

Assessment Guide

Most companies, particularly the larger ones, will include an assessment stage to conclude their recruitment process. This could be anything from a couple of hours to two days, but typically it will be a one day affair with three to four components. You could be up against anything from one to six other people, although usually there will be three or four candidates in total.

Here are some of the most likely components with a few of our top line tips. We strongly recommend you work with your consultant to prepare in detail for any given assessment stage.

Interview

Most likely this will be a competency interview, like the majority of first interviews. But, unlike most first interviews, here you are more likely to face a panel of two to four people. Here are a few key pointers:

- Start from scratch. Even if one of the panel has heard it before, pretend they haven't.
- Include everyone. Make sure you scan all of the panel as you answer questions. Try not to single out any one as more important.
- Sit in a comfortable but neutral position. Crossed legs can appear informal, folded arms can appear defensive.
- Refer to our Interview guide for more advice.

Group exercise

This will normally be a problem solving task. Contrary to what most think, the actual solution achieved is not the most important aspect here, the key is the demonstration of how you interact with others.

Here some of the key points to watch:

- Avoid being drawn into confrontation and arguments. If challenge is necessary, do it respectfully and ensure any criticism is presented in a constructive manner.
- Many will simply assume that the task is to persuasively bring everyone else around to their idea and try to shout the loudest to achieve this. In reality, the real prize is to be seen to praise others, where appropriate, and be able to listen to, and build on, their ideas.
- Never embarrass or insult others.



- Try to portray a calm but assertive manner.
- Help resolve differences in the group and be seen to draw a consensus wherever possible.

Psychometric tests

These are tests used to determine your underlying behavioural traits. You can't practise these, just answer them as honestly as possible.

Verbal and numerical reasoning

Many claim that you cannot improve your scores on these tests by practising. At PCC we believe this is absolutely not true. Many people score low on these tests because of a poor approach and lack of preparation.

We work with candidates to ensure they achieve scores which truly reflect their abilities in these tests. It is important that you work closely with your consultant to prepare for these tests.

Presentation skills

Broadly speaking, there are two possibilities here. On the one hand you may be asked to prepare a presentation in advance. For this, please refer to our Presentation guide and work with your consultant for maximum impact.

The second, and perhaps more challenging, scenario is that you are given a presentation topic on the day with limited time to prepare. For this, the key is to have a clear structure in mind before the day. You will often be presented with a mass of information, far too much to process such that candidates feel immense pressure which can result in an element of panic.

In this scenario, it's important to remember that there are usually more marks for structure and delivery, than content. There is rarely enough time to produce a high quality presentation with perfect content, and in their panic, many candidates create a badly-structured presentation which they deliver poorly when in front of their audience. Candidates should accept that there isn't enough time and plan a clear structure, even if the content is technically poor or even incorrect. Most importantly you must deliver the presentation professionally, displaying complete confidence in what you are saying.

Key points are:

- Aim for a clear presentation structure.
- Decide on a strategy and approach quickly, accepting that this may be the lesser-weighted aspect.
- Prepare the structured presentation as early as possible, to allow some rehearsal time.
- Once done, don't question your content, simply deliver it confidently.

Role play

At best these exercises tend to be quite artificial. The most important aspect to remember is that most of the marks will centre around structure. So you should work with your consultant in advance to predict the type of role play ahead, and have a structure into which you can slot various scenarios. Then you can, to a degree, rehearse the structure, which helps remove the anxiety that inhibits role play performance.



If you are theatrical, this is your time to shine as it's purely acting. The more you can throw yourself into it, as if it were real, the better you will present yourself. For those people who are more introverted, you need to kick out the invading thoughts of how artificial it really is, they will serve only to damage your performance.

Analysis/in tray

This is usually a problem solving exercise involving a mass of information that requires both processing and filtering. Like presentations, marks will be allocated as much for process as actual content and results. The actual tasks can vary hugely but here are some key pointers:

- Accept that there is often too little time to do this task to the standard you would wish.
- Don't panic.
- Try to set milestones and a process to complete the task on time, remembering that many marks will be allocated on process.
- Write down notes about the clear rationale behind the decisions you take.
- Given the pressure of limited time, it may not matter if your decisions are poor, as long as you present clear rationale for your decision-making.

Run your race

As a consultancy presenting candidates for assessment, the most common questions we get asked by candidates are 'How many other candidates are there?' and 'What are they like?'. These are entirely irrelevant. Even if the answers were available, having that information would not enhance your chances.'

The only approach we advocate is to run your own race, to the very best of your ability. At PCC we believe that the results on the day can be determined before the day, by the quality and quantity of your preparation. And we offer the best assistance available to maximise your chance of success.

