



Government
Commercial
Function

COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE



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Introduction

The UK central government spends almost £50 billion every year buying goods and services from third parties. This rises to nearly £300 billion when including spend by the wider public sector.

In 2014 the National Audit Office (NAO) reported that the government needed to do more to improve commercial and contract management capability.

Since then, the Government Commercial Function (GCF), led by the Government Chief Commercial Officer, has taken interventions to improve commercial capability across government. Interventions include the introduction of a specialist resourcing hub, the Assessment and Development

Centre (ADC) and bespoke training and talent programmes. The progress to date has been acknowledged by the NAO.

Commercial work should be assigned to people who are capable, experienced and, where applicable, accredited by the ADC. The ADC provides a robust method to evaluate commercial professionals against government-published commercial people standards. It provides rigour and consistency when selecting our senior commercial staff and ensures that the government has capable people to improve commercial delivery and prevent contract value leakage.



"We've made great progress over recent years investing in the skills and capabilities of commercial staff across government, but we can't afford to stand still. The benefits to be gained from working closely with our suppliers to deliver better value for taxpayers' money are enormous, so the Government Commercial Function continues to play a critical role in advancing this agenda."

Alex Chisholm, Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary and Chief Operating Officer

Foreword from



Gareth Rhys Williams

Government Chief Commercial Officer



The Assessment and Development Centre (ADC) supports our ambition to become the best commercial function in the UK. We want capable people, with the right leadership and technical skills, to grow for the future.

The ADC was introduced in 2016 to confirm that central government has capable people and to recruit new talented individuals. Since then, it has expanded to support the wider public sector and now assesses hundreds of individuals every month.

There is no doubt that the commercial environment worldwide, especially in government, has become harsher and more demanding in the last few years. We need to rise to that challenge by ensuring 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 of our colleagues internally.

If you pursue a career as a commercial professional in central government you will have access to learning and development to help further your career. We are committed to investing in you and ensuring 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 is intended to be challenging but will also give you the opportunity to shine.



Commercial profession

■ Structure and grading

The commercial profession is made up of eight levels.



■ Professional standards

The [GCF People Standards for the Profession](#)

define what is expected of commercial professionals at each level.

The standards include attributes which are specific to the commercial profession. These are split into two sections:

- **Section A** (judgement and leadership)
- **Section B** (expertise)

The standards are the responsibility of the Government Chief Commercial Officer and are maintained by the GCF.

■ Government Commercial Organisation (GCO)

The GCO is the single employer of commercial specialists (equivalent to grade 7 and above) within the GCF. It was established in 2017 to bring together the best commercial talent across government and provides specialists with a centralised accreditation, targeted development and access to a network of commercial leaders.



GCO vision

We will recruit, develop and retain the best senior commercial talent to lead departmental commercial activities to support the delivery of policy objectives.



ADC background

■ What is the Assessment and Development Centre (ADC)?

The ADC is a day made up of various interviews and simulated role-play exercises. It has been designed by commercial subject matter experts and occupational psychologists, guided by the British Psychological Society's standard on assessment design and delivery.

It is used to assess the commercial expertise, skills and capability of individuals against the [GCF People Standards for the Profession](#). This includes individuals at levels:

- senior commercial specialist
- commercial specialist
- associate commercial specialist
- commercial lead

■ Format

The ADC takes place virtually by default, using a virtual platform for meetings and the Government Commercial College platform for online materials.

■ Purpose

The ADC is used for:

1. **assessment** as part of a recruitment campaign
2. **development** for individuals to understand their strengths and areas for development

■ Who it is for

You may attend an ADC if you are:

- a recruitment candidate
- an existing civil servant or employed in the wider public sector (commercial lead level and above, whose work is primarily commercial) providing you have the agreement of your commercial director

■ Benefits

For you: a comprehensive report with expert insight on your areas of strength and areas for development to help you develop in your career.

For employers: 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 organisational challenges.

For the GCF: 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.

■ **Fairness**

You will be assessed by a number of different assessors on the day. This means your score comes from multiple people and multiple exercises, before going through a robust moderation process. The results are continually reviewed and evaluated; the structure and content is adjusted to stay in line with best practice.

What we assess

We evaluate your skills against the GCF People Standards for the Profession. The standards have two main themes.

