

“The conversations made you think but also got me to express my experience and capability.”

“The assessors were all very personable and supportive.”

“The thoroughness of the exercises in terms of breadth and depth was the best part of the day.”

“It had the right balance of challenge and feeling you are getting something out of the day.”

“Interesting opportunity to learn different techniques with regards to interviews and how to communicate.”

“The whole experience was interesting, and exercises challenging.”

“Well run, very professional, with high quality assessors.”

“The best part of the day was meeting a team of highly skilled and experienced assessors and also a range of candidates all of who had a vast array of skills and experiences which was very interesting.”

“I was impressed with all aspects and thought which has been put into the exercises and interviews.”

“Challenging but enjoyable …..provides insight into areas where I need to improve on.”

“It has considerable personal development value and candidates should approach it professionally with an open mind”
The day was well organised and ran smoothly

Average: 9.14

The communications about the day were clear

Average: 8.69

The Assessment and Development Centre team were helpful, well informed and attentive

Average: 9.46

The facilities and location were convenient and well managed

Average: 8.73

How would you assess the difficulty of the interviews?

Average: 5.62

How would you assess the difficulty of the briefing exercises?

Average: 5.91
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is an Assessment and Development Centre?
The terms "Assessment Centre" and "Development Centre" are used interchangeably depending on how the outputs are to be used.

- An Assessment Centre is used to support recruitment and selection in to commercial roles at the specialist levels (equivalent to grade 7 and above). The output of an Assessment Centre is a report that flags the areas that the panel may wish to probe further at final interview.
- A Development Centre is used to identify the commercial expertise, experience and capability of existing Civil Servants (at grade 7 & above) whose work is primarily commercial. The output of a Development Centre is a report that provides expert insight in to the areas a participant can develop to best support their career.

The format of the actual day is very similar, but the outputs are different.

2. What exercises take place during the Assessment and Development Centre?
The Assessment & Development Centre is an integrated set of interviews and simulated exercises designed to assess a participants commercial expertise, experience and capability against the People Standards for the Profession.

Participants take part in between four and five exercises during the course of one day. The exercises vary depending on the specialist level being assessed, but will include a selection from the list below:

- Group Exercise
- Executive Briefing
- Supplier Meeting
- Case Study and Briefing
- Judgement & Leadership Interview
- Technical Interview
- Situational Judgement Interview

3. What skills does the Assessment and Development Centre assess?
All exercises are designed to evaluate a participant against the attributes and themes defined in the GCF People Standards for the Profession. These are:

A) Judgement & Leadership.
   - Business Acumen & Commercial Judgement.
   - Leadership Skills & Capability.

B) Technical Expertise. The current technical areas are listed below, but we are working with departments to add more, to ensure they are relevant to their requirements:
   - Strategy and Policy Development
   - Understanding & Sourcing Needs
   - Procurement Process
   - Contract & Supplier Management
   - Complex Deals*

*The Complex Deals module is a combination of attributes from each of the other 4 commercial life cycle areas and are only relevant for those people either working in, or applying for, roles in the Complex Transactions team.

4. How long does the Assessment or Development Centre last?
The Assessment or Development Centre takes place over the course of one day. The precise timings vary depending on the specialist level but the day runs approximately from 0900 to 1530. Lunch is provided.

5. Where does the Assessment & Development Centre take place?
Primarily in London however, if there is a requirement to conduct days outside of London, this can be requested by individual departments.

6. Who can attend a Development Centre?
Any Civil Servant at Grade 7 or above, whose work is primarily commercial, can attend if they have the agreement of their Department’s Commercial Director.

7. Is the Development Centre compulsory?
It is highly recommended that all senior commercial staff participate, especially for those above Grade 7 wanting to pursue their career in the Government Commercial Function. It will provide expert insight in to the areas an individual can develop to best support their career.
Frequently Asked Questions

8. Do current professional qualifications such as CIPS and MCIPS exempt individuals from this process?
No. The Development Centre process is not based on qualifications; nonetheless the skills required for these professional qualifications will position candidates well for the types of exercises that take place at an Assessment or Development Centre.

