



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, INC.

6277 Riverside Drive · Dublin, Ohio 43017

Advisory Services Division

FAQ's

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT CENTER PROCESS

Advisory Services Policy Committee
Chief (ret.) Dennis Yingling, Carey PD, Chairperson
Craig King, Advisory Services Director

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT CENTER PROCESS

The purpose of this document is to provide information, of a more technical nature, about Assessment Centers to agencies that are considering using an Assessment Center as part of their promotional process. The Advisory Services Policy Committee (ASPC) is made up of OACP members, some of whom represent client agencies and some of whom represent Advisory Services police management consultants. This committee helps to insure the integrity of the Assessment Center process and to direct and monitor the activities of the police management consultants.

Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Craig King, Advisory Services Director at 614-761-4632 or craig.king@oacp.org.

<u>QUESTION</u>	<u>ANSWER</u> Page #
• How is the cost of an Assessment Center determined and is this a "not to exceed" amount?	2
• Does Advisory Services provide other support to agencies that are involved in making employment decisions?	2
• Why is it important that Assessment Centers follow the rules?	2
• Who decides which exercises will be used and what dimensions will be measured and what are candidate told in advance?	2
• Are certain exercises better suited for certain ranks?	3
• What differences (if any) should be built into the assessment process when assessments are being conducted for two or more positions during the same day or over several days? For example - Captain/Lieutenant	3
• Will candidates who have gone through the process previously have an advantage over those going through the first time?	3
• How are the exercises scored?	3
• What is a passing score?	4
• What percent or weight should be given the assessment process if it is a component of a multi-part examination process?	4
• Are individual results available for each candidate to use to analyze strengths and potential areas for improvement?	4
• Can the assessment process be used by clients whose form of government requires that only written exams be administered for promotion?	4
• Do candidates have the right to inspect their examination papers and receive a copy of the test and individual scoring sheets?	4
• Why is each candidate provided a confidential identifier letter/number and why is their picture taken?	5
• How important is the debriefing process of the candidates following the assessment process?	5
• Who is responsible for conducting background checks?	5
• What actions can be taken to safeguard the process from bias?	5
• What do management studies/organizational reviews conducted by the OACP involve?	6
• Are Assessment Center records "Public Documents" and how long are they retained?	6

QUESTION:

How is the cost of an Assessment Center determined and is this a "not to exceed" amount?

ANSWER:

A "not to exceed" estimate of the total cost for a one day, 6 candidate, Assessment Center is \$5,130, including the cost of the Pre-Assessment meeting. The exact cost depends on the number and type of exercises used, the number of candidates, and the travel/lodging costs of the consultants. As these variables become known, a "not to exceed figure" will be provided for inclusion in the contract between OACP Advisory Services and the client. If due to the number of candidates the Assessment Center takes an additional day, the "not to exceed" cost is an additional \$3,100. In all cases, the invoice for services will not be greater than "not to exceed figure" included in the contract and in most cases it will be less.

QUESTION:

Does Advisory Services provide other support to agencies that are involved in making employment decisions?

ANSWER:

Yes, Advisory Services can help with the creation of position announcements, posting such announcements on the OACP website or sending them to over 800 law enforcement officials and agencies via US mail or email, handling returned résumés or applications, ranking returned or applications and other consulting services. Cost estimates for the aforementioned help can be obtained by contacting Craig King, Advisory Services Director at 614-761-4632 or craig.king@oacp.org.

QUESTION:

Why is it important that Assessment Centers follow the rules?

ANSWER:

Assessment Centers are not all the same. Some are created by psychologists, some by lawyers, some by testing companies. Ours are created by law enforcement practitioners, Ohio chiefs of police. Regardless of who creates them, it is extremely important that the assessment process follows the single set of standards that has been established by the one professional organization that continually studies and upgrades assessment standards. These standards include recommendations relative to minimum procedural requirements and training requirements for those conducting assessment centers. These standards are created, reviewed and revised through the annual meetings of the *International Congress on Assessment Center Methods* and published as the "Guidelines and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations. OACP Advisory Services ascribes to these guidelines. These guidelines may be accessed online at:

http://www.assessmentcenters.org/pdf/AssessmentCenterGuidelines_2009.pdf

QUESTION:

Who decides which exercises will be used and what dimensions will be measured and what are candidates told in advance?

