



Public
Service
Commission

Recruitment and Selection Guide

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1. Context

The *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (GSE Act) has replaced the *Public Service Employment and Management Act 2002*.

The GSE Act modernises the framework for government sector employment and management in NSW. It reflects the NSW Government's commitment to improve the government sector by providing employment arrangements that facilitate high performance, excellent customer service delivery and rewarding careers.

The provisions in the GSE Act strengthen the application of the principle of merit for government sector recruitment and selection processes.

The GSE Act specifically provides for an ethical framework founded on a merit-based, apolitical and professional government sector, and for the inclusion of recruitment and promotion of employees on merit as a government sector core value. In addition, one of the Public Service Commissioner's principle objectives is to ensure that "government sector recruitment and selection processes comply with the merit principle and adhere to professional standards".

The GSE Act provides for the Public Service Commissioner to make Government Sector Employment Rules (GSE Rules) on the recruitment of employees, including the application of the principle of employment on merit. These GSE Rules are instruments made under the GSE Act. It is mandatory for employers and employees in the government sector to comply with the GSE Rules.

Principles-based approach

To support the development of the GSE Rules and application of the merit principle across the sector, the Public Service Commission (PSC) completed a major review of existing recruitment processes in the sector, leading to the development of best practice guidance on merit-based recruitment and selection methodologies. The new principles-based approach to recruitment includes the use of capability-based workforce planning and market analysis to inform recruitment strategy; simplified application processes; capability-based assessment methods; and the development and use of internal and external talent pools. The new approach introduces a fair, rigorous and consistent approach to recruitment.

Together with this approach, the GSE Act requires that employees be assigned to a role and allows for them to be reassigned to other roles over time for organisational or development purposes. Assignment to roles promotes mobility across the sector; broadens employees' capabilities and provides new development opportunities. It also allows agencies to respond quickly to changing government priorities or community needs.

Getting recruitment right has never been more important. Failing to recognise the candidate best suited to the requirements of the role and the longer term capability needs of the agency is a lost opportunity, and selecting an unsuitable candidate is

Investing in a new employee deserves a rigorous and consistent selection process

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an expensive mistake. Poor recruitment costs time, money and effort – for all involved. The costs can be direct (e.g. advertising, remuneration) or indirect (e.g. performance problems, lower team morale, reduced productivity). Investing in a new employee deserves a rigorous and consistent selection process.

The GSE Rules set out the principles to be applied in employment decisions

Purpose

This Recruitment and Selection Guide describes best practice principles that will give managers and recruiters the knowledge to conduct ‘fit for purpose’ recruitment and selection processes to assist in the attraction, selection and retention of the best candidates possible.

2. Merit, Diversity and Ethics

Merit principles

The GSE Rules, rule (16) 2, sets out the following general principle to be applied in employment decisions:

“Any employment decision relating to a role in the Public Service is to be based on an assessment of the capabilities, experience and knowledge of the person concerned against the pre-established standards for the role to determine the person best suited to the requirements of the role and the needs of the relevant Public Service agency.”

A number of more detailed principles underpin the general principle:

- Any recruitment action (whether for ongoing, temporary or casual employment purposes) is to take into account:
 - Long and short term capability needs to meet the objectives of the agency concerned, and
 - Existing workforce capabilities
- Pre-established standards for a role (or role type) are to be expressed as levels against each capability or other requirement for the role or role type;
- Any assessment for a role (or role type) is to include appropriate methods to assess different requirements;
- A person may only be included in a talent pool or employed in a role if the person meets the pre-established standards for the role (or role type) except where a development opportunity is being provided; and
- Any employment decision is to be made on balance taking into account all the results provided by the assessment process.

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Workforce diversity

The GSE Act establishes new arrangements for workforce diversity and amends the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* by removing Part 9A, which previously provided the basis for Equal Opportunity in Public Employment.

The GSE Act provides for workforce diversity employment strategies to be integrated within each agency's workforce planning. The GSE Act provides that:

- Workforce diversity includes, but is not limited to, diversity of the workforce in respect of gender, cultural and linguistic background, Aboriginal people and people with a disability; and
- Agency heads are responsible for workforce diversity within the agency and for ensuring that workforce diversity is integrated into workforce planning for the agency.

For more information please visit [the Equity and Diversity page of the Public Service Commission website.](#)

Ethics

Working in the Public Service requires high standards of behaviour. The principles and guiding ethics are available [on the Public Service Commission Website.](#)

Sections 25 and 30 of the GSE Act state that the Department Secretary and heads of agencies are responsible for implementing the Ethical Framework within agencies.

