



Government  
Commercial  
Function

# COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE





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# Introduction

**UK central government spends £44 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. Both the NAO report and the Commercial Capability Reviews that followed, identified that substantial value and money has been lost in government as a result of insufficient business acumen and capability within the commercial profession.**

Significant progress has been made since that time; however continuing to build and develop commercial capability remains a top priority for the Cabinet Secretary, the Chief Executive of the Civil Service and the Government Chief Commercial Officer. Having a robust mechanism in place to evaluate commercial professionals against published people standards remains a key part of the capability drive.

This brochure will provide you with the detail behind the Assessment and Development Centre.



***“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

## Dear participant,

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 about what we're trying to achieve.

First of all let me put this in context. We are making the Government's Commercial Function into the best commercial function in the UK. That means having capable people with the right leadership and technical skills, in the right structure, with the appropriate personal development plan to grow for the future.

The Assessment and Development Centre was introduced to confirm central Government has capable people. After assessing over 1,000 people, the Assessment and Development Centre is now supporting the wider public sector.

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.

I want to emphasise that while those of you that pass should feel very proud, everyone who completes the Assessment and Development Centre wanting to pursue a career as a commercial specialist in central Government will have the support of 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.

I hope you enjoy the day – having done it 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



***“CIPS is pleased to have contributed and supported the Commercial Function Assessment and 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 Government Commercial Function.”***

CIPS

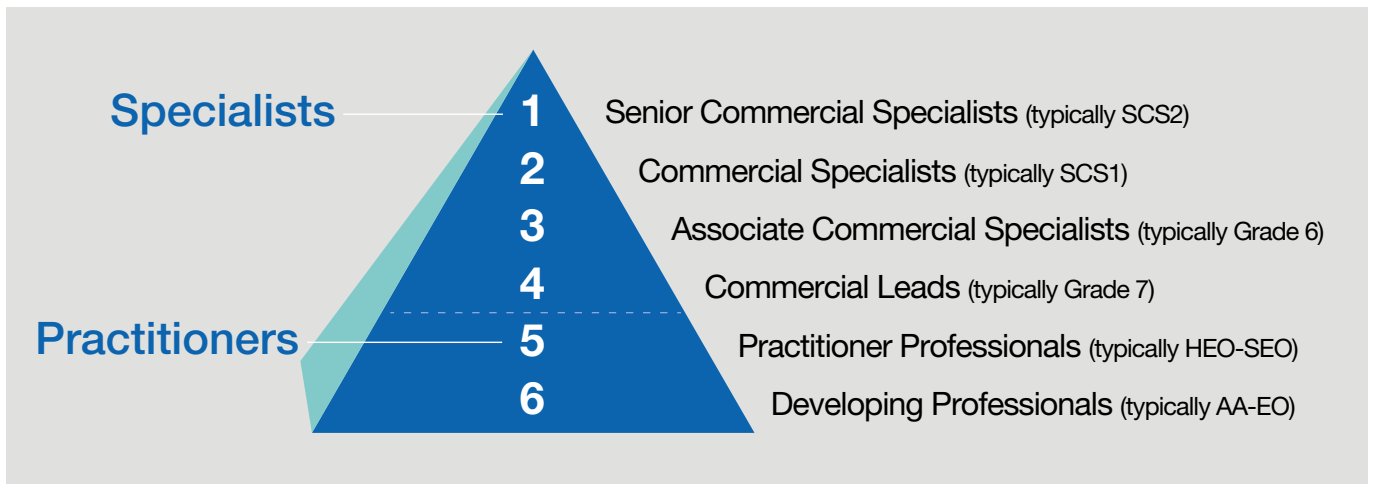


***“The UK government commercial reform initiative is without question one of the most ambitious and extensive projects of its kind and one which we at IACCM regularly cite in our discussions around the world.”***

IACCM

# The Commercial Profession

The Commercial Profession is defined in terms of specialists and practitioners:



## The Professional Standards

Standards for specialists and practitioners were published in early 2015. These standards clearly define, using a common language, what is expected of our commercial professionals at each of the different levels.

Both standards are the responsibility of the Government Chief Commercial Officer and are maintained by the Government Commercial Function.

### 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 Commercial Skills and Competency Framework for Developing and Practitioner levels set out the standards expected for levels SEO and below.

# The Assessment and Development Centre

The Assessment and Development Centre has been designed by occupational psychologists and commercial Subject Matter Experts in accordance with the British Psychological Society's standard on assessment design and delivery.