Section A: Attributes for judgement and leadership

Group 1: Business acumen and commercial judgement

- Risk mindset
- Manages complexity
- Decisive
- Market insight
- Commercial focus

Group 2: Leadership skills and capability

- Resilient
- Assertive
- Political insight
- Builds relationships
- Coaching manager

On the day you will be assessed on each of these attributes three times. This provides you with multiple opportunities to demonstrate your capability across different exercises and gives us an accurate view of your performance as a whole.

You will meet different assessors throughout the day and each judgement and leadership exercise will be assessed by a different assessor.

This multi-assessor, multi-exercise, multi-attribute approach ensures a robust assessment of your current capability against the standards.

Attribute definitions

Risk mindset:

Identifies and analyses risks and their potential impact on work and outcomes. Applies understanding of risk, margins of error and trade-offs to develop appropriate recommendations, solutions or mitigations.

Manages complexity:

Analyses and assimilates information from a variety of sources to form a comprehensive picture of complex situations. Is able to bring clarity when working with incomplete information and when explaining complex information to others.

Decisive:

Makes clear and effective decisions, weighing up evidence effectively and presenting conclusions based on a coherent rationale. Recognises when to involve others in the process of decision making and when to pause or re-evaluate decisions.

Market insight:

Understands the motivations and behaviours of stakeholders, suppliers and networks, and applies these insights to shape approaches to work and maximise performance. Aligns market knowledge with current and future organisational needs to deliver results.

Commercial focus:

Applies commercial principles effectively, to deliver solutions which meet commercial needs and priorities and to maximise value for money. Comprehensively analyses and utilises financial data and contractual information to guide commercial decisions.

Resilient:

Remains calm and composed in challenging situations. Strives to resolve issues, despite challenges, and helps others to deal with setbacks. Perseveres and remains focused on the objectives and outcomes for their business area.

Assertive:

Communicates their position assertively and clearly, ensuring key messages are heard and understood. Leads discussions and takes ownership by demonstrating a clear sense of purpose and direction. Influences others and handles conflict constructively.

Political insight:

Understands the wider political context of work and considers the impact on others of actions, issues and changes. Works effectively with diverse stakeholders, adapting style and approach in line with others' needs and positions, and managing the political dynamics of situations.

Builds relationships:

Works collaboratively with stakeholders, building strong relationships. Invites the views of others and builds a shared sense of purpose. Demonstrates effective interpersonal skills to deliver optimum outcomes in interactions, whilst respecting the needs and opinions of others.

Coaching manager:

Builds confidence and capability in others across relevant areas of responsibility. Understands and utilises the strengths of others to allocate work and deliver results, whilst also providing support to address gaps and deliver improved performance. Supports and encourages the development of others, applying coaching skills in their communication.