3. Planning

Workforce planning

Workforce planning requires an understanding of the make-up of the current workforce, investigation into future service needs and analysis of the type and size of workforce required to meet them. To be effective, workforce planning needs to be linked to an organisation's corporate objectives.

Before commencing any recruitment action you need to take into account the broader whole of agency workforce planning approach. That is:

- The capabilities needed to deliver current and future priorities;
- The roles required to deliver on the business outcomes
- The options for re-assignment of employees with the required capabilities (or who would benefit from development in the role) from across the agency; and
- The internal and external market and likely application volumes.

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Role analysis

Most roles are not static; they change and evolve in response to changes in the organisation's legislation, policy, priorities, operating environment or technology. A vacancy in a role provides an opportunity for the role description to be reviewed and updated based on these internal and external factors (i.e. role analysis).

Role analysis is critical to recruitment and selection because it is the foundation of selecting the right candidate who will be able to deliver on the inherent role requirements. Role analysis informs the role description and identifies the assessment standards. A poor role analysis is likely to adversely affect the quality of outcomes, for example, without correct role analysis your panel members may misunderstand the capability requirements of the role, select inappropriate assessment tools to assess capabilities, and hire a person unsuitable for the role.

A comprehensive role analysis requires skill and you may like to involve your human resources representative.



NOTE: The role analysis should be based on regular reviews and predictions of needs and you should consider whether the new role is similar to an existing generic or common role type

Role analysis is critical to recruitment and selection because it is the foundation of a quality process

Role description

A capability-based role description is an essential document because you use it to describe the role, to attract candidates and, most importantly, as a basis for selection.

Role descriptions highlight the core capabilities and, where appropriate, occupation specific capabilities required for a specific role. All 16 core capabilities in the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework in the Personal Attributes, Relationships, Results and Business Enablers groups apply to all Public Service roles, across all grades/bands and all occupations. In addition, four People Management capabilities apply to all Public Service roles responsible for managing others. The level required for each capability depends on the role type and responsibilities.

The capabilities that are considered essential from day one for the effective performance of the role are called "Focus" capabilities (while other capabilities could be developed in reasonable time). Only candidates who meet those Focus capabilities at the required level can be considered for appointment.

The range of assessments you use should measure all 16 core capabilities (as well as the four People Management capabilities for roles responsible for managing others) and more than one assessment method should be used for Focus capabilities (refer to **Selecting assessment methods** on page 10).

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Your human resources representative can assist you to develop a role description that will help you select the right candidate. For more information, please refer to the Role Description Development Guideline, contained on the PSC Capability Framework webpage under 'Tools and Resources'.

www.psc.nsw.gov.au/capability-framework.



NOTE: Refer to **the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework** and role description template for guidance on developing role descriptions which capture your workforce planning requirements. An important principle of the reforms is mobility, supported by common capabilities and roles across the sector. Roles should not be described in unique, specialist terms unless those features are inherent to the core requirements of the job.

A capability-based role description is an essential document because you use it to describe the role, to attract candidates and, most importantly, as a basis for selection

Employment kinds

Once you have established that the role is necessary and that funds are available, a vacant role can be filled in a number of ways.

Employment as a Public Service non-executive employee may be any one of the following kinds of employment:

- Ongoing employment
- Temporary employment
- Casual employment

Employment as a Public Service Senior Executive may be either one of the following kinds of employment:

- Ongoing employment
- Term employment

The kind of employment chosen will depend on the nature of the work to be done and whether it is ongoing or for a defined term or project. Consideration should be given to the existing workforce for reassignment.

Ways to recruit

Once roles are created, there are two considerably different ways to recruit. You may either advertise an individual vacancy when it arises (e.g. specialist roles with specific technical knowledge and capabilities) or use a department-wide or sector-wide talent pool (e.g. for common role types with generic transferable capabilities ranging from executives and managers to administrative, policy and project officers).

Find more information on **Talent pools** on page 11.

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Comparative and suitability assessments

If you have decided to employ a person in ongoing employment or in temporary employment for over six months, you will need to undertake a comparative assessment.

If you have decided to employ a person in short term (up to six months) temporary or term employment, and you are absolutely certain the employment will not exceed that length, you can undertake a suitability assessment (at a minimum). However, if there is any possibility that you may want to extend the temporary or term employee or convert the temporary or term employee to ongoing employment after six months you should undertake a comparative assessment after external advertising and on the employee's most recent performance under the performance management system.

There are two main differences between comparative and suitability assessments: the number of capability-based assessments required and whether the assessment is against the claims of other people or not.