The Assessment and Development Centre is a range of interviews and simulated role-play exercises that take place over the course of a day. It assesses the commercial expertise, skills and capability of individuals against the GCF People Standards for the Profession.

The results are continually reviewed and evaluated and the structure and content is adjusted to stay in line with best practice research. An in-depth independent analysis of over 1,000 results took place in 2018 and this concluded that **“(the overall ADC) distinguishes a full range of candidate performance, therefore providing foundations for a robust data selection or performance decision”**

The Assessment and Development Centre is currently available at the levels of Senior Commercial Specialist, Commercial Specialist, Associate Commercial Specialist and Commercial Lead.

The ADC provides two services for departments:

## 1. Assessment Centre

### What does it do?

Assesses a participant's commercial expertise, skills and capability against the GCF People Standards, highlighting areas of strength, areas for development and accrediting successful participants at a specific level.

### How is it used?

By the participant to understand development needs and to inform final panel interviews for departments that are recruiting into commercial roles at specialist levels.

### What is the output?

A report that provides expert insight into a participant's areas of strength and areas of development. This report may also help inform final panel interview questions for recruitment.

## 2. Development Centre

### What does it do?

Like the Assessment Centre, the Development Centre assesses a participant's commercial expertise, skills and capability against the GCF People Standards, highlighting areas of strength, areas for development and accrediting successful participants at a specific level.

### How is it used?

To help inform and structure a bespoke development plan for an individual.

### What is the output?

1. A report and feedback session that provides expert insight into a participant's areas of strength and development.
2. Access to the Development Programme that includes a one to one talent conversation that focuses on areas for development aligned to individual career goals. More information can be found on page 20.

## The benefits of the Assessment and Development Centre are:

**For the participants:** Expert insight into areas they should develop to best support their career.

**For the employer:** 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.

**For the Government Commercial Function:** A baseline understanding of capability and specialisms that exist within the profession, which can be used to help shape the future of the commercial function.



# What is assessed?

The Assessment and Development Centre is designed to evaluate a participant's skills, experience and capability against the GCF People Standards for the Profession.

There are a number of attributes assessed during the Assessment and Development Centre. These are detailed below.

## **The 10 Judgement and Leadership attributes are:**

### a) Business Acumen & Commercial Judgement (5 attributes)

- Risk Mindset
- Manages Complexity
- Market Insight
- Commercial Focus
- Decisive

### b) Leadership Skills & Capability (5 attributes)

- Resilient
- Assertive
- Political Insight
- Builds Relationships
- Coaching Manager

## **The Technical areas are:**

- a) Strategy and Policy Development
- b) Understanding Needs and Sourcing Options
- c) Procurement Process
- d) Contract and Supplier Management

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

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

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

# How are you assessed?

The Assessment 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. It 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.

## Exercises designed to evaluate the 10 Judgement and Leadership Attributes:

### Judgement and Leadership Interview

A 50 to 70 minute (depending on level) one-to-one interview.

### Peer-to-Peer Meeting

Participants have 45 to 55 minutes (depending on level) to review information before entering into a 20 minute role play exercise with an assessor.

### Supplier Meeting

A 20 minute one-to-one role-play exercise linked to the outputs from the Peer-to-Peer Exercise.

### Case Study and Senior Briefing

Participants have 60 to 85 minutes (depending on level) to review a range of information in advance of a 20 to 30 minute (depending on level) one-to-one role-play exercise where the participant is required to brief a senior colleague.

### Stakeholder Meeting

Participants have 30 minutes to review information before entering in to a 25 minute role play exercise.

## Exercises designed to evaluate Technical Expertise:

### Technical Interview

A 60 minute one-to-one interview, designed to explore a participant's experience and knowledge in relation to the technical areas listed on page 9.

A participant will be assessed in all 4 technical areas however only 1, 2 or 3 areas will contribute to the final score (depending on level assessed).