ANSWER:

These matters are thoroughly discussed with the client during the pre-assessment site visit. The decision to inform the candidates of the type of exercises that will be conducted during the assessment process rests with the client. However, the dimensions used, details of the scoring process, and similar specifics remain confidential and are not disclosed to the candidates prior to the testing. This is essential to insure that all candidates are provided the same information. A "level playing field" must be maintained.

QUESTION:

Are certain exercises better suited for certain ranks?

ANSWER:

Yes. For example, the in-basket exercise is normally not used for first line supervisory positions unless administrative (command) duties compose a large percentage of that position's overall work responsibilities. Similarly, the oral presentation exercise, when used, should be designed to reflect a realistic situation that might be encountered by the candidate at the rank being tested. There are five (5) types of exercises from which to choose. Scenarios are designed for each exercise chosen to match the target position.

QUESTION:

What differences (if any) should be built into the assessment process when assessments are being conducted for two or more positions during the same day or over several days? For example - Captain and Lieutenant

ANSWER:

Assessment exercise content is based on an analysis of the job descriptions, job/task analysis (if available) and discussions held during the pre-assessment phase, with dimensions selected that measure the "relative capacity of the candidate to utilize those certain behavior dimensions." The specific assessment simulation exercises and scenarios are then designed based on the skills, knowledge, and abilities identified for the target position so that the desired behavior dimensions for each position can be demonstrated. They are as unique or common as each job is. In some cases, there may be little or no difference between the positions and their respective behavior dimensions, other cases, there may be significant differences between the two positions. In such instances, two sets of exercises (or parts thereof) may need to be used.

QUESTION:

Will candidates who have gone through the process previously have an advantage over those going through the process for the first time?

ANSWER:

Theoretically, any type of competitive testing process gives some advantage to those individuals repeating the test or process. This is as true for an Assessment Center process as it is for a written test to the extent that knowledge of the process involved allows the candidate to know what to expect. However, just as the candidate does not know the specific questions on a written test, the candidate is also unaware of the specific exercise situations utilized in the assessment process.

As a result, it is especially important in such situations that those conducting the Assessment Center process be aware of the fact that an Assessment Center had been previously conducted. It would be even more helpful to know the specific exercises and scenarios utilized in the earlier process so that any similarities in the subsequent testing could be minimized.

QUESTION:

How are the exercises scored?

ANSWER:

The exercises are scored by the assessors using standardized evaluation forms. Each of the three assessors scores each exercise separately and then the total points for all exercises are combined to produce a numeric score. A consensus discussion is conducted according to assessment process guidelines to confirm the consistency of the observations.

QUESTION:

What is a passing score?

ANSWER:

Assessors do not establish a passing score. This is done by the client based upon their own standards. For our purposes there is no passing or failing score, just a numeric score which is used to rank the candidates. Candidates will be listed by assigned letter/number. Scores are also reported for each exercise and dimension.

QUESTION:

What percent or weight should be given to the assessment process if it is a component of a multi-part examination process?

ANSWER:

This is a decision that lies totally with the client and depends upon their own standards. However, it is our belief that the assessment process should be given a greater weight.

QUESTION:

Are individual results available for candidates to use to analyze strengths and potential areas for improvement?

ANSWER:

The final report to the client includes a display of charts for each candidate depicting their individual performance on each exercise and their scores for each dimension measured. These charts compare each of the candidate's scores to the average score for the group assessed. The charts can be used by candidates or supervisors to provide insight into existing strengths and guidance relative to skills and abilities they may choose to further develop to enhance their potential.

