Assessment Centres
Assessment centres evaluate your suitability for a job through various tasks and activities, allowing employers to test skills in a way that may not be possible in a traditional interview. They are usually hosted over a full day, and sometimes 2 days including an overnight stay. Occasionally, the candidates need to pass the morning activities to be invited to return for the afternoon. Assessment Centres vary in size with anything from 6 to 25 other candidates.

Assessment Centres are a good way of predicting your potential, as they give a number of assessors a chance to see you over a longer period of time and in different situations.

Manchester Met students have provided us with detailed information of their Assessment Centre experiences and we have included these within our Company Profiles. If you have an upcoming Assessment Centre make sure you check My Career Hub first for insider information on what to expect: [www.mmu.ac.uk/findajob](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/findajob). Once you are logged on simply search for ‘Assessment Centres’ on the resources page.

You can find out more about assessment centres by having a look at the Assessment Centre Tool within MMyou: [https://mycareerhub.mmu.ac.uk/students/abintegro?redirectURL=/AssessmentCentreTool](https://mycareerhub.mmu.ac.uk/students/abintegro?redirectURL=/AssessmentCentreTool)

**What to expect**

Assessment centres are frequently used among large recruiters and are typically the final stage of the selection process. They usually involve a combination of individual and group tasks; some are designed to mirror the job you are applying for, while others focus more on the desired competencies or behavioural characteristics required for the job. Below is a brief summary of the potential exercises that may make up an Assessment Centre:

**In-tray/e-tray exercises**

In-tray exercises are designed to measure how effectively you manage your workload. You will be given a range of emails, memos, messages, reports and correspondence, together with information on the organisation. You may be asked to prioritise tasks based on the information provided, including drafting replies, delegating and recommending action to supervisors. There will be a time limit to complete the task. E-tray versions of the exercise will involve dealing with a series of emails which arrive on your computer.

The exercises assess your problem analysis and judgement skills, together with your communication and time management. You can practise an in-tray exercise at [www.assessmentday.co.uk/in-tray-exercise](http://www.assessmentday.co.uk/in-tray-exercise)

**Social Event**

It is likely that there will be an informal event such as a lunch or a coffee break at some point; whilst you are not being formally assessed, you may be under observation. Use this opportunity to find out more about the company culture and the experiences of staff within the organisation.

It is quite common for candidates to have lunch with current trainees and/or hiring managers. This is your opportunity to find out more about the job and the company. Have questions in mind and talk to staff.

Consider how your behaviour appears to the employer. Make an effort to speak to the people you meet and bear in mind that assessors have been known to ask for the opinions of other company personnel who have met you.
Group Exercise

Group exercises can take different forms, you might expect to find a problem solving or work-simulation exercise, followed by discussion around the problem solving process. Remember this is not a competition, the purpose is to see how you interact with others and how you perform under pressure.

The assessors are looking for how individuals function as a member of the group; this may include participation and contribution, the ability to present reasoned arguments, effective communication, listening skills, or negotiation and co-operation. Your own contribution to the team process will normally be more important than the outcome of the exercise.

DO

- Try to develop a relationship with the group – use names and encourage quieter members
- Remain calm when challenged
- Be confident to speak out tactfully and assertively if you disagree
- Have opinions, but listen to others. Be prepared to debate/discuss
- Provide clear and logical arguments
- Keep an eye on the time to ensure the task is completed
- Remember that the quality of what you say is more important than how often you speak!
- Try to give structure to the group discussion by setting objectives and sticking to the brief. If appropriate, take stock, summarise where the group are up to and what still needs to be achieved in the time remaining. This can help the group to prioritise.

DON’T

- Keep reiterating the same point if the group is not listening – if you feel it is important, wait for a quiet moment then raise the point again
- Be impatient or angry with other team members
- Talk over others
- Blend into the background – the assessors cannot give you credit if you do not speak!

Psychometric tests

Many graduate employers now use psychometric tests as part of an overall selection process, whether at an assessment centre or during the preliminary screening stage. Psychometric tests are used to assess the abilities and personality traits of job applicants and are often completed online. You can practise psychometric tests online for free through our “Graduates First Test Portal” on our website:

www2.mmu.ac.uk/careers/students/cvs-applications-and-interviews/psychometric-tests.

Presentations

Presentations can be challenging; but practise and preparation can help a great deal. You could be given anything from 30 minutes to several days to prepare for a presentation. It is common for assessment centres to start with an introduction to the group, where you will have to talk about yourself.

For tips on how to prepare for presentations read our ‘Presentation Skills’ guide at www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides or attend one of our regular ‘How to present like a professional workshops.'
Role-Play

Role-plays are a business simulation exercise where you are given a brief and assigned a role to be maintained throughout the exercise, they are usually related to the type of work to which you have applied. For example, it can be a popular method of assessment for sales and customer service roles, where the assessor may adopt the role of a difficult customer.

Assessors will be watching the way you analyse the situation, how well you think on your feet and how you are able to express your ideas. You will be judged on your interpersonal skills, how you listen to and understand the other person, whether you develop a relationship with the other person, and the extent to which you are able to influence them and come to a mutually agreed outcome to the situation.

Interview

Prepare for Assessment Centre interviews as you would for any other. Research the organisation, keep in touch with current events by reading newspapers, journals and watching the news, follow their tweets and take time to view the assessors profiles on LinkedIn. For more help on how to prepare for interviews read our Interviews and Researching Employers guides available at [www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides).

Your preparation

- Go back to the company web site and identify the skills, abilities, personal qualities they are looking for. They will be assessing these at the Assessment Centre.
- Read back on your application/CV
- If given a presentation topic in advance, research and prepare thoroughly (but don’t neglect your other preparation).
- If in doubt about anything, call the employer to clarify.
- Try and get a good nights sleep the night before and eat some breakfast!
- Research the company thoroughly. This is the second top tip students feedback to us
- The top tip they feedback is “enjoy the day, and be yourself “
- And finally, if you want to discuss your preparation, go through your presentation etc. book a Careers appointment

Careers & Employability Support

The Careers & Employability Service offers a range of support to Manchester Met students and graduates, including:

- **Detailed careers guides:** Our full range of careers guides, including information on psychometric tests, presentation skills and interviews are available on our website.
- **Careers Consultant Appointments:** Book a 30 minute appointment to discuss preparation for an upcoming Assessment Centre with a Careers & Employability Consultant.

For more information visit [www.mmu.ac.uk/careers](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/careers)