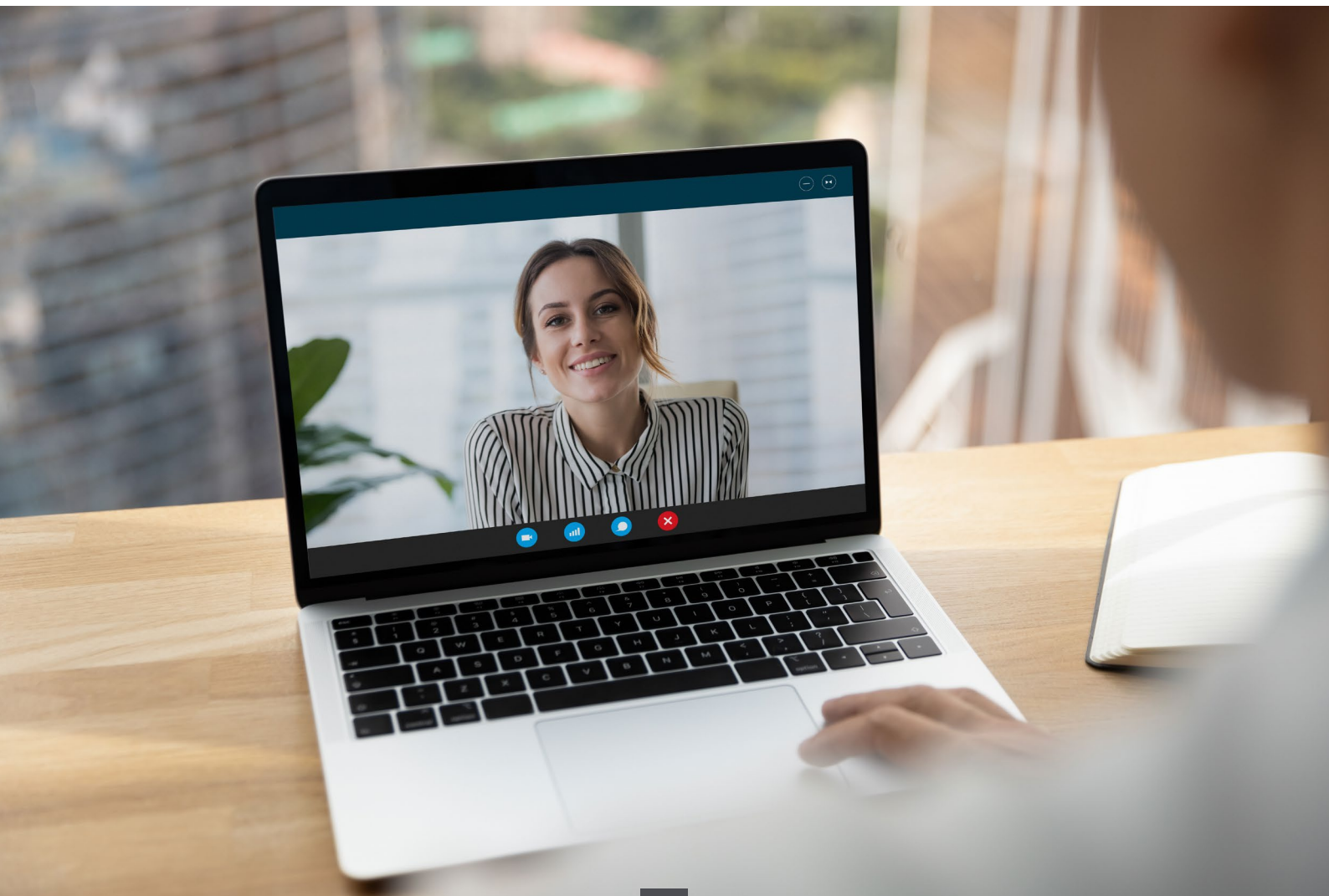
Section B: Attributes for technical expertise

This is assessed against four key areas of the commercial lifecycle:

1. Strategy and policy development
2. Understanding needs and sourcing options
3. Procurement process
4. Contract and supplier management

These are each assessed in a single exercise (the technical interview).

Further details on the technical attributes are available in the [GCF People Standards for the Profession](#).



How we assess

The ADC uses a mix of interviews and simulated exercises to assess the attributes. The specific exercises 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 one-to-one interview
- **Peer-to-peer meeting:** a role-play exercise (you will have time to review information and prepare beforehand)
- **Supplier meeting:** a role-play exercise linked to the outputs from the peer-to-peer meeting
- **Case study and senior briefing:** a role-play exercise where you will brief a senior colleague (you will have time to review information and prepare beforehand)
- **Stakeholder meeting (senior commercial specialist level only)** – a role-play exercise (you will have time to review information beforehand)

■ Exercises designed to evaluate technical expertise

Technical interview

A one-to-one interview, designed to explore your experience and knowledge on the technical areas.

Selection and order of exercises according to level

Commercial lead

1. Judgement and leadership interview
2. Peer-to-peer meeting
3. Supplier meeting
4. Case study and brief
5. Technical interview

Associate commercial specialist

1. Judgement and leadership interview
2. Peer-to-peer meeting
3. Supplier meeting
4. Case study and brief
5. Technical interview

Commercial specialist

1. Judgement and leadership interview
2. Peer-to-peer meeting
3. Supplier meeting
4. Case study and brief
5. Technical interview

Senior commercial specialist

1. Judgement and leadership interview
2. Case study and brief
3. Technical interview
4. Stakeholder meeting

The assessment is different at each level. Remember to refer to the [GCF People Standards for the Profession](#), which defines what is expected of commercial professionals at each level.

Before your ADC

■ Preparing for the ADC

In order to prepare for assessment, it is important that you read the [GCF People Standards for the Profession](#).

The standards are divided by level. Once you know which level you are being assessed at, you can focus on the sections relevant to you.

