



Quality Standards for Assessment and Development Centres

HELEN BARON, MAX CHOI, NIGEL POVAH, STEVE WHIDDETT, CHARLIE EYRE

BPS DOP WORKING GROUP ON ASSESSMENT CENTRE STANDARDS

Agenda

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Research Findings
- ▶ Development
- ▶ Content of the Standards
- ▶ Discussion

Background to project

- ▶ Symposium at 2012 Conference showed substantial interest in improving standards
- ▶ Sponsored by the Division of Occupational Psychology of the British Psychological Society
- ▶ Working group of Occupational Psychologists
 - ▶ Consultants, Internal HR Teams, Academics
- ▶ Growth in AC field leading to less qualified practitioners and poor practice
- ▶ Existing guidelines required updating and did not provide sufficient guidance
- ▶ Comparison to benefits of test standards

Why is a standard needed?

- ▶ To protect the public
- ▶ Address poor practice
- ▶ Improve validity
- ▶ Support practitioners
- ▶ Guidance for commissioners
- ▶ Promote evidence based practice
- ▶ Underpin other initiatives
 - ▶ E.g. Training accreditation
 - ▶ Practitioner accreditation
 - ▶ Process accreditation

Evidence of Poor Practice

- ▶ Surveys of practitioners
- ▶ Two stage research project
 - ▶ Collected problems seen by
 - ▶ Candidates
 - ▶ Assessors
 - ▶ Designers
 - ▶ Asked groups to rate how frequently the problems occurred
- ▶ Dewberry, under review

Percentage of AC where Designers (n=25) Reported Issue

Assessors being asked to work extremely long hours	38%
Assessors not being given the opportunity to practice the evaluation of exercises before the AC went 'live'	25%
Assessors asked to be involved in the AC at the last minute, when not properly prepared	23%
Insufficient training of assessors	22%
Timetables that do not allocate sufficient time to move between rooms	22%
Insufficient trialling of the AC	22%
The effectiveness of the assessment centre being compromised by the need to cut costs	20%
The use of competencies which have not been identified with job analysis	18%
Assessors being required to assess more competencies in an exercise than they were able to deal with effectively	17%
People being actively involved in the design of AC when they were not adequately trained to do so	16%

Percentage of Assessors (n=95) estimating problem occurs Quite Often or more frequently Pre-‘Wash Up’	
The order in which candidates take part in exercises not being the same for all	66%
Assessors being given insufficient time to evaluate and score candidates	49%
Candidates being assessed less than twice on a particular competence during the AC	53%
Assessors being too rushed, throughout the entire AC, to do their job properly	43%
Assessors being given such a large workload in the AC that they cannot perform their role properly	42%
Exercises which require assessors to evaluate too many behaviours in the time allowed	41%
Assessors tending to give all candidates middling scores - never very high or very low	36%
Assessors being required to write reports which are unnecessarily long and time-consuming	36%
The over-use of exercises which favour extraverts rather than more reflective introverts	38%
Assessors being influenced by how well the candidate appears to “fit” the organization	31%

Percentage of Assessors (n=95) estimating problem occurs Quite Often or more frequently 'Wash Up'	
Wash-ups which are rushed due to lack of time	51%
More time spent discussing candidates at the beginning of the wash up than at the end	42%
Wash-ups in which there is too much unnecessary and unproductive discussion	40%
Senior assessors in the wash-up having greater influence than more junior ones over evaluations and decisions	34%
Junior assessors deferring to more senior ones in wash-ups	31%
Assessors framing evidence about candidates so as to support the final decision they want to be made about them	31%
More junior assessors being unwilling to challenge the evaluations made about candidates by more senior assessors	30%
"In-house assessors" having more influence on the evaluation of candidates than external ones	29%
Wash-ups in which assessors appear to place more emphasis on defending their own evaluations than in listening to the evidence from others	28%
Assessors with less dominant personalities deferring to those with more dominant personalities when evaluating candidates	27%

