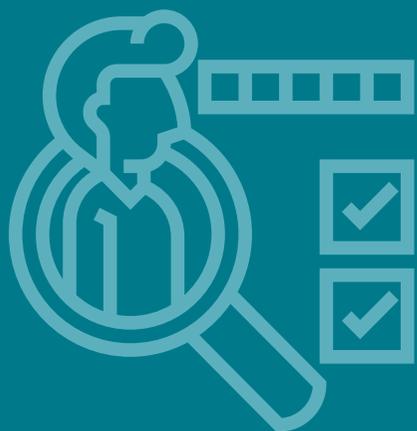


SAGEA TOOLKIT SERIES



Using an Assessment Centre to select your young talent

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Selecting the right talent is critical to long-term employee planning and business continuity. At a graduate level, more than half of recruiters working for SAGEA clients said that competition from other employers for graduate talent is a key challenge in the marketplace. Nonetheless, employers still need to make the right decisions and choose the best candidates from the available graduate pool.

Most employers will have a defined graduate recruitment strategy that outlines what methods will be used to select the right talent. One of these methods is the Assessment Centre (AC).

Just over a quarter of SAGEA employers use one or more simulation-based exercise(s) as a method of assessment for recruitment.



What is an Assessment Centre (AC)?

- ✓ A method that uses **business-related simulation exercises** to replicate critical aspects of an employee's job in the organisation
- ✓ Consists of two or more **simulations** that are completed in different settings (e.g. interactive and/or written)
- ✓ **Candidates are observed by multiple trained assessors** who observe and record candidate behavior, and then classify and evaluate candidate behavior against a set of defined behavioural competencies



Key Components of an AC

- ✓ **Job analysis** - an important step is to conduct a job analysis to create the ideal graduate profile for your organisation. The process results in a job description that can be used to identify and link key critical competencies to the AC
- ✓ **Competencies** - best practice recommends that about 8 competencies should be identified based on the outcomes of the job analysis. Importantly, these competencies must be easy to observe and evaluate in the AC
- ✓ **Multiple exercises** - a typical AC consists of two or more simulation exercises
- ✓ **AC matrix** - this is a map that plots the AC exercises against the selected competencies. Best practice recommends that each competency is measured at least twice across the exercises, but that no more than 5 competencies are measured within an exercise
- ✓ **Multiple assessors** - this is a group of people who are trained to administer and score the simulation exercises. Assessors rotate across candidates and exercises to ensure objectivity
- ✓ **Standardisation** - it is important that different groups of candidates completing the same graduate AC have the same time limits for each exercise, experience the same conditions, receive the same instructions, and that candidate information is scored, integrated and reported in a standardised way



Why use an AC to select young talent?



Provides evidence of demonstrated competence



Relevant, observable and comprehensive candidate information



Effective decision making, including workplace planning



Increased fairness and reduced unconscious bias from multiple evaluators



Enhances your employer brand



Provides candidates with an effective preview of the role or job level



A legally defensible selection method



Predicts work performance¹



How to implement an AC in your organisation

STEP 1

Compile the AC business case

case - Document the rationale and motivation for AC in

order to align with similar processes in the organisation and work out what budget you will need.

Ensure alignment to other people

processes - Identify where the AC fits in with other talent management processes and when the AC can and should be used

Formulate the AC policy statement - A specific AC policy statement complements existing assessment policies and practices and should include recommendations for best practice design and implementation

STEP 2

Decide on off-the-shelf simulation exercises

- If sufficient internal skill and capacity is available, then the organisation can source existing simulation exercises to form part of the graduate AC, or

Customised simulation exercises - If the organisation does not have sufficient internal skill and capacity then the services of an AC specialist can be used to design simulation exercises specific to the organisation's graduate AC

Identify service providers and confirm validation evidence and/or procedures

- Before the graduate AC can be implemented the simulation exercises need to be piloted. Once sufficient data is available then the graduate AC needs to be validated to ensure that it predicts which candidates will be successful graduates in the organization

STEP 3

Decide on insourced AC

- This option is recommended when

the organisation has internal capacity and venues to accommodate the process. It is a cost-effective option in the long-term

Outsourced AC - This option is recommended when the organisation does not have internal capacity and venues to host the graduate AC. But it becomes expensive over time. Consider logistics, internal capacity, availability of observers, outputs required, and validation requirements²

¹ Meiring, D., & Buckett A. (2016). Best practice guidelines for the use of the assessment centre method in South Africa (5th Edition). SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde, 42(1), Art. #1298, 15 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v42i1.1298>.

The SAGEA Employer Benchmarking Survey 2019

² Buckett, A. (2020). Purchasing an assessment centre. In Assessment centres: Unlocking people potential for growth, edited by S. Schlebusch and G. Roodt. Johannesburg, South Africa: KR Publishing, 77-93.



Using AC information to select graduates



The World Economic Forum (2015) states that there is a 21st-century skills gap



21st century competencies include critical thinking/ problem solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration



These competencies can easily be measured in a well designed and implemented graduate AC by using case studies, presentations, group exercises and role-play exercises



Samples of competency-based behaviours will provide evidence of candidates likely demonstrated competence on-the-job³

³ World Economic Forum, 2015. New vision for education: Unlocking the potential of technology

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