9. How can I prepare for attendance at the Assessment or Development Centre?
There are a number of ways in which you can best prepare yourself for attendance at an ADC. This brochure should provide everything you need to know about the day itself but to fully prepare yourself for what is expected at each of the specialist levels, you should read the GCF People Standards for the Profession framework. If you still have questions, speak with your line manager or contact gcfddevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk for more information. There are also video briefings available on youtube:
   Senior Commercial Specialist level: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Np-CHw-COc
   Commercial Specialist level: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjlk35C5BQ
   Associate Commercial Specialist level: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olWYH8YuDDw
   Commercial Lead level: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2g-PW6591X4

10. What does a participant get after attendance at a Development Centre day?
A full feedback report will be available within one week of attendance. This will show the participant’s overall result and a score against each of the main themes (see page 11). The report will identify areas of strength and areas for development. Each participant will be encouraged to take up the opportunity to have a one-to-one feedback session, to explore the report in more detail and start to input into development plans.

11. What happens if an individual fails the Development Centre?
There are 3 different marks available.
   A: Meets threshold (accredited)
   B: Need for development (working toward accreditation)
   C: Significant need for development.
   Those within a small (defined) margin of the A/B borderline will be eligible to apply for an Accreditation Status Review (ASR) through the Accreditation Board.
   Those who achieve a B are expected to work towards accreditation and will be fully supported by the GCF within a bespoke Development Plan to address any development areas identified before re-sitting the ADC.
   Those who achieve a C will be encouraged to have a career conversation with their line manager and pursue other opportunities outside of commercial.
   Everybody has the opportunity to re-sit the Development Centre provided they have the support of their line manager but restrictions do apply (please see page 12)

12. Who will see the results?
An individual’s results will be shared with their line manager, HR and their Commercial Director. All Development Centre results will be available to the Commercial Capability Programme and GCO HR in order to further develop the Profession and the learning and development offer. All data is securely stored and managed in line with the Data Protection Act.

13. Who assesses participants at a Development Centre?
See page 8 for more information on assessors.

14. How are assessors selected?
See page 8 for more information on assessors.

15. What training do assessors need to undergo before assessing any participants?
All assessors attend a full one-day training session held by the Occupational Psychologists who were involved in developing the assessment materials. The course covers best-practice assessment, including use of the ORCE model, conscious and unconscious bias and gives practical examples of how to use the Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) to assess participants, using pre-recorded examples.

16. Can I appeal the result?
Yes in line with the appeals procedure. Please email the ADC team for details of the appeals process.
Frequently Asked Questions

17. How do you ensure consistent and objective scoring of participants at a Development / Assessment Centre?
To minimise subjectivity in the assessment process:
• All assessors are all trained in objective assessment including awareness and management of bias
• All exercises are assessed against a defined set of Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS).
• Assessors are trained to follow the ORCE model (Observe / Record / Classify / Evaluate). Any rating against the BARS is backed up by detailed observed behaviours, as opposed to a subjective opinion.
• Each participant is assessed by multiple assessors across multiple exercises and each is subject to a thorough moderation process.
• Assessor performance is continually reviewed as is participant performance to ensure consistent distribution.

18. How do you know the assessment process is robust and fair?
Every candidate will be assessed by multiple different assessors (and a moderator) across multiple different exercises. A participant can therefore be confident that their score for risk mindset, for example, is derived from multiple different assessors’ views of multiple different exercises, as well as the moderation process.

19. Have you bench-marked the Assessment & Development Centre against the best in the private sector?
The ADC Team have worked with the professional bodies IACCM and CIPS throughout its development. The final product was also reviewed and validated by Korn Ferry. All have been extremely positive about the content and process. The ADC is governed by the Accreditation Board which has representatives from CIPS, IACCM and EY.

20. Why has the Assessment & Development Centre been introduced?
The Assessment & Development Centre contributes towards the overall drive to improve commercial capability across government in a number of ways.
For departments:
• It helps Departments make more informed decisions during recruitment and selection of senior commercial professionals and ensures that those recruited into senior commercial posts possess the expertise, experience, and capability outlined in the GCF People Standards for the Profession.
• It helps Departments identify capability gaps for individual staff and collectively for the Department.
• It helps Departments have a more targeted approach to their L&D offer.
• It helps Departments manage talent in a more coherent and informed manner.

For the participant:
• It provides expert insight into the areas a participant should develop to best support their career.
• It provides access to a suite of targeted interventions hosted within the Commercial College.

For the Government Commercial Function:
• It provides clarity as to who is in the profession, at which of the specialist levels.
• It maps the level and type of commercial skills that exist across Departments.
• It enables a tailored approach to learning & development.
• It enables a more rigorous, tailored and strategic approach to talent management across the profession.