## Senior Commercial Specialist

1. Judgement & Leadership Interview
2. Stakeholder Meeting
3. Case Study & Brief
4. Technical Interview (Asked questions in 4 technical areas. Strategy and Policy Development and other highest 2 scores counting towards mark)

## Commercial Specialist

1. Judgement & Leadership Interview
2. Peer-to-Peer Meeting
3. Supplier Meeting
4. Case Study & Brief
5. Technical Interview (Asked questions in 4 technical areas. Highest 2 scores counting towards mark)

## Associate Commercial Specialist

1. Judgement & Leadership Interview
2. Peer-to-Peer Meeting
3. Supplier Meeting
4. Case Study & Brief
5. Technical Interview (Asked questions in 4 technical areas. Highest 1 score counting towards mark)

## Commercial Lead

1. Judgement & Leadership Interview
2. Peer-to-Peer Meeting
3. Supplier Meeting
4. Case Study & Brief
5. Technical Interview (Asked questions in 4 technical areas. Highest 1 score counting towards mark)

# Preparing for the day

**Cheryl has over 20 years' global experience across IT Procurement and has attended the Assessment and Development Centre twice – once at Commercial Specialist level in September 2016 and once at Senior Commercial Specialist level in November 2017, securing accreditation both times. Cheryl shares her preparation suggestions below.**



Having prepared for the Assessment Centre twice at different levels I would like to pass on my top tips.

Preparation for the day is key and understanding what exercises you will be doing is the first step. The Assessment Centre provides guidance on what the assessors are looking for in the People Standards so I used these in my preparation.

Considering the competencies being examined, I created a comprehensive spreadsheet full of career highlights and examples. I tried to cover what I personally did, how I managed particular situations and stakeholders, how I achieved objectives, what risks I took, what the outcomes were and what I learned – I also tried to ensure the wider context was going to be covered in my answer.

I felt prepared for any question with several possible answers for each. The preparation helped me explain to the assessor in a succinct manner. Personally I used the

STAR (Situation, Tasks, Action, Result) methodology to deliver my answers.

The day was nerve-racking however preparing certainly helped.

On the second time around, at a higher level, the nerves were still there - 'what happens if you don't perform as well?' I did not take anything for granted and took the same preparation steps, updating my spreadsheet with more relevant and improved examples.

It is important to project confidence and show that you are relaxed so the better your preparation, the more this will come across.

You have one opportunity to prove yourself so it is important to prepare well, and not leave regretting that you have wasted an opportunity to show how good you are.

I wish you all the best for your Assessment Centre.

**Cheryl Avery,**  
Ministry of Justice

# Self-Assessment

To support a participant's preparation for the Assessment and Development Centre, there is a self-assessment tool available.

The self-assessment can help a participant prepare for the day by prompting them to think about their personal skills and experiences in line with the GCF People Standards for the Profession.

The self-assessment can be found in the resources section on the online platform that supports the Assessment and Development Centre. Participants can log in, complete their profile and access the self-assessment at any time.

# Reasonable Adjustment

There are a number of circumstances under which candidates may require an adjustment or accommodation in their assessment.

If participants have anything that could be considered for Reasonable Adjustment, they **must** let the ADC Team know several days before assessment. Contact them on [gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

# On the day

**Attending any sort of assessment can be nerve-wracking so to help, our Assessment Centre Lead, James Thirkettle, has written the following to help participants understand what they can expect on the day.**



The Assessment Centre can be a challenging day, however the team are there to ensure it is run with efficiency and is hassle-free for you.

The team are committed to hosting you with the upmost professionalism, so you can focus on the exercises.

A Day Manager will greet you upon your arrival and accompany you to your breakout room. This is where you will meet other participants on the day as well as rest between exercises and help yourself to refreshments.

At the start of the day you will be issued a timetable and the profiles of the assessors. Your assessors will already have raised any potential conflict of interest, but if you still believe a conflict exists, the team are on hand to work through it with you and make the necessary adjustments.

You will sit three exercises before lunch (two for SCS) and then two exercises in the afternoon. Our experienced assessors are there to draw the best out of you, so just focus on demonstrating your experience and ability as best as you possibly can.

During the day you are likely to receive a visit from an ADC moderator. The moderator is present to ensure the assessors are being fair, objective and applying the scoring system correctly. At the end of the day the moderator and assessors discuss each participant in depth, reviewing and analysing observations and validating the scores awarded.

It is important to remain energised throughout the day so ensure you make the most of your breaks and stretch your legs between exercises. Lunch and refreshments are provided on the day too. The team are very accommodating so we encourage you to please contact us prior to the day with any additional requirements you may need.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Assessment & Development Centre soon.

**James Thirkettle,**  
Assessment Centre Lead

# A participant's experience: on the day

**Paul Carter, Deputy Director for Rehabilitation Services at the Ministry of Justice, went through the Development Centre at Commercial Specialist level in May 2016. In his letter below, he shares his experience of the day and some top tips and advice on how best to prepare.**



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.

Mindset 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. You will need to fully focus on the task in hand so my advice is to not book in any meetings after! You'll want the time to relax and unwind after what is a very thorough and demanding day. 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.