Comparative assessment

If you have decided to employ a person in ongoing employment, or temporary or term employment of over six months, you will need to undertake a comparative assessment. A comparative assessment is also used to include a person into a talent pool.

A comparative assessment for a role is the process of assessing an individual's claim against the pre-established standards for the role (or role type); and the claims of other people for the role.

The process includes:

- Pre-screening for essential requirements such as a qualification or licence;
- An application and resume review;
- At least three capability-based assessments, one of which is an interview; and
- Referee checks against the pre-established standards for the role (or role type).

The comparative assessment must be conducted by at least two assessors and all assessors should base their consideration of recommended candidates on the results of all phases of the process.

If there is any possibility of extending a temporary or term employee after six months you should undertake a comparative assessment at the outset

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Suitability assessment

If you have decided to employ a person in a short term (up to six months) temporary or term employment and you are absolutely certain the employment will not exceed that length, you will need to undertake a suitability assessment at a minimum (you may also choose to conduct a comparative assessment).



NOTE: : In the case of a person whose employment in any such temporary or term employment is based on a suitability assessment, the person cannot continue in that employment after six months unless a comparative assessment for the role is completed after advertising across the Public Service.

So if there is any possibility that you may want to extend the temporary or term employee or convert the temporary or term employee to ongoing employment after six months you should undertake a comparative assessment at the outset.

A suitability assessment is the process of assessing an individual against the pre-established standards for a role or role type (and not against other applicants).

The process includes:

- Pre-screening for essential requirements such as a qualification or licence;
- A resume review;
- At least two capability-based assessments, one of which is an interview; and
- Referee checks against the pre-established standards for the role or role type.

The suitability assessment can be undertaken by a single assessor who should take into consideration the results of all phases of the process.

Recruitment strategy

Whether you are recruiting to an individual vacancy (e.g. a specialist role with specific technical knowledge and capabilities) or to form a department-wide or sector-wide talent pool (e.g. for common role types with transferable capabilities ranging from executives and managers to roles in occupations such as administration, policy and project management) you need to plan the recruitment and selection process from beginning to end with the aim of attracting the best possible candidates and managing them through the process.

Appropriate planning includes considering likely applications volumes and relevant capability-based assessments; and scheduling the activity, resources and

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time to support the process. Planning is an important aspect in the recruitment and selection process as it helps manage time constraints and streamlines the process for both the organisation and applicant.

Good planning also positively affects an applicant's experience of the recruitment and selection process and their view of the agency.

One assessment activity can serve to assess several capabilities



NOTE: Executive Search

The PSC has established an Executive Search pre-qualification panel of suppliers who can offer a suite of executive recruitment services from sourcing and screening through to assessment, selection and offer negotiation. To meet GSE requirements, all suppliers on this contract have been screened to ensure they have the capacity to develop and deliver a range of suitable assessments aligned with the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework. This will ensure all candidates recommended for employment have undertaken the required number of capability-based assessments and have been assessed against the Capability Framework.

Suppliers are to provide a recommendation report to the client agency including outcomes of assessments.

Selecting Assessment methods

An effective assessment process collects as much objective evidence as possible to assess candidates' claims. Some common assessment methods, such as years of experience and unstructured interviews, are not as reliable as other assessment tools. Any assessment for a role is to include a range of appropriate methods to assess the different requirements of the role.

The assessment methods you select should be defensible in that they will:

- Accurately measure the candidate's capability levels against the capability levels required for the role (validity)
- Consistently administer and measure across the whole candidate pool, candidate's performance on the capabilities required for the role (reliability)

Capability-based assessments can include methods such as personality and behavioural testing, cognitive ability testing, behavioural interviews, work samples, group exercises, and role plays. There is no single tool or method that is best suited to assess all capabilities and some tools are only useful for assessing very specific behaviours within the capabilities. A mix of 'fit for purpose' tools should be chosen to provide information across the range of capabilities. Refer to [the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework](#).

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A capability-based assessment has the potential to assess a range of capabilities in one activity. Capabilities can be assessed at different stages of the recruitment process. All capabilities will need to be assessed during the recruitment process using at least one method. However, more than one assessment method should be used for testing the focus capabilities.

A minimum of two capability-based assessments should be used to assess the 'focus' capabilities (i.e. the capabilities the person employed is required to demonstrate at the specified level from the outset in the role) to ensure that a reasonable amount of information is collected. This means that the successful candidate must have demonstrated that they meet those capabilities but may require some development to reach the required standard for one or more of the other capabilities. Where this occurs, this development need should be incorporated in their performance agreement on commencement. The choice of Focus capabilities may vary from one selection exercise to the next, to reflect factors such as organisational priorities or team capability mix.