21. Why is there such a focus on improving commercial capability?
UK central government spent £45 billion each year buying goods and services. Both the 2014 NAO report on Transforming Contract Management and the Kingman/Crothers Commercial Capability Reviews (CCRs) identified that substantial value and money has been lost in government as a result of insufficient business acumen and capability within the commercial profession. Building commercial capability is therefore a top priority for the Cabinet Secretary, the Chief Executive of the Civil Service & the Government’s Chief Commercial Officer.

22. Am I entitled to extra study time for the Development Centre?
Your line manager is encouraged to support you whilst going through the Development Centre process. The assessment will not require specific study, although time to write the Self-Assessment will be beneficial, as will familiarising yourself with the Government Commercial Function Professional Standards. You may want to speak to their line manager about how best this can be achieved and to agree what time is appropriate.

23. What specifically did the Commercial Capability Reviews conclude in relation to commercial capability?
• Commercial capability is overly focused on the regulated procurement process at the expense of higher value activities such as market shaping and contract management;
• There are too few experienced, commercial people and conversely too many junior commercial people whom have limited real commercial experience;
• There is a need to improve the commercial skills and awareness of generalists; and
• The issues above are exacerbated by unclear decision-making and accountabilities in Departments combined with major recruitment and retention challenges.
Frequently Asked Questions

24. Is there a cost to attend the Development Centre?
The cost of attending an Assessment or Development Centre (ADC) is £850 per person.¹
This fee provides the participant with:
- Access to the Commercial Capability Management Platform (CCMP) where participants can carry out a Self-Assessment and manage their ADC booking.
- Access to the assessment materials.
- Senior, experienced, accredited commercial assessors.
- Lunch and refreshments throughout the day.
- A detailed final output report.
- The provision of one-to-one feedback.
- Access to the Talent / teach team within the GCF and the creation of a tailored development plan (for those achieving an A or B)²²

The GCO will endeavour to hold all Assessment and Development Centre days within existing government accommodation but please note that where external accommodation is required, there is an additional charge of £750pp. Cancellation made within 2 weeks of an ADC date will be charged 100% of the fee. Please contact the central team on gcfddevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk for more information.

¹VAT will be charged to Departments, but any VAT applied is recoverable by finance teams.
²² For departments in scope for the GCO

25. How do I sign up?
Visit https://gcf.onmats.com/w/webpage/807 to register and set up a profile.
You can also contact gcfddevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk for details on how to sign up.
All participants must have department approval before attending a Development Centre.

26. What is the Government Commercial Function (GCF)?
This consists of people working in commercial within departments or centrally. Mainly commercial practitioners and specialists who are spending most of their time on commercial matters but this also includes professional staff such as: HR/IT/Policy/Communications/Finance etc who work in commercial teams. The implication is that people will be part of the overall commercial function and can also be in a different profession (which is sometimes described as a function e.g. Communications) to the commercial function they are part of.

27. What is the Government Chief Commercial Officer (GCCO and Head of Profession)?
The Government Chief Commercial Officer is the Head of the Commercial Function. That person is directly responsible for the Central Teams and is the Cabinet Office sponsor for CCS. They also have a dotted line accountability for all departmental Commercial Directors.

28. What is the Government Commercial Organisation (GCO)?
A senior subset of GCF that are employed centrally. They will be accredited specialists at grade G6 and above.

29. What is the Commercial Profession?
These are people within the commercial function who currently hold, or who are progressing towards, a commercial professional membership / accreditation, such as MCIPS or similar. They may or may not be employed through the GCO, depending on accreditation as commercial specialists. This area also includes people with a commercial professional accreditation, such as MCIPS, who are not working in an operational commercial role e.g. Policy.

30. What is the Commercial Central Teams (which was previously termed GCF)?
Part of GCF, the central teams of Complex Transactions, Suppliers and Markets, Commercial Assurance, and Commercial Capability Programme. Senior members will be in the GCO once accredited as commercial specialists. This also includes other professional staff e.g. HR / recruiting / assessment staff.

31. What is the Crown Commercial Service (CCS)?
A part of GCF, the Crown Commercial Service is responsible for Procurement Policy matters across the entire UK public sector and for the procurement of common goods and services, both for Central Government and the Wider Public Sector.
Contact Us

gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

https://gcf.onmats.com