What is the Fast Track Assessment Centre?

The Fast Track Assessment Centre is a half-day activity that selects candidates who show the calibre and potential to join the Fast Track Apprenticeship Scheme.

You now have the chance to show that you possess the skills and personal qualities needed to be a successful Fast Track Apprentice!

Our aim is to measure each candidate’s skills, aptitudes and abilities against set criteria. During the assessment, candidates complete a variety of exercises, including a one-to-one interview with an assessor, and a group exercise, in which you’ll be working with four, five or six fellow candidates from a wide range of backgrounds.

This guide will tell you what to bring along, what you can expect as part of the assessment, and what will happen afterwards.

What time does the Assessment Centres start?

Please arrive in good time for your assessment centre -

- Manchester sessions start at 9.00am or 1.00pm; and
- All other locations start at 8.30am and afternoon sessions start at 12.30pm.

Your invitation details whether you have been invited to a morning or afternoon session. Each assessment centre is scheduled for three and a half hours, but you may wish to allow for four hours if you are booking transport. Information about the assessment centre exercises can be found below.

What to bring to the Assessment Centre

Any offer to join the scheme is subject to successful security checks. To undertake the security checks we require you to provide documents to demonstrate proof of name, signature, date of birth and address. You should bring all documents listed below that you have (and if possible two copies of each document) which will then be verified and, if required, copied by the Centre Manager. All documentation will be saved in accordance with Civil Service Information Assurance policies.

- Full Passport (if you have one);
- Full Driving Licence or Provisional Driving Licence (if you have one) – both photo card and paper counterpart;
- A full UK Birth/Adoption Certificate (which includes your name and at least 1 or your parents /adoptive parents’ names);
- Passport photograph (signed and dated by a person of standing to confirm that it is a true likeness); please note that the passport photo will be retained;
Proof of address e.g. Bank Statement/Public Utility Bill/Council Tax Bill (issued within the last 6 months, addressed to you at your current address); and

Proof of National Insurance Number - this must be on an official document issued by a Government Department or previous employer which shows your National Insurance Number and your name e.g. P45/p60/payslip/NI Card or letter from a Government Department

EEA member state identity card (if applicable);
Residence permit issued by the Home Office to EEA nationals on sight of own country passport (if applicable); and
National identity card or travel document bearing a photograph of the applicant and/or other documentation relating to immigration status and permission to work (if applicable).

In addition, to ensure you meet the criteria for the Fast Track Scheme, you will also need to provide your education certificates:

Five GCSE A*-C grade (or equivalent) certificates; and
Two A level A-D grade (or equivalent) certificates if you have selected Project Delivery; or
Two A level A-C grade in STEM subjects (or equivalent) certificates if you have selected Digital & Technology.

We are aware that you may not have all education certificates (for example if you have not yet sat your GCSE exams) but you should note that if you are successful at an Assessment Centre you will be asked to supply the required certificates and documentation so that the pre-appointment and security checks can be undertaken prior to you successfully taking up post.

At the Assessment Centre

What will be assessed?

Fair and open recruitment is fundamental to us and underpins every part of the Fast Track Assessment Centre. We will assess you solely on the basis of your performance in the exercises and interview.

To assist you we have also provided you with a copy of the Civil Service Competency Framework - Level 2 which is the level required for a Fast Track Apprentice. We recommend that you familiarise yourself with the six competencies you will be assessed against prior to attending the assessment centre so that you can start to identify examples to use for the interview, and what to demonstrate during the group and written exercises.

All candidates are assessed against the following areas:
Leading & Communicating
Leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It’s about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens.

Collaborating and Partnering
Creating and maintaining positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the Civil Service to help get business done. It requires working effectively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

Delivering at Pace
Focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. Working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way.

Making Effective Decisions
Being objective; using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. Showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well-reasoned justifiable decisions.

Changing & Improving
Being responsive, innovative and seeking out opportunities to create effective change. It is about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in smarter, more focused ways.

Building Capability for All
Having a strong focus on continuous learning for oneself, others and the organisation. Being open to learning, about keeping one’s own knowledge and skill set current and evolving.

Motivational Fit
Showing motivation for the scheme by demonstrating prior research in Fast Track scheme and the Civil Service generally. Having a detailed and well-thought out justification for how the scheme meets their career goals. Openly shows enthusiasm for the scheme in their approach. Showing clear interest and understanding of what public service is and why it appeals to them.

What are the exercises?
All candidates will complete an interview, a group exercise and a written exercise.
The assessment process is comprehensive, and the interview and exercises are each considered separately. No final decision will be made until your performance in all the exercises and the interview has been fully evaluated. The process is designed to be challenging and it’s rare for a candidate to do well in everything. It’s quite possible that you’ll feel you haven’t performed well in a particular exercise or the interview, but no single part of the assessment will rule you in or out. So it makes sense to concentrate on doing your best at each stage and not to dwell on what's happened earlier in the day.

