



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Careers Service

Preparing for Assessment Centres

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Inspiring futures



Start with the logistics

- **Dress code** is business professional (unless told otherwise)
- Take a **watch** to keep your own track of time
- Keep the organisation's **contact information handy**

In-person

- Know where you're going and plan your route – if you plan to use public transport, identify a back-up and **aim to arrive early**

Digital

- **Test your technology** in advance – video, microphone, explore the platform you'll be using on the day
- How you come across: background / lighting / sound



Assess Centres: What can you expect?

To be assessed on your performance in a **range** of activities – against predetermined criteria

- Group exercises
- Case study / written analysis
- In-tray exercises
- Presentation
- Role play (indiv. or group)
- Psychometric tests
- Interview
- Social:
 - Tour
 - Meet staff
 - Lunch / dinner + drinks



Remember:

Work with, not against, the other candidates

You will succeed if
your team succeeds!

(Not a competition with other candidates)



Assess Centres: What can you expect?



Overload



Ambiguity



Conflict



Practise tests!

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [ed.ac.uk/careers/students/undergraduates/make-it-happen/selection-tests](https://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/students/undergraduates/make-it-happen/selection-tests). The page features a purple header with the text 'CAREERS SERVICE'. A left-hand navigation menu includes 'Careers Service home', 'Students', 'Undergraduates', and a 'Make it happen' section with sub-items: 'Plan your approach', 'Write CVs and applications', 'Selection tests' (highlighted), and 'Interviews and assessment centres'. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Careers > Students > Undergraduates > Make it happen > Selection tests'. The title is 'Selection tests'. The text explains that aptitude tests, or psychometric tests, are commonly used in recruitment. It notes that employers use these tests to assess reasoning skills. The most common tests, verbal reasoning and numerical reasoning, assess logical reasoning skills. A button labeled 'Practise tests here (University of Edinburgh login)' is visible. Below this, a section titled 'How to succeed' lists three bullet points: 'Practise! Familiarity with different sorts of questions will improve your speed and accuracy.', 'You'll need to concentrate, so do the tests somewhere you won't be disturbed.', and 'If possible, work out how much time you'll have for each question, and keep track of your time and as accurately as you can. Many tests are designed to put you under pressure. If you are str...'. Further down, it mentions 'Many other sites include **free practice tests** (they also invite you to pay to access more) and these Day's practice tests and advice on how to approach them include verbal and numerical reasoning'. Links for 'Assessment Day' and 'JobTestPrep' are provided. At the bottom, it suggests trying a free test from AptitudeTest.com to know typing speed and accuracy.

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<https://www.ed.ac.uk/careers/students/undergraduates/make-it-happen/selection-tests>