I hope this has been helpful. Prepare, relax and try to enjoy. Good luck

**Paul Carter,**  
Deputy Director,  
Rehabilitation Services,  
Ministry of Justice

# The assessors

Key to the success of the ADC is 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 the profession. As a result, only the most senior and experienced individuals are invited to join the team.

The current pool consists of accredited Senior Commercial Specialists from across government, Crown Representatives, Partners and Directors from some of the largest Professional Services Companies as well as senior leaders from some of Government's largest suppliers.

All assessors go through a selection and training processes before undertaking assessment of an ADC day. This includes:

- Interview with a Senior Civil Servant to assess their suitability and assessment level.
- Attendance at a full-day training session designed by Occupational Psychologists.
- Close management and support on ADC days.

All assessors are subject to on-going performance review and continuous training.



***“The assessors were all very personable and supportive.”***

***"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 have been an assessor for the Commercial ADC for 2 years now, pretty much from its inception. I am also a Crown Representative, working closely with all key Departments and 2 strategic suppliers in the IT sector, who between them do £2bn of business with HMG per annum.**



I have recently led the Broadband Delivery UK programmes in the Department for Culture Media and Sport, with a commercial value of £2bn, and I am now a Director in the Cabinet Office establishing a Geospatial Data Commission.

I have a long background in the private sector with executive leadership roles in global IT and Telecoms, engineering, and management consultancy.

Having personally assessed nearly 100 people now (the ADC has seen a total of 1,000 come through), I am confident when I say that the day is robust, sufficiently challenging, thorough, exhausting(!) but extremely rewarding... and I think it really is contributing towards a step change in commercial capability across government.

I have also been a member of the Accreditation Board (the governing body that oversees the ADC) and involved in the subsequent development programme and am encouraged to see that the team are responding to feedback and adapting the content of the day to reflect latest psychological research.

I am extremely proud to be involved in what I believe to be one of the broadest and deepest commercial development and transformation programmes anywhere in the UK.

**William Priest**

# The results

All participants will receive their personal feedback report within 1 week of attending an Assessment or Development Centre.

This report will provide participants with a score against each of the attributes assessed as well as an overall mark. Detailed qualitative commentary against each of the attributes assessed is also included as is an overall summary of performance provided by the ADC moderator.

Having received the feedback report, existing Civil Servants will have the opportunity for a one-to-one feedback session with the ADC team to discuss the report and the day itself. For existing staff, this is the first part of their development journey. This will be followed by a conversation with a GCO career coach and together this will all contribute to the personal development plan. (Please see 'Development' section on page 20 for more information).

## Scoring

There are 4 marks that can be awarded after attendance at an Assessment or Development Centre:

**A:** Meets Threshold (Accredited)

**B(ASR):** B but eligible for Accreditation Status Review (ASR)\*

**B:** Need for Development

**C:** Significant Need for Development

\*If a participant scores a B(ASR), this means they are eligible to apply for a review of their Accreditation Status. This may be done via a final panel interview (for candidates applying for roles in the GCF) or via the Accreditation Board

The 10 Judgement and Leadership attributes are split into 2 groups (as detailed on page 9). Participants receive an overall score for each of the 10 attributes and an average for each group is generated.

To secure accreditation at the ADC (i.e. to achieve an A), participants require:

- a total score of 6 (out of 10) across the 2 Judgement and Leadership attribute groups, with no less than 2.7 in any one group;
- and the benchmark score of 3 (out of 5) in the number of technical areas\*\* required for the specialist level being assessed.

\*\*Technical areas counting towards results:  
SCS – 3 (one of these must be Strategy and Policy Development), CS – 2, ACS & CL – 1

## Resits and appeals

There are restrictions as to how many times an individual can attend an ADC.

For more information on resits and the appeals process please contact the ADC team on

[gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

# What the results mean to me

## **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 secure accreditation on their first attempt.
- are eligible to apply for an Accreditation Status Review (ASR) through the Accreditation Board if they achieve a B (ASR).

## **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 also be found appointable at a final panel interview 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 Assessment Centre.

## **Those participants attending with support of their employer (i.e. public servant in wider government bodies or employee in external organisation):**

- please attend the briefing session or consult your employer to understand what the result may mean to you as it will vary between organisations.

\* individuals scoring a B have 2 years upon point of GCO entry to secure accreditation

\*\* provided there are no unresolved performance concerns

# Development Programme

After attending an Assessment and Development Centre and receiving feedback, participants will have a talent conversation with the GCO Talent Team, as well as with their line manager, to identify individual development needs and create a personal development plan.