**Interview**

The one-to-one interview will last up to 50 minutes and you will be asked set questions so that the assessor can evaluate your answers against four of the Civil Service competencies – Leading and Communicating, Delivering at Pace, Changing and Improving and Building Capability for All. You will also be asked questions to test your motivation for the Civil Service Fast Track Scheme. The interview will seek to capture your 'strengths' against these competencies - in other words things that you enjoy and give you energy - we want to find out about you as a person.

The interview will be fast paced and will only allow 1 – 2 minutes for you to respond succinctly to each question.

Before the interview, you want to prepare by thinking of examples of how you have demonstrated the competencies above. The assessor will be seeking the strongest examples you can give that demonstrate skills in these competencies. You can draw from your experience of school, university, work and your personal life. The assessor will have no background information on you, and will not be familiar with anything on your application.

Remember that you can decide what you are willing to discuss in your interview, and you can ask for information to be treated as confidential. You will not be penalised for not wanting to talk about issues that are sensitive to you.

**Group exercise**

This exercise is designed to test your ability to make effective decisions, to work collaboratively with others, to show leadership and communicate effectively and to demonstrate your motivation for the Fast Track Apprenticeship Scheme.

Groups can run with 4, 5 or 6 candidates and you will be given 15 minutes to prepare for the exercise by yourself. At the start of the 15 minute preparation period all group members will receive a brief which summarises the overall scenario and gives detailed background information. In addition group members will also have an individual brief which will contain some unique information. The group will then have up to 45 minutes depending on the number of candidates participating to present their recommendations and to reach a decision.
Group members are regarded as equal and groups are told not to appoint someone to chair the meeting. You will need to work with the other candidates in your group to try and reach the best solution that fulfils the brief. All members of the group are expected to contribute to the discussion on all aspects of the group task. You are instructed to keep to the information in the briefs, remembering that the scenario is fictitious and you should avoid introducing information from outside the exercise.

You should not feel that you are competing with other members of your group. You should seek to establish co-operative relationships within your group, rather than try to score points off other participants.

Overall, the assessor will be evaluating your performance against five competency areas: Leading and Communicating, Collaborating and Partnering, Making Effective Decisions, Building Capability for All and Motivational Fit.

**Written exercise**

The written exercise last for 50 minutes and you will be provided with information to respond to correspondence and make a recommendation.

You will be provided with background information, the scenario to draft your response and form your recommendation. Your task is to analyse the information you have been provided to compare and contrast the options and explain convincingly the reasons for your recommendation.

There is no right answer. The important thing is how you support your decision, using the facts provided, and how you express this in writing. You should pay particular attention to the time when completing this exercise. You will find you have no time for rough drafts and you should work quickly but be concise in your answers.

Your assessor will be evaluating your performance against: Leading and Communicating, Collaborating and Partnering, Delivering at Pace, Making Effective Decisions and Changing and Improving.

**Who are the assessors?**

All assessors are current Civil Servants who have experience of a wide range of civil service work areas and who also have experience of working in the scheme areas of the five Fast Track apprenticeships being offered; business administration, commercial, finance, project delivery and digital & technology.

The assessors will be given no information on you except your name. They will not have seen your application form or your scores from the online tests. Furthermore, the Civil Service is wholeheartedly committed to equal opportunities. Your socio-economic
or ethnic background, gender, appearance, age, sexual orientation, accent, political views, religion, personal beliefs or previous employment play no part whatsoever in our final decision. We want you to feel perfectly free to express your point of view throughout the assessment procedure.

**Getting to Assessment Centre**

You have been provided with information about the Assessment Centre you will attend in the email that was sent to you. Please contact the Fast Track Recruitment Team if you have any queries on 03000 542211.

Please make sure that you prepare for your attendance by researching your journey and knowing how long it will take you to get there. The Assessment Centre timetable is tight and there is no room for delays so it is a good idea to work out how you’re going to travel to the assessment centre in advance.

If you have trouble with transport and can’t help being a few minutes late, don’t panic. Call ahead and let us know if you’re going to be delayed. However, **if you arrive more than 10 minutes late, you might not be able to take part**, as the timetable for the day does not allow for significant delays. Similarly, if you are unwell, please contact us on 03000 542 211 (messages can be left outside office hours).

A great deal of work goes into planning your programme at the assessment centre and unexplained “no-shows” have a financial and organisational impact and will affect other candidates. Although we can try to offer alternative dates for an assessment centre, we can’t always guarantee it, particularly towards the end of the recruitment period when places are very limited.

**What to expect on arrival**

You will be greeted by a Centre Manager who will be your point of contact throughout your time at the assessment centre. If you have any queries please direct these to the Centre Manager. The Centre Manager will welcome you to the centre, provide information about the day, provide your materials and will be your point of contact for any queries or questions.

We want to make you feel as welcome as possible during your assessment so please feel free to ask the centre manager about anything that may be bothering you.

**How to contact us**

If you have any further details please call us on 03000 542211 or email us at: Fast.track@csresourcing.gsi.gov.uk