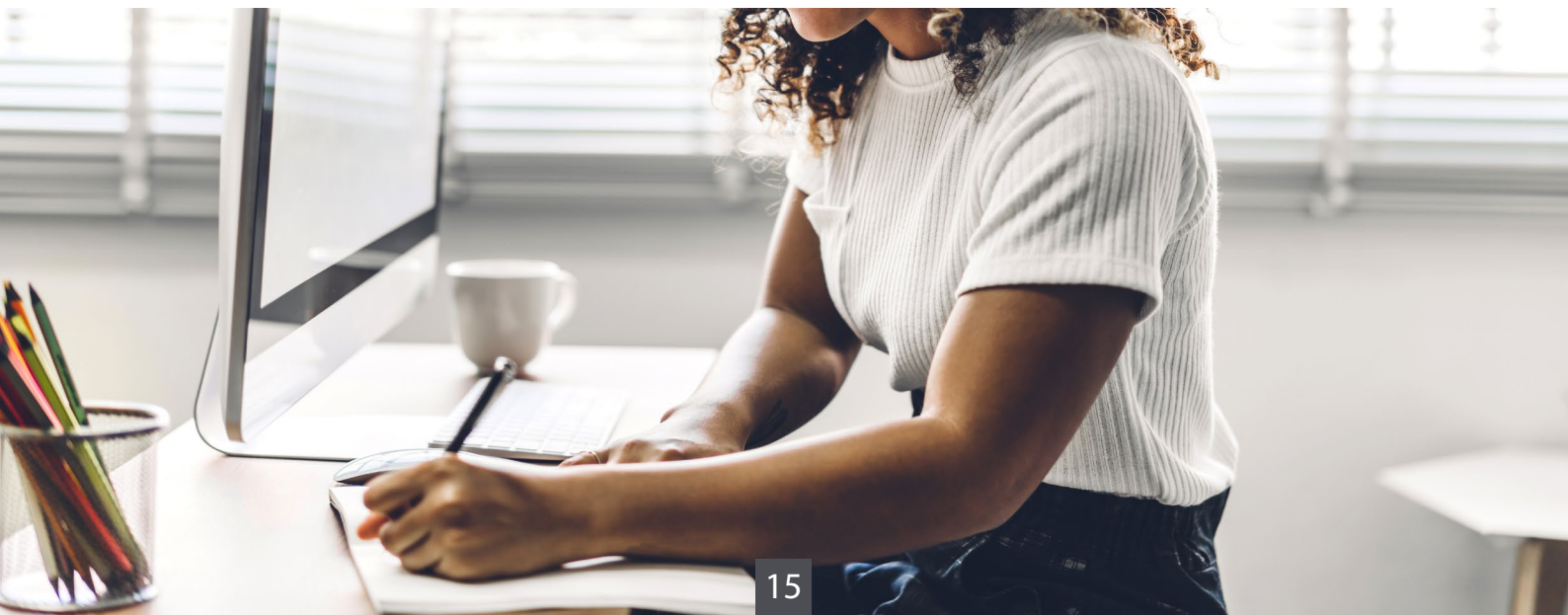
You will receive various materials as part of your registration process, which are designed to give you insight into the day. Please read these carefully.

■ Virtual ADC - Participant Guidance

If you are attending the virtual ADC, you will be sent the Participant Guidance. This is a separate document explaining how you can prepare practically for the virtual ADC environment and includes the technical requirements. Please read the guidance carefully.

We strongly recommend that you test your equipment in advance.

Please do **not** leave your preparation until the last minute.





■ Reasonable adjustments

The ADC is designed to be as accessible as possible. We recognise that you may require reasonable adjustments to your working environment to meet your needs. You may also request accommodations to ensure that you perform to your best on the day.

There is no set list of circumstances for which reasonable adjustments can be made, but as examples the ADC has supported requirements relating to:

- neurodiversity: such as dyslexia and dyspraxia
- medical conditions: such as those which lead to fatigue or not being able to remain seated for long periods
- physical impairments: such as those relating to sight or hearing

Requests for reasonable adjustments or accommodations are assessed on an individual basis. Reasonable adjustments made previously include amending timetables to allow for additional breaks or reading time (this sometimes means spreading the exercises across more than one day) and providing different document formats. For virtual ADCs all documents are accessed via the Government Commercial College platform.

If you would like to request reasonable adjustments or accommodations please email the ADC team as early as possible via gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk.

If you are uncertain or concerned about a request you can contact the team in confidence to discuss.