Percentage of AC where Candidates(n=64) Reported Issue

No clear guidance provided on how assessments will be marked	55%
Not being given sufficient feedback on your performance after an assessment	51%
Assessments which seemed poorly designed	34%
Being asked to act in simulations which seem very unrealistic	31%
Not being provided with any opportunity to wind down and relax after the AC	30%
The use of tests or exercises which appear to be of little or no relevance for the role	28%
The AC being located in a rough and intimidating part of town	28%
The impression that assessors have not been sufficiently trained	28%
A lack of 'human' contact - an impersonal experience - feeling like being in a sausage machine	27%
The relevance of certain assessments for the job you applied for not being explained	26%

Who developed the standard?

- ▶ Drafting Team

- ▶ Helen Baron, Independent, Dave Bartram, CEB's SHL Talent Measurement Solutions, Max Choi, Quest Partnership, Charles Eyre, College of Policing, Patricia Lindley, Independent, Nigel Povah, A&DC, Steve Whiddett, Association for Business Psychology and WHE UK Ltd

- ▶ Broader Working Group

- ▶ Sue Bawtree, CEB's SHL Talent Measurement Solutions, Alan Bourne, Talent Q, Chris Dewberry, Birkbeck College, Nigel Evans, Nigel Evans Consulting Ltd, Amelia Hughes, Price-Waterhouse Coopers, Claudia Nutgens, Independent, Sonia Pawson, NOMS, Jo Silvester, Cass Business School, City University, John Toplis, Independent, Derek Wilkie, Stuart Robertson & Associates Ltd, Philip Wilson, Fast Stream, Civil Service Resourcing

How was the standard developed?

- ▶ Working from an evidenced based practice approach
 - ▶ E.g. meta-analysis shows 50% increase in validity with arithmetic decision making
- ▶ Where evidence is less specific combine with experience
 - ▶ E.g. Number of assessment criteria – must be balanced with resources
- ▶ Informed by survey results, experience of developers
- ▶ Reviewing existing standards
 - ▶ BPS Guidelines
 - ▶ ISO 10667
 - ▶ Other standards e.g. International Taskforce
- ▶ Consultation and redrafting

Relationship to ISO 10667

- ▶ ISO 10667-1 & 10667-2
Assessment service delivery – Procedures and methods to assess people in work and organizational settings –
Part 1: Requirements for the client
Part 2: Requirements for service providers
- ▶ Provides a general framework
- ▶ Assessment Centre standard provides detail
 - ▶ Uses similar language and structure
 - ▶ Considers standards from both commissioner (client) and service provider perspectives

The formal standard – not guidance

- ▶ Standards include what **shall** be done and what **should** be done:
 - ▶ **'Shall'** is taken to mean that something is obligatory. If an entity fails to meet a **'shall'** condition they could not be certified as compliant with the standard.
 - ▶ **'Should'** is taken to mean 'recommended but optional'.
- ▶ The **'shalls'** define good practice, the **'shoulds'** define best practice.
- ▶ Wherever possible, tried to use **'shall'** rather than **'should'**.
- ▶ Notes – these provide some general background, but generally the standard does not explain why something ought to be done or avoided
- ▶ Standards can be used to evaluate practice

Structure of Standards

- ▶ Specifying the purpose and scope for the Centre
- ▶ Designing the Centre
- ▶ The standards of competence and professional behaviour required of the different roles involved in the Centre process
- ▶ Preparing for delivery
- ▶ Implementing the Centre
- ▶ Data integration and decision making
- ▶ Appropriate reporting and feedback of Centre results
- ▶ Managing the data derived from the Centre including access, use and storage
- ▶ Evaluation of Centres

Using the standard

- ▶ To define good practice for assessment procedures and methods
- ▶ Enhance equity in the application of assessment procedures
- ▶ Enable appropriate evaluation of the quality of assessment service provision
- ▶ Defining training requirements
- ▶ Evaluating practice
- ▶ Supporting resource requirements
- ▶ Certification

Dealing with technology

- ▶ A few specific standards relate to technology
- ▶ Most standards are the same whether technology is used or not
- ▶ Good practice is independent of the medium used
- ▶ Technology can present challenges in implementing good practice
 - ▶ E.g. difficulty in exercising control when candidates are in remote locations
- ▶ Appendix discusses use of ICT more generally including 'virtual centres'

How future proof are the standards?

