



HR DELIVERY

Making Sure HR Delivers

HR DELIVERY WORKSHOP SERIES

Assessment Centre

An introduction to designing and understanding assessment centres

Explore how assessment centres connect work requirements, exercises and evidence. Practise observing fictional behaviour, mapping criteria across activities and discussing assessor judgements, while identifying the design, training and pilot work needed before a real centre operates.



01 DAY

Introductory taster

IN-HOUSE

Your people. Your context.

PRACTICAL

Explore, discuss and apply

A PRACTICAL STARTING POINT

Understand the topic. Try it in practice.

An assessment centre needs a clear connection between the work, the exercises and the evidence assessors record. A busy schedule of activities alone does not provide that connection. This introductory workshop helps participants understand design choices, observe behaviour carefully and recognise the controls needed before assessment informs consequential decisions.

Introduce the practical building blocks of an assessment centre through a fictional supervisor role. Participants develop a small exercise-to-criterion map, practise observation and evidence review, and identify the specialist design, assessor preparation and piloting needed beyond this introductory workshop.

WHO IS IT FOR?

HR practitioners, recruitment and talent colleagues, managers and prospective assessment centre coordinators who want to understand design and evidence requirements. Previous experience as a trained assessor is not expected.

BY THE END OF THE DAY, PARTICIPANTS CAN:

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| <p>01 Define the purpose</p> <p>State the decision an assessment centre should support and distinguish selection, development and other uses that require different participant arrangements.</p> | <p>02 Map criteria and exercises</p> <p>Create a simple matrix showing which job-related criteria a proposed exercise could reveal and where evidence coverage would remain incomplete.</p> |
| <p>03 Recognise exercise limits</p> <p>Explain why an exercise must provide a relevant opportunity to demonstrate behaviour and why observed performance cannot establish every aspect of capability.</p> | <p>04 Record observed behaviour</p> <p>Practise recording specific actions or statements from a fictional exercise separately from interpretation, trait labels or impressions of the participant.</p> |
| <p>05 Discuss evidence clearly</p> <p>Compare practice observations against supplied criteria and explain differences in assessor judgements by returning to specific evidence and acknowledged gaps.</p> | <p>06 Identify readiness needs</p> <p>Outline the specialist design, assessor training, pilot, accessibility and governance questions that need resolution before a real assessment centre is used.</p> |

A useful first application

The day uses fictional exercises and practice observations. It does not certify assessors, validate an assessment centre or authorise live selection decisions; operational use requires suitable expertise, training, piloting and governance.

THE FRAMEWORK / WORKSHOP FOCUS

Assessment centre design enquiry — workshop working model

The workshop working model links purpose, criteria, exercise coverage, observation, integration and review. It helps learners trace a design decision from job requirements to evidence, keeping participant experience and assessor competence visible throughout.

A PRACTICAL LEARNING AID FOR THIS TASTER

01 Purpose and decision

What decision should the centre support for this participant group?

02 Work-related criteria

Which observable requirements follow from the work and its real demands?

03 Exercise coverage

Where can each criterion be demonstrated across relevant and complementary activities?

04 Observation and recording

What behaviour occurred, and what evidence did the assessor actually capture?

05 Evidence integration

How do observations across exercises support or limit the proposed judgement?

06 Pilot and review

What must be tested before this design informs real people decisions?

The six questions are introductory design prompts, not a validated assessment process. Practice observations carry no selection consequences; real centres need appropriate professional design, trained assessors, consistent administration and evidence of suitability for purpose.

LEARN BY DOING

Explore. Challenge. Make the ideas useful.

Short explanations lead into lively exercises, paired discussion and small-group challenges. Participants test ideas, share experience and build a draft together. The tone is engaging and enjoyable, with time to reflect and connect learning to real work.

01 Build the exercise matrix

Teams select a small set of supervisor criteria, compare proposed role-play and analysis tasks and map where each criterion has a meaningful opportunity to be demonstrated across activities.

02 Observe without labelling

Participants watch or enact a short scripted workplace simulation, independently record observable actions and statements, then identify where their notes drift into personality labels or unsupported interpretation.

03 Run an evidence integration meeting

Groups use fictional assessor notes to compare evidence across exercises, explore contradictory observations and practise reaching a limited conclusion while preserving uncertainty and reasons for disagreement.

04 Stress-test the centre plan

Teams review a proposed centre schedule for candidate burden, exercise coverage, assessor workload and access needs, then identify priority pilot questions and the professional support required before implementation.

DIAGNOSE BEFORE YOU ACT

Evidence > shared feedback > agreed priorities

Use selected diagnostic prompts to distinguish known facts from assumptions. Discuss the findings and agree their meaning before proposing a solution. Feedback is part of diagnosis, not an afterthought.

ONE CASE, DEVELOPED THROUGH THE DAY

A company plans a centre for first-line supervisors using a presentation and group discussion. Both reward confident speaking, while the role also requires prioritisation, judgement and follow-through. Assessors have different expectations, and a strong presentation is becoming a proxy for overall suitability without enough evidence from other work situations.

Groups revise the exercise-to-criterion map, identify missing opportunities to demonstrate relevant behaviour and propose observation, assessor preparation and pilot checks before the organisation considers using the design with candidates.