On the day

■ Start and end time

The precise timings of an ADC vary depending on the level being assessed but the day runs from approximately 8:00am to 3:30pm. There are breaks in the morning, for lunch and later in the afternoon.

■ Who you will meet

The assessors

The quality of our assessors is key to the success of the ADC. Our assessors have significant commercial experience gained from many years in the profession, which allows them to hold challenging and informed discussions. Only the most senior and experienced individuals are invited to join the team.

The current assessor 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 are interviewed by a senior civil

servant to assess their suitability and assessment level and attend a two-day training session designed by occupational psychologists. The course is designed to equip assessors with the necessary skills to assess using best practice methods.

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

The moderators

The moderators ensure that the ADC is delivered fairly and consistently for all participants and that the overall integrity of the day is maintained.

They lead a moderation session at the end of the day to review all of the exercises you have completed and explore the scores and feedback provided by the assessors.

The day managers

The day managers ensure the day runs smoothly for you, making sure that you understand the process and timings and have access to the materials you need for the exercises. They are

the first point of call for any technical issues or problems you might experience on the day.

■ How your performance is scored

Scoring methodology

Scoring is based on the Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS). This is a tool to assess individual performance against examples of behaviour and is endorsed by the British Psychological Society.

The BARS used in the ADC include behaviours in the [GCF People Standards for the Profession](#).

The assessors will score you on each judgement and leadership attribute and each area of technical expertise. You are scored on evidence that you provide in response to questions and the behaviours you exhibited in the exercises.

Judgement and leadership attributes

The 10 judgement and leadership attributes are split into two groups:

- Group A: Business acumen and commercial judgement
- Group B: Leadership skills and capability

Participants receive an overall score for each of

the 10 attributes and an average for each group is generated.

Technical expertise attributes

All four technical areas are assessed. The number of technical areas you are required to pass depends on your level:

- commercial leads and associate commercial specialists are required to pass **one** area
- commercial specialists are required to pass **two** areas
- senior commercial specialists are required to pass **three** areas; one of these areas must be strategy and policy development

Overall mark

The individual scores are combined to provide an overall mark. There are four overall marks that can be awarded:

- A: Meets threshold (accredited)
- B(ASR): B but eligible for accreditation status review (ASR)*
- B: Need for development
- C: Significant need for development

To become accredited at the ADC (to achieve an A), you will require **both** of the following:

- a total score of 6 or more across the two

*If a participant scores a B(ASR), a review of their accreditation status may be undertaken. Further details will be provided if this occurs.

judgement and leadership attribute groups, with no less than 2.7 in either group

- the benchmark score of 3 (out of 5) in the number of technical areas required for the level being assessed



After your ADC

■ When you will receive your results

Your report will be sent out within five working days. This may be sent to your recruitment contact, line manager or directly to you, depending on the reason for attending the ADC.

This report will include your score against each attribute assessed as well as an overall mark.

There will be detailed commentary against each attribute and an overall summary of performance provided by the ADC moderator. Existing civil servants and wider public sector staff can request a feedback call with a moderator.

If you join the GCO, you will be offered a conversation with a GCO leadership and career coach to help you with your personal development plan*.

■ Appeals

In some circumstances you may submit an appeal against your result. For more information on the appeals process please contact the ADC team on: gcfdevelopmentcentre@cabinetoffice.gov.uk.

■ Who will see the results

Recruitment candidates (internal and external)

Your report will be fed back into the recruitment process.

Existing civil servants and individuals from the wider public sector or external organisations who are attending the ADC for development purposes

Your results will be shared with your line manager. They may also be shared with your commercial director and HR. Your results will be available to the Commercial Capability Programme and GCO HR in order to develop the profession and our learning and

*If you join the GCO on a short term fixed term appointment you will not automatically be offered a conversation with a GCO leadership and career coach. If you think a conversation would be beneficial please email us via commercialtalent@cabinetoffice.gov.uk.

development offer. All data is securely stored and managed in line with the Data Protection Act and is compliant with GDPR regulations.

■ What the results mean to you

Recruitment candidates (internal and external)

Your recruitment account manager will explain what your results mean to you and the next steps in the process.

Existing civil servants in scope to transfer to the GCO

You should discuss your results with your line manager or refer to the ADC policy to understand the impact of different outcomes.

Individuals from the wider public sector or external organisations who are attending the ADC for development purposes

You should talk to your line manager and your employer to understand what the result may mean to you as it will vary between organisations.