QUESTION:

Can the assessment process be used by clients whose form of government requires that only written exams be administered for promotion?

ANSWER:

Those governmental agencies that were previously restricted by the Ohio Revised Code to the use of only written exams should be aware of a recent change in the ORC. Effective 10/25/95 ORC 123.23 was changed to permit a broader range of testing options. Tests may be written, oral, physical, demonstration of skill or an evaluation of training and experiences and shall be designed to fairly test the relative capacity of the persons examined to discharge the particular duties of the position for which appointment is sought.

An Assessment Center process requires job related simulations that are both written and oral in nature. While we can provide a "written evaluation" process by modifying the design of the various exercises, it is not an Assessment Center process and should be considered an exam. In using this approach, great care must be taken to identify issues that will illustrate the strengths and areas for improvement of the candidates and exercise dimensions must be carefully reviewed when listing strengths and areas for improvement.

QUESTION:

Do candidates have the right to inspect the Final Report?

ANSWER:

Everything provided to the client is a public record and is, therefore, open for inspection. However, materials used as part of the assessment center are intellectual property of OACP Advisory Services and are not available for inspection.

QUESTION:

Why is each candidate provided a confidential identifier letter/number and why is their picture taken?

ANSWER:

These are standard procedures in the process that help to insure that anonymity is maintained throughout the process. The identifier letter/number is an identifying indicator for each candidate and is used throughout the process for assessment, evaluation, and scoring purposes. Pictures with code letters are an alternative method of maintaining anonymity.

QUESTION:

Is there a way for candidates to receive information about their performance directly from the lead consultant?

ANSWER:

A brief debriefing is typically held at the end of the assessment center. This provides an important opportunity for the candidates to ask any questions they may have concerning the process. This helps to clarify any misconceptions or misunderstanding of the process. The debriefing is also important because it often provides the assessors with information that can improve their preparation and effectiveness for when they conduct future assessments. However, the purpose of the debriefing is not to give information about a candidate's individual performance.

At an additional cost to the client, the lead Consultant can return after the assessment center to discuss each candidate's performance.

QUESTION:

Who is responsible for conducting background checks?

ANSWER:

The OACP does conduct background investigations. Although often considered an important part of the selection process, it is to be considered it is the responsibility of the client to have any required background checks completed.

QUESTION:

What actions can be taken to safeguard the process from bias?

ANSWER:

The prevention of bias begins with the awareness on the part of the consultant that conducting an assessment is a serious matter and must be completed as professionally as possible. Equally important is the knowledge on the part of each consultant that the perception of bias is often just as serious as actual bias. Consultants are acutely aware that special care must be exercised at all times throughout the assessment process.

Important steps are taken by Advisory Services to prevent bias or the perception of bias. These include the posting of bio's in advance so that candidates can let the client know if they have a concern, the use of consultants who are not within the immediate vicinity of the client, insuring human diversity in assessor selection to reflect the client population and the use of letter identifiers/confidential numbers to maintain the anonymity of the individual candidates. In some instances, especially when an assessment process is conducted for a Police Chief position, the consultants assigned to the process are provided the names of the candidates so that they can excuse themselves from the panel if they know a candidate or candidates.

QUESTION:

What do management studies/organizational reviews conducted by the OACP involve?

ANSWER:

In addition to conducting Assessment Centers, OACP Advisory Services consultants conduct management studies when requested by the chief of police or others responsible for local government. The time and cost depends on the depth and breadth of the study requested. In conducting a management study it is essential team members demonstrate objectivity, fairness, empathy and professionalism. At the conclusion of the study, a written report recognizes areas that are operating in a satisfactory manner and provides recommendations for improvement as noted. The report becomes a "roadmap" for future strategic planning efforts in the department.

QUESTION:

Are Assessment Center records "Public Documents" and how long are they retained?

ANSWER:

All records generated in an Assessment Center that are sent to OACP or to the client are public records and copies must be made available when requested by anyone. Records are retained by OACP for 7 years.