It is not necessary to develop separate assessments for every capability as selection methods can be used to measure multiple capabilities simultaneously. For example, for high volume or bulk recruitment campaigns, capability-based assessments can be used as culling tools to assess some key capabilities (Think and Solve Problems' and 'Deliver Results' could be assessed via a cognitive ability test) before proceeding with a smaller pool of candidates to more resource intensive assessments such as a behavioural interview.

To assist agencies, the PSC has established an Assessment Services panel contract of suppliers who will offer a suite of assessment tools and services using the NSW Public Service Capability Framework. Agencies can draw upon these suppliers to provide a suite of capability-based assessments to meet specific assessment needs for recruitment. If in-house expertise is not available, the panel contract also includes consulting and advisory services to support agencies in selecting the most appropriate capability-based assessment tools for their recruitment activity.

Talent pools

While hiring managers are accustomed to advertising an individual vacancy, it may be more beneficial to choose a candidate from a talent pool. Establishing department-wide or sector-wide talent pools for common role types with generic transferable capabilities will improve the speed of appointment to vacancies and mobility arrangements within departments or agencies and across the sector. Specialist roles with specific technical knowledge and capabilities may still require individual advertising or alternatively additional assessment against those specific capabilities.

A talent pool is a group of suitable candidates (whether or not existing Public Service employees) who have been assessed against capabilities at certain levels.

Establishing talent pools will improve the speed of appointment and mobility arrangements across the sector

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Agencies can search the talent pool for candidates who have the required set of capabilities at the required level for a particular role.

Using a talent pool enables you to source a candidate without advertising every time a vacancy occurs. You can either directly appoint from the pool without further assessment (for example, to fill a shorter term vacancy), or conduct a capability-based behavioural interview with one or more candidates from the pool to ensure a fit with organisational, team and role requirements (and/or additional assessment for agency, role specific or specialist requirements – this is recommended for longer term or ongoing vacancy). This considerably reduces the time and costs associated with advertising.

A talent pool can be established for a specific period of time but a person cannot be in a pool for longer than 12 months following the completion of the comparative assessment that was the basis for their inclusion in the pool. Talent pools will be created as a result of recruitment action at public service, department or agency level.

You don't have to rely only on pools established across the NSW Public Service. Your agency or a group of agencies across government with common interests can also create pools. Both skills shortages and frequently recruited roles can be better managed by using talent pools. If it is difficult to find accountants or if you often need project officers, then you can create a pool and select from that pool as needed.

However, if you want to access an existing talent pool you should seek your human resources representative's assistance.

Assessment panel

For a comparative assessment, more than one assessor must be involved and the panel should be made up of the following:

- One independent member who works outside of the employment area or division;
- One male and one female member, wherever possible;
- Persons reflective of the types of applicants who are likely to apply including representation from diversity groups; and
- A hiring manager who should be of a higher grade than the role being recruited unless the hiring manager is a qualified human resources or recruitment representative.
- Ideally, other panel members need to be at the same grade of the role being recruited or higher

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Depending on the nature of the recruitment, additional panel members may be included where appropriate.

4. Advertising



NOTE: The following process must be used to advertise an individual vacancy when establishing a talent pool or a for bulk recruitment campaigns.

The full functionality of the jobs.nsw e-Recruitment system must be used for all roles

jobs.nsw.gov.au

The NSW Government's online e-Recruitment system, known as jobs.nsw (Oracle Taleo), provides a central portal for NSW Public Service agencies. The system supports the new principles-based approach to recruitment, which includes simplified application processes; capability-based assessment methods; the development and use of internal and external talent pools; and the collection of data vital to meeting changing workplace needs.

This means that the full functionality of the jobs.nsw system must be used for the creation, approval, advertising and filling of all NSW Public Service roles.

The system offers the following functionality:

- Creates vacancy and role details
- Workflows approvals
- Uploads generic and customised role descriptions
- Generates advertisements
- Allows essential requirements (disqualification questions) to be set up
- Gives access to applications and interview schedules
- Contains both shortlist and assessment worksheets
- Generates related correspondence
- Tracks progress and results
- Produces agency, department and whole-of-government reports

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Hiring managers and panel members should, wherever possible, use the full jobs.nsw functionality. Your human resources representative can assist you with this process and your system access.