THE FACILITATOR WILL

Invite different perspectives.

Make assumptions visible.

Welcome constructive debate.

Capture practical learning.



SAMPLE WORKSHOP AGENDA

A working day, with room to think.

09:00-16:30 | Six hours of facilitated learning, plus lunch and breaks. The agenda, emphasis and timings are always agreed with the client, including local scheduling needs.

09:00-09:20	Clarify the centre's purpose Explore selection and development uses, identify the decision owner and define the boundaries of the fictional supervisor assessment centre used throughout the day.
09:20-10:15	Connect job criteria and exercise coverage Translate supplied role requirements into observable criteria and compare how different activities could provide relevant, complementary opportunities to demonstrate the required behaviour.
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-11:30	Design a small exercise matrix Map criteria across proposed activities, identify over-represented and missing evidence, and consider participant burden before adding another exercise to the schedule.
11:30-12:30	Practise observation and evidence notes Observe a scripted simulation, record specific behaviour independently and compare notes to distinguish evidence from impressions, labels and unsupported assumptions about capability.
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:30	Explore judgement and evidence integration Use supplied guidance to discuss fictional observations across exercises, identify conflicting evidence and record the limitations of any provisional interpretation or recommendation.
14:30-14:45	Break
14:45-15:30	Plan assessor preparation and piloting Identify design expertise, training, consistent administration, accessibility and pilot questions needed before a centre can responsibly inform an actual people decision.
15:30-16:10	Challenge the proposed centre design Present the revised supervisor centre plan, review coverage and practicality with peers and identify the most important unresolved evidence or implementation concern.
16:10-16:30	Prepare a bounded development brief Draft the purpose, criteria, stakeholders and specialist questions for a future assessment centre enquiry, keeping practice outputs separate from operational approval.

Trace job requirements into relevant exercises, specific observations and proportionate judgements supported by trained, consistent assessment practice.

FROM THE SESSION TO YOUR DESK

Useful models. Practical working records.

The day combines reference materials with drafts developed in the exercises. Each has a clear use beyond the workshop; the work reflects the evidence and perspectives available in the room.

01 Assessment purpose brief

A draft statement of the centre's intended decision, participant group and boundaries, with questions about how selection and developmental uses affect design and participant communication.

Clarify the assessment decision before commissioning exercises or scheduling candidates.

02 Exercise-to-criterion matrix

A worked coverage map linking a small set of job-related criteria with proposed activities, identifying missing opportunities, excessive repetition and assumptions about what an exercise can reveal.

Discuss whether a proposed centre collects enough relevant evidence.

03 Observation practice record

An annotated fictional exercise record distinguishing observable actions and statements from inference, with feedback on specificity and the limits of the evidence captured by each observer.

Recognise the discipline required before undertaking formal assessor training.

04 Integration meeting prompts

A set of practice questions for comparing evidence across exercises, examining contradiction and recording limitations before discussing a provisional judgement against the intended role criteria.

Keep assessment discussions grounded in recorded behaviour and explicit criteria.

05 Pilot and readiness checklist

A commissioning checklist covering exercise relevance, assessor preparation, consistent administration, participant access, workload and governance, with unresolved design questions identified for professional review before any operational use.

Identify what must be checked before a real centre operates.

06 Specialist design enquiry

A focused brief for discussion with an assessment specialist, setting out purpose, role requirements, proposed evidence sources and the design or training questions raised during the workshop.

Prepare a practical next conversation with suitably experienced assessment professionals.

CONTINUE EXPLORING

Continue with the models, diagnostic manuals and development resources on the HR Delivery website. Workshop exercises provide a first application; a full organisational diagnostic or implementation assignment can be agreed separately.

[Open the framework >](#)

[Explore diagnostic resources >](#)

MAKE THE LEARNING COUNT

A better conversation. A practical next step.

If an assessment centre is planned, review its purpose and role criteria with the owner and a suitably experienced specialist. Use the exercise matrix to identify coverage gaps, then agree what design, training or pilot work is required.

YOUR FIRST 30 DAYS

01

Days 1-7

Confirm purpose and criteria

Discuss an existing or proposed centre with its owner. Clarify the intended decision and participant group, then check whether the role requirements and relevant professional design responsibilities are clearly documented and agreed.

02

Days 8-21

Review exercise coverage

Use the exercise matrix to prepare questions for an experienced assessment professional. Identify criteria with weak coverage, possible access barriers and assumptions about what current exercises or assessor notes can actually establish.

03

Days 22-30

Agree design support needs

Summarise the review with the centre owner and specialist. Record the design, assessor preparation or pilot work needed, identify responsible colleagues and agree the evidence required before considering operational implementation or changes.

Follow-through is participant-led. Additional facilitation, a full diagnostic or specialist support can be agreed separately.

AVAILABLE IN-HOUSE

Shaped around your organisation

Participants receive a fictional supervisor role and scripted exercise materials. The client may outline an assessment centre purpose, but live candidate records and restricted exercises are unnecessary; all observation and rating work remains a learning simulation.

PLAN YOUR IN-HOUSE WORKSHOP

Talk to Dr Phillip Welsh

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Discuss your workshop

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