Based on their needs, participants will have access to a range of talent and development opportunities to help participants grow as a commercial leader.

**The GCO offers a range of development opportunities. The development offer has been designed to supplement what might be already available in a participant's organisation.**



**1**  
A personalised development plan



**2**  
A specific development programme for those working towards accreditation



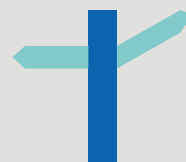
**3**  
Access to a career coach



**4**  
Engagement with your GCO colleagues and the wider industry



**5**  
Access to a digital commercial community



**6**  
Option to consider career moves



**7**  
Opportunities for job shadowing, coaching and mentoring



**8**  
Masterclasses led by commercial experts

# Participant experience

**John Michalski went through the Development Centre at Commercial Specialist level in August 2016. In his letter below, he explains how the Talent Team helped develop his career, after passing the Development Centre.**



As Head of Employment Category at the Department for Work and Pensions (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 in August 2016 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, what I should be doing to develop my career and what I'd like to do next.

While 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 me in touch with the Department for Education (DfE) and, after a couple of meetings and discussions with both the Chief Commercial Officer, 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.

**John Michalski,**  
Deputy Director of DWP (2013-2016)

In 2017 John earned a move to the Ministry of Justice, becoming a Commercial Director.

# Feedback

The Assessment and Development Centre team are continually reviewing and refining the process based on feedback received. To enable this to continue and to help us maintain a high quality service, 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 October 2015 (from 516 responses).

## Feedback 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.”***

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

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

***“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



I do not agree at all

Partly

I completely agree

**The communications about the day were clear**

Average 8.69



I do not agree at all

Partly

I completely agree

**The Assessment and Development Centre Team were helpful, well informed and attentive**

Average 9.46



I do not agree at all

Partly

I completely agree

**The facilities and location were convenient and well managed**

Average 8.73



I do not agree at all

Partly

I completely agree

**How would you assess the difficulty of the interviews?**

Average 5.62



Too easy

Just right

Too difficult

**How would you assess the difficulty of the briefing exercises?**

Average 5.91



Too easy

Just right

Too difficult

# FAQs

## 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 or Public 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 at the Assessment and Development Centre?

The Assessment and Development Centre is an integrated set of interviews and simulated exercises designed to assess a participant's commercial expertise, experience and capability against the GCF People Standards for the Profession. Participants take part in between 4 and 5 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:

- Peer-to-Peer Exercise
- Stakeholder Meeting
- Supplier Meeting
- Case Study and Briefing

- Judgement and Leadership Interview
- Technical Interview

These exercises are subject to change and are indicative and correct at time of publication.

## 3. What skills do the Assessment and Development Centre assess?

To evaluate a participant against the attributes and themes defined in the GCF People Standards for the Profession. These are: Business Acumen and Commercial Judgement; Leadership Skills and Capability; and Technical Expertise.

## 4. How long does the Assessment and 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 8:45am to 3:30pm. Lunch is provided.

## 5. Where does the Assessment and 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 or employer-supported individual at Commercial Lead 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?

No. 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.

**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 and can use tools like the self-assessment, available on the online platform. If you still have questions, speak with your line manager or contact [gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) for more information.

**10. What does a participant get after attendance at an Assessment 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. The report will identify areas of strength and areas for development. Existing Civil Servants 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 in to development plans.

**11. What happens if an individual fails the Assessment Centre?**

- A, meets threshold (accredited);
- ASR B, eligible for Accreditation Status Review;
- B, need for development (working toward accreditation);
- and C, significant need for development.

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 resitting the ADC. Those who achieve a C will be encouraged to have a talent conversation with their line manager and may choose to pursue other opportunities outside of commercial. Everybody has the opportunity to resit the Development Centre provided they have the support of their line manager but restrictions do apply (see page 18).

**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 and is compliant with GDPR regulations.

**13. Who assesses participants at a Development Centre?**

See page 16 for more information on assessors.

**14. How are assessors selected?**

See page 16 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 designed 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. What happens if I have a conflict of interest with my assessor?**

The ADC team gives both the assessor and participant an opportunity to declare a conflict of interest upon attending an ADC day. The necessary arrangements will then be made.

**17. Can I appeal the result?**

Yes. All appeals should be made directly to the Assessment and Development Centre team on [gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

**18. How do you ensure consistent and objective scoring of participants at an 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 supported by detailed

observed behaviours, eliminating 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 and monitored.