An advertisement will be more successful if you target the right candidates

Prepare advertisement

An advertisement will be more successful if you target the right candidates. An effective job advertisement is one that is written clearly with the aim of attracting the best qualified candidates for your role. It is important to know your target audience, and include the benefits that would appeal to that particular group.

Think of your advertisement like a funnel where initially you are casting the net out wide to a broad audience. Then as applicants make their way through your advertisement, they are either self-removing from the process or they are mentally ticking all the boxes because they can actually picture themselves in the role. In the end you only want suitable candidates to apply.

Jobs NSW is the main career portal for the posting of advertisements. Other selected media can include on-line career boards, specialist publications, social networks and even emails to potential candidates. If you decide to use media other than the jobs.nsw or on-line career boards you will need to refer to the government advertising policy [government advertising policy](#).

The advertisement should:

- Be written specifically for the target audience
- Capture the candidate's attention with the headline;
- Be interesting, engaging and actively sell the role in the first few lines;
- Highlight the benefits;
- Include sentences that are short and to the point, providing enough information to interest candidates but not to overload them (consider external candidates*);
- Accurately describe the duties and the pre-established standards (that is, the capability, knowledge and experience standards) of the role; and
- Ask for a cover letter, and where applicable include a short statement in response to one or two targeted questions and a resume (per simplified application section on page 16).

The advertisement should reflect the Role Description and therefore shouldn't include unnecessary specialist requirements as it restricts the pool of applicants and inhibits mobility. For instance, essential requirements may include qualifications, certifications and registrations, employment screening and health checks. For more information, please refer to the Role Description Development

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Guideline, contained on the PSC Capability Framework webpage under ‘Tools and Resources’. (<http://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/sector-support/capability-framework>).

*** External candidates**

2012 data from the e-Recruitment system (**Jobs NSW**) shows that over 70 per cent of advertised roles were filled by existing NSW public servants (85 per cent at manager level). Further, 57 per cent of these were filled by an applicant from within the advertising agency and 86 per cent from within the originating cluster. Note that these statistics would be higher again if entry level roles were removed from the calculations.

Sourcing candidates externally brings in new perspectives, improves diversity and opens up new opportunities for organisations and staff alike, so it is important when advertising roles not to place unnecessary barriers in the way.

Expressions of interest (EOI)

Advertisements for EOI for secondment opportunities are displayed on **Taleo**. These are created by your human resources representative through the jobs.nsw system.

For further information on secondments refer to **Part 6 of the GSE Rules**.

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Simplified application

Candidates are not required to write a statement addressing individual selection criteria (note: it is not a legal requirement). Your advertisement should invite prospective candidates to respond with:

- A one page covering letter, including (where applicable) a short statement in response to no more than two targeted questions* (to provide evidence of experience against role capabilities); and
- A resume/curriculum vitae (CV).

The aim of targeted questions is to gather evidence of a candidate's experience and capability at the required level against the role's Focus" Capabilities

* Targeted questions

Targeted questions are questions based on the level of capabilities (knowledge, skill and abilities) required for the role. The aim of targeted questions is to gather evidence of a candidate's experience and capability at the required level against the role's Focus Capabilities (refer Section 3 - [role description](#) on page 6). This is done by asking the candidate to describe actual examples of when they used specific capabilities.

Targeted questions are used as a tool to identify how a candidate's experience in a previous role or situation may contribute to their performance in the role. These questions will usually start with phrases such as:

- Give an example of a situation where...
- Describe a scenario...

Contact person

The contact person should be:

- Knowledgeable about the role, capabilities, standards and other attributes required of the best suited candidate;
- Readily available to answer enquiries during normal working hours; and
- Receptive to enquiries from all sections of the community and reasonable adjustment considerations.

Posting to jobs.nsw

Once the advertisement and link to the role description (based on the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework) is ready it is posted on jobs.nsw, the NSW

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Government's career portal. For this and all e-Recruitment processes your human resources representative can assist you.

Priority assessment

Posting the role on jobs.nsw commences the priority assessment process.

All role vacancies, except those for exempt positions, are made available to agency case managers before advertising for excess employee redeployment role matching.

During this matching period, case managers identify vacancies that match the skills and experience of excess employees. They refer matched excess employees to the recruiting agency for a priority assessment.

When excess employees are matched to roles, you will suspend action to advertise until the excess employees have been assessed for their suitability for the role. If an excess employee is assessed as suitable there will be no need to advertise the role.

More information can be found in the [Case Management and Redeployment Guidelines](#).

Advertise role

If no excess employees are matched to the role at the conclusion of the matching period, the role is posted for advertising or filled from a talent pool.