- ▶ Based on current evidence
 - ▶ New studies may change our view
- ▶ New practices may require new standards
- ▶ Best practice is about:
 - ▶ Accurate assessment
 - ▶ Respect for candidates
- ▶ Standards should be robust

Example content (1)

- ▶ The Client **shall** be responsible for determining the assessment need and ensuring that the Centre addresses an appropriate and legitimate aim.
- ▶ The Service Provider **shall** advise the Client where a Centre may not offer the most appropriate response for the proposed assessment need.
- ▶ The Service Provider **shall** take an evidence-based approach to Centre provision and **should** provide Clients with access to documentation supporting the validity of the approach.
- ▶ The number of assessment criteria **shall** not be greater than can be effectively assessed within the confines of the Centre design.
- ▶ Each assessment criterion **shall** be assessed by at least two different assessment methods, at least one of which **shall** be an Exercise and ideally each assessment criterion **should** be assessed by at least two different Exercises.

Example content (2)

- ▶ Descriptive anchors **shall** be provided for at least two points on the rating scale to ensure consistent interpretation of the scale by all assessors. A fully defined behaviourally anchored ratings scale (BARS) **should** be used where possible.
- ▶ All Participants **shall** be informed of decisions made based on performance at the Centre. Participants **should** be provided with an opportunity to receive qualitative feedback about how they have performed during the Centre.
- ▶ The Service Provider **shall** take account of the diversity of Participants and the purpose of the Centre in allocating Participants to Centres and groups within Centres. The rationale for the approach **should** be documented.
 - ▶ NOTE: Typically allocations are made to ensure a similar balanced mix of demographic, geographical and functional characteristics of Participants within each group to ensure a fair and equitable process for all. On some occasions it may be more in line with the purpose of the Centre to have groups which are homogenous on some factors e.g. a positive action Centre for Development purposes might be single gender.

Example content (3)

- ▶ The Centre Manager **shall** ensure that Participant briefings make it clear when they are, and when they are not, being assessed.
- ▶ Arithmetic approaches **shall** be used to determine the Overall Centre Rating whenever the Centre is designed to facilitate selection decisions.
- ▶ A Feedback Generation Meeting **should** be held whenever qualitative developmental feedback to Participants is provided.
- ▶ Any report of the outcomes of the Centre **should** clearly state that decisions using the information are the responsibility of the Client.
- ▶ Following completion of the Centre, any learning points for the future **shall** be collated including both elements that went well and those that did not. This **should** include both the assessment process itself as well as matters such as Participant perceptions, acceptability and use of outcomes.

Benefits of working with standards

- ▶ Good practice increases validity
- ▶ Reduces risk of bad practice or unfair assessment
- ▶ Increases defensibility of practice
- ▶ Supports challenges to pressure to compromise standards due to cost, time and resource constraints
- ▶ External perception and brand image improved by adhering to standards
- ▶ Facilitates training design
- ▶ Enables quality checks
- ▶ Supports commissioning activity

Panel discussion

- ▶ Your questions about the standards
- ▶ What would make you adopt the standards in your practice?
- ▶ Would you be interested in further developments?
 - ▶ Accredit individuals – different roles
 - ▶ Accredit organisations
 - ▶ Accredit training courses – for different roles
 - ▶ Accredit Centres
 - ▶ Accreditation against full standard or separate parts?