**19. 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 is derived from multiple different assessors' views of multiple different exercises, as well as the moderation process. The results are continually reviewed and evaluated and the structure and content is adjusted to stay in line with best practice research. An in-depth independent analysis of over 1000 participants took place in 2018 and this concluded that "[The Overall ADC] distinguishes a full range of candidate performance, therefore providing foundations for a robust data selection or performance decision."

**20. Are existing Civil Servants entitled to extra study time for the Assessment and Development Centre?**

Your line manager is encouraged to support you whilst going through the process. The assessments will not require specific study, although time to complete the Self Assessment will be beneficial, as will familiarising yourself with the People Standards for the Profession. You may want to speak to your line manager about how best this can be achieved and to agree what time is appropriate.

**21. Is there a cost to attend the Development Centre?**

Yes. Please contact [gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) for more information on costs.

**22. How do I sign up?**

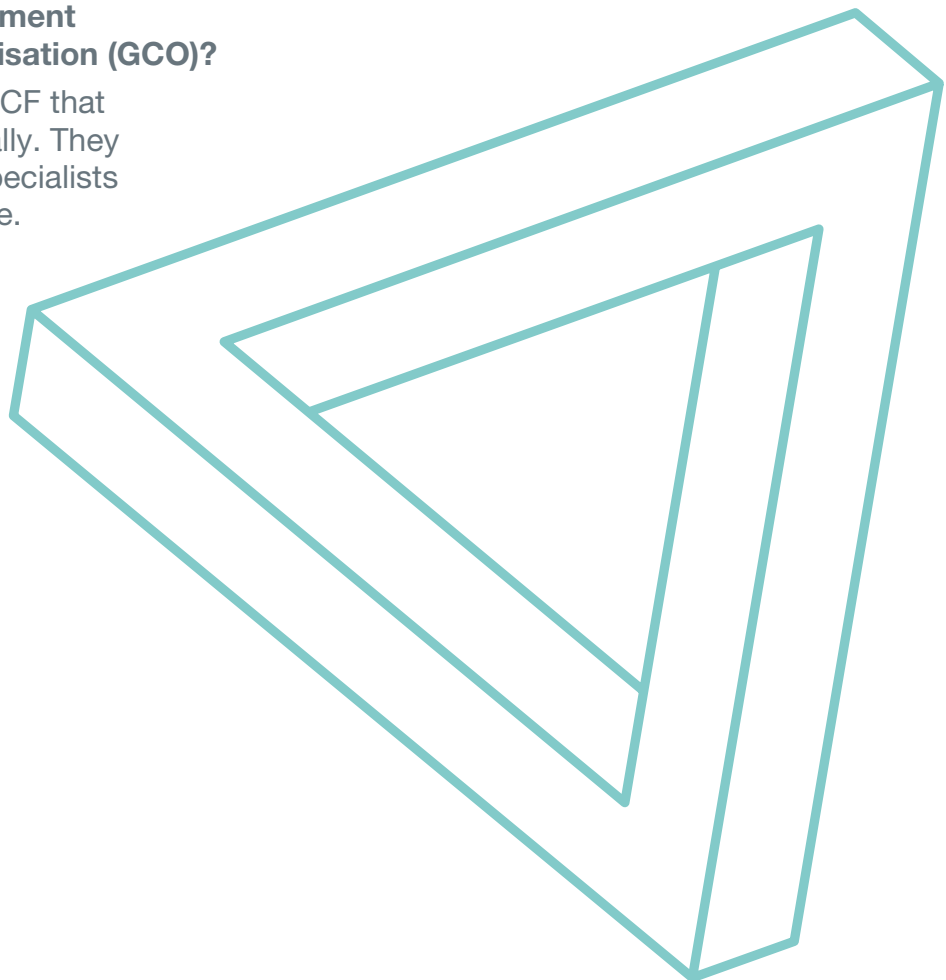
All participants must have organisational approval before attending an Assessment and Development Centre. You can also contact [gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) for further details on how you can go about gaining employer support and sign up.

**23. Who is the Government Chief Commercial Officer (GCCO and Head of Profession)?**

The Government Chief Commercial Officer is the head of the Government Commercial Function.

**24. What is the Government Commercial Organisation (GCO)?**

A senior subset of GCF that are employed centrally. They will be accredited specialists at grade 7 and above.



**Government Commercial Function**  
**Cabinet Office**  
[gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)