The contact person named in the advertisement will be required to respond to potential candidates' enquiries with information about the role, the workplace environment, working conditions and the agency.

5. Selecting

Using the jobs.nsw system

In developing your recruitment strategy you would have considered what capabilities to assess at different stages of the assessment process. To assist the panel to work more effectively, you can access a shortlist worksheet and an assessment report (which charts each applicant against each capability and assessment method to be used) available in the jobs.nsw system. This template contains space for comments, and candidate assessments/recommendations can be included.

There are two ways the assessment process can be conducted:

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5.1 Panel assessment process

5.2 Assessment centre process

The assessment process you select may depend on whether the panel is assessing for an individual specialist role such as a research analyst, engineer or psychologist; or for the creation of a talent pool for common role types ranging from executives and managers to administrative, policy and project officers, which can be accessed by agencies when they need to fill roles.

There are two ways the assessment process can be conducted i.e. a panel assessment or assessment centre

5.1 Panel assessment process

This process includes:

- Pre-screening for essential requirements such as a qualification or licence;
- Application and resume review;
- Two to three capability-based assessments*, one of which is an interview; and
- Referee checks against the pre-established standards for the role or role type.

This approach allows the full spectrum of capabilities for the role to be assessed using different tools or methods, and at different stages of the assessment process.

Pre-screening

The online application process in jobs.nsw allows two forms of pre-screening questions:

- The first is for essential requirements such as a qualification or licence and is called “disqualification questions”. If the candidate does not meet one or more of the disqualification questions it would not be possible for the candidate to progress with the application.

Essential role requirements may include qualifications and certifications (where necessary to practice), licensing and registration. In some cases knowledge and experience requirements may be included if they are critical to successful performance in the role, cannot be met by transferrable capabilities in other roles and cannot be developed “on the job” within a reasonable period of time.

- The second form of pre-screening can take the form of targeted questions or gathering additional information to determine role suitability. If the candidate does not respond to the targeted questions the Panel may decide not to consider the application further.

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Application and resume review

Assessing a resume involves reading the cover letter (including responses to targeted questions) and resume to evaluate the candidate against the role requirements.

Know what you are looking for

Understand what you want to read in the cover letter (including responses to targeted questions) and resume so you can focus on that. If you understand the key things you are looking for you can more easily identify these and skim through other less important information.

Essentially, you need to look for evidence of a candidate's experience and capability against the "focus" capabilities that are considered essential from day one for the effective performance of the role. The aim is to look for specific examples in the cover letter and resume of when a candidate used these "focus" capabilities and gather evidence that the candidate's experience and capability is at the required level (refer Section 3 - **role description** on page 6). Be careful to take a broad view of "relevant experience", looking for comparable functions rather than experience in the specific content area.

In many cases, you may need to introduce a capability-based assessment, such as an online psychometric assessment, as a progressive culling tool to reduce candidate pool numbers as the application and resume review alone may not cull candidates.

Red flags

The resume should also be reviewed for more subtle subjective qualities of the candidate. There are a number of red flags that should be noted and questioned as part of any pre-screening with the candidate. Some of these red flags are easy to spot such as gaps in employment, job hopping, multiple job changes in a short period of time, using years instead of months/years for employment history and noting a college and/or degree program without indicating graduation. While there are many valid reasons for some of these things, they should generate follow up questions for the candidate if they appear to be otherwise suitable for further consideration.

At least three capability-based assessments*, one of which is an interview

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***Capability-based assessments**

Your assessment panel must use a range of assessments to determine the person who has the capabilities, experience and knowledge best suited to the requirements of the role and the needs of the agency. Capabilities can be assessed at different stages of the recruitment process.

The number of capability-based assessments required is a minimum of at least two for a suitability assessment (one of which is an interview) and at least three for a comparative assessment (one of which is an interview).

As discussed in Section 3 (**role description** on page 6) you will need to assess all 16 core capabilities plus four “People Management” capabilities where relevant and, where appropriate, occupation specific capability sets. All capabilities including the “focus” capabilities are outlined in the capability summary of the role description, together with their required level.

It is not necessary to develop separate assessments for every capability as selection methods can be used to measure multiple capabilities simultaneously. For example, the capabilities ‘Communicate Effectively’, ‘Plan and Prioritise’ and ‘Influence and Negotiate’ could be assessed via a role play. The capabilities ‘Think and Solve Problems’ and ‘Deliver Results’ could be assessed via a cognitive ability test. However, more than one assessment method should be used for Focus capabilities. You may require your human resources representative’s assistance with selecting the types of assessments to use and aligning them to the capabilities you are assessing. Alternatively, the PSC has established an Assessment Services Panel Contract of suppliers who will offer a suite of assessment tools and services using the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework as highlighted in Section 3 (**Selecting assessment methods** on page 10).

Common forms of assessments are described below:

Online assessments

Online assessments are a common way of gathering important information about candidates’ capabilities, personal values and attributes, with minimal inconvenience to candidates. Candidates do not have to take time away from current employment as the assessments can be completed out of hours or at home.

By testing aptitudes using cognitive ability tests such as abstract thinking and verbal and numerical reasoning, you can get measures of various abilities such as problem solving, critical thinking and aptitude to learn certain tasks.

Cognitive ability tests are commonly used because of their reliability in identifying role performance. Because these assessments are completed

An assessment panel must use a range of assessments to determine the person best suited to the requirements of the role

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online in an unsupervised setting, a further validation test is completed by the candidate at interview under supervision.

Work samples

Work sample assessments may be set as a means of gathering information on candidates' experience and capabilities. Work samples can be designed to test a number of skills. For example, a work sample that involves the applicant analysing a document and providing a summary of key issues can assess conceptual and analytical ability and communication skills. Verbal presentations simulate other role requirements and will give an indication of other capabilities.



NOTE: Work sample assessments may be conducted as part of the interview or maybe undertaken as part of an assessment centre (further information relating to assessment centres is detailed on page 23).

Interview questions can be improved significantly by using behavioural questions as they elicit examples of the candidate's previous behaviour

Structured behavioural interviews

The structured interview has been found to have a better predictive validity (i.e. is a better predictor of work performance) than a traditional interview as it allows multiple interviewers to rate candidates in a consistent, standardised manner. However, interview questions can be improved significantly by using behavioural questions. It is called a behavioural interview because the questions are designed to elicit examples of the candidate's previous behaviour as opposed to just their knowledge or opinions.

The technique typically involves citing situations or the type of work relevant to the role and asking candidates to give examples of like work or similar situations from their own experience and how they approached them, what they did and what were the results.

The focus of the structured behavioural interview must be on assessing the required capabilities and other requirements of the role with the aim of determining the candidate's claims to meet them. Each question should ideally assess no more than 2 capabilities to gather enough behavioural information to assess candidates appropriately.

Multi-mini interviews

Another form of behavioural interview is the multi-mini interview (MMI). The MMI is an interview format that uses many short independent assessments (behavioural questions), typically in a timed circuit, to obtain an aggregate score of each candidate's capabilities. Capabilities to assess

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could include their ability to communicate effectively; influence and negotiate; think and solve problems; plan and prioritise; and deliver results.

The MMI usually consists of approximately six interview stations consisting of timed (six-minute) interview scenarios. Applicants rotate through the stations, each with its own interviewer and scenario. These interview rotations combined should not take any longer than a traditional interview.

Each panel member conducts a review and assesses on specific capabilities, rather than sitting as one panel to assess all at once.

Traditional interviews can be influenced by inherent biases, expectations, and perspectives of the interviewers. By using multiple “raters” to assess candidates, candidate performance is evaluated through multiple assessments by multiple assessors, creating a fairer and less biased process. Candidates who do poorly on one interview station have the opportunity to perform better on another.

Referee checks

Referee information is an equally important aspect of fact finding about the applicant and should be considered together with the application, resume, interview and other selection tools used, when making a decision. Often panels fall into the trap of using referee information to confirm a decision they have already made regarding their preferred applicant or simply leave it up to the hiring manager.

The panel must conduct rigorous ‘fit-for-purpose’ reference checking (360 degree where possible*) to verify the employment and performance claims of candidates against the pre-established standards for the role.

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***360 degree reference checks**

Reference checks are used to confirm and cross check information gathered from capability based selection methods and to clarify any concerns raised during the selection process. Reference checks can be used to confirm the capability assessment results if you ask respondents for actual examples of behaviour.

Although the standard form of reference checking is to seek information from 2 of the candidate's direct supervisors, it is best practice to use a 360 degree reference check.

This means conducting referee checks not only with supervisors but with direct reports, peers, and stakeholders who have regular contact with the candidate, ideally 2 from each category. To obtain valid results, it is important to select referees who have good knowledge of the candidate and will provide an objective assessment of their capabilities.

Additional referees may be sought from the candidate if the panel is not satisfied with those nominated by a candidate.

Compare assessments

Whichever assessment tools are used, assemble the information as you proceed to build a reliable picture. Where information is not consistent, gather more detail if necessary to find out what is accurate. Be aware that even agreement between two referees may not be as reliable as independent evidence, for example a skills test.

Your responsibility is to make a recommendation on the best suited candidate, and you should keep gathering information until you are confident of your selection.

5.2 Assessment centre process

An assessment centre is a process of combining multiple assessment activities and can be used for campaigns with large volumes of candidates, for example, recruitment to talent pools or to facilitate bulk or cyclical recruitment.

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NOTE: Assessments are generally valid for 12 months and a person may be included in a talent pool for no longer than the period of 12 months following the completion of the comparative assessment. Please consult with your assessment services supplier for specific information on the tenure of particular assessments.

How they work

Assessment centres usually follow after the initial short-listing stages of the assessment process, i.e. cover letter and resume review and any online assessments. Each assessment centre is specifically designed for either a particular role or for a common role type with transferable capabilities; in order to assess candidates' performance against the capabilities, knowledge and experience standards for the role.

A typical assessment centre incorporates a range of assessments in which a candidate's performance is observed and rated by a team of qualified assessors. Role experts should participate in the design of assessment centre activities as they understand what the role requires.

This approach also allows the full spectrum of capabilities for the role to be assessed using different tools or methods, but typically conducted in one session.

At the beginning of the assessment centre, candidates receive an initial briefing about the organisation and the structure of the day.

Common forms of assessments include:

Group exercises

The group exercise (sometimes called the 'group discussion') is a common assessment centre activity. A group of candidates work together to perform an activity while being watched by assessors. The assessors will make notes and score the candidates based on their respective contributions to the exercise.

Job knowledge tests

Job knowledge tests evaluate technical or professional expertise and knowledge required for specific roles or professions. Examples of job knowledge tests include tests of basic accounting principles.

Role plays

A role-play exercise is an assessment activity where candidates are allocated a scenario that closely mirrors a situation that could occur in the role they have applied for.

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Work samples

As described in section 5.1.

Filling roles from talent pools

If the assessment centre is for the purpose of creating a talent pool, then there may also be a subsequent suitability interview to ensure fit with organisational, team and role requirements (and/or additional assessments for agency or role specific requirements) conducted by the agency accessing the pool.

Making a recruitment decision means all panel members consider all phases of the assessment process, including referee reports

6 Appointing

Recommendation

Making a recruitment decision means all panel members consider all phases of the assessment process, including referee reports. All members of the panel have equal participation rights in discussions. The information collected about the candidates through the assessment process should be considered in a structured and systematic manner and then thoroughly evaluated against the predetermined role standards (as detailed in the role description).

The panel's decision is reached after all the information obtained about the candidates has been considered. The role of the panel is to determine the best suited candidate to the requirements of the role, taking into account other factors such as team fit and longer term capability needs of the agency concerned.

The assessment panel then prepares a report that recommends the preferred candidate to the delegate who has the authority to make the decision to appoint. The report summarises the process that was undertaken and should specify the following information:

- The reasons, against the pre-established standards for the role or role type, for the recommendation(s) to employ or appoint the preferred candidate(s);
- An assessment of the other candidates, identifying for each where their capabilities were not considered as meritorious as the recommended candidate(s); and
- How the pre-established standards were assessed.

In the case where panel members are unable to make a unanimous recommendation, the hiring manager may submit a hiring manager's report and the other member/s may submit an alternative report to the department head or delegate.

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Screening checks

Various employment screening checks may need to be conducted, for example:

- Police checks
- Child safety screening
- Service checks
- Academic qualification checks
- Professional membership confirmation

The types of checks undertaken will be determined by the essential role requirements.

Successful candidate(s) - offer

Once the delegate has approved the recommendation, an offer can be made to the successful candidate. The offer can initially be made verbally, but must be confirmed in writing.

Unsuccessful candidate(s) - feedback

You or your human resources representative should ensure that unsuccessful candidates are promptly advised of their status as it occurs throughout the recruitment process.

It is most important that the hiring manager offers post-selection feedback to unsuccessful candidates. Feedback is valuable for candidates who are keen to understand what would help them be successful for another role.

Onboarding, induction, performance management and development

Given the effort and cost associated with selection, steps need to be taken to ensure the new employee is retained. The first of these steps are making work-related adjustments for people with a disability and conducting an effective induction program.

Onboarding and induction should be immediately linked to performance management, i.e. the new employee's assessment results should be the basis for future development from day one of their appointment and should be included as part their performance management program. This is essential if the successful candidate did not meet the required standards for one or more of the non-focus capabilities.

For more information on Managing for Performance visit [the PSC website](#).



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