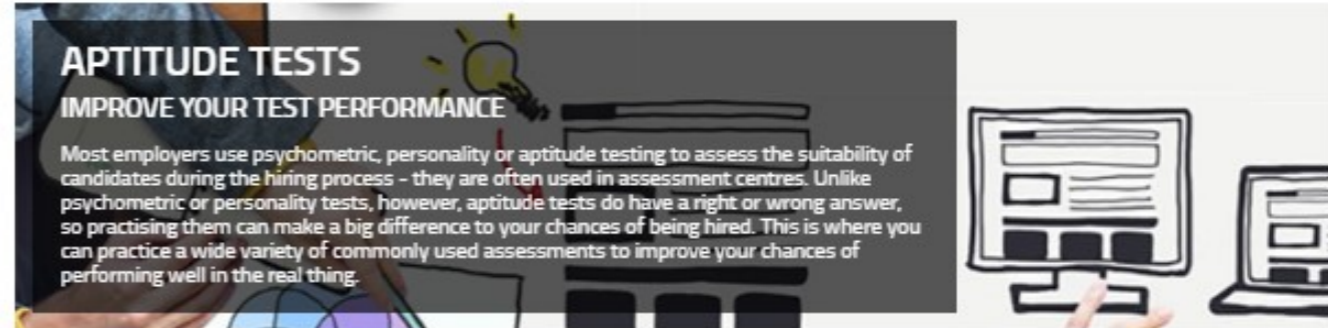
Practise – and find out about yourself



Use [Careers Service Plus](#) to

- Learn about yourself
- See how it feels to be timed
- Explore the test types

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Your Progress 0%

A magnifying glass over a circular arrangement of colorful numbers. Numerical Test 1 Take Test	A glowing blue sphere with numbers and lines. Numerical Test 2 Take Test	A blue background with various numbers and mathematical symbols. Numerical Test 3 Take Test	A blue speech bubble on a brown background. Verbal Test 1 Take Test
A white speech bubble on a wooden background. Verbal Test 2 Take Test	A purple and pink profile of a head with sound waves. Verbal Test 3 Take Test	A blue brain with light rays emanating from it. Inductive Test 1 Take Test	A white head with a glowing orange and yellow brain inside. Inductive Test 2 Take Test

Identify your group work roles

Which role do you take?

- Do you come up with ideas?
- Are you a researcher?
- A confident speaker?
- A note-taker and thinker?
- The cheerleader who gets everyone to the finish line?

Respect everyone's unique contribution.

Team tasks are observed by several assessors and designed to see how you collaborate, there is no discussion 'winner'.



Prepare for making group decisions

For success in group activities, your aim is to find consensus:

- **Listen** actively to all opinions, regardless of how different they are, it's not a popularity contest – find compromises where possible
- **Invite** quieter members to contribute and/or speak up
- Consider methods for doing this in digital settings
- Establish a **method of making your decision** early in your discussion, *e.g. assessing your recommendations against a criteria checklist.*
 - Try a SWOT analysis: **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**
 - Voting can work but should not be your default method as it is often resorted to at the last minute when running out of time – incorporate it fully if used
 - Ask questions if you don't understand to prompt valuable discussion



Advice – employers

Institute of
Student
Employers

ise.

"People most commonly fail due to:

- *Poor preparation of any reading material;*
- *Lack of knowledge about the sector/company;*
- *Lack of understanding of role;*
- *Bad at rapport building;*
- *Not clarifying task instructions;*
- *Running out of planning time;*
- *Nerves;*
- *Being derailed by one bad performance or one bad person in group."*

– Institute of Student Employers



Advice – an employer

- *“Be yourself;*
- *Talk to the other candidates and build relationships – ideally before the formal start of the day (e.g. waiting at the start) – in order to support one another;*
- *Use candidates’ names;*
- *Participate – quiet people need to push themselves to speak – but...*
- *...do not talk too much (verbose/talkative candidates should push themselves to listen – communication is a two-way process);*
“It is not the case that the candidate who speaks the most/loudest is the best; it is about quality of contribution, not quantity!” [RBS Recruiter];

Advice – an employer

- *Do not view the other candidates as competitors – RBS are looking for how individuals perform **in a team** – “They win: you win” [RBS recruiter];*
- *Prioritise: identify the key issues and give them priority;*
- *Facilitate – take note of time, ask others’ opinion, use open questions and summarise;*
- *Don’t be afraid to challenge constructively;*
- *Ensure that as a group you complete the task.”*

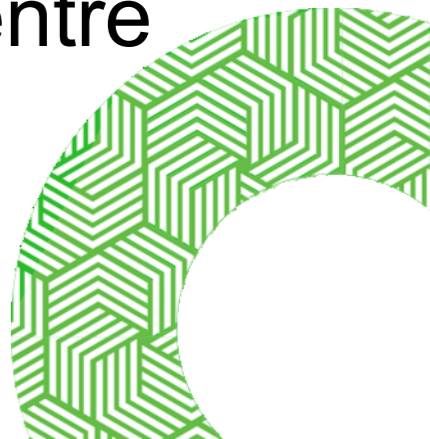


Advice – students

“I'd say the advice you gave me before I went was incredibly useful - "If you cannot do, facilitate". I took that to heart during the team task, and I think I was offered my current job in large part because of how I performed on that task.

*Also, I'd say **try no take it too seriously**. Perhaps that's not what people want to hear, but I found it fairly easy to tell those at the assessment centre who thought that getting that particular job was absolutely vital to having a successful happy working life. By and large, these people didn't get it.”*

– 2015/16 Civil Graduate; *Thames Water Assessment Centre*



Advice – students

"I honestly came out of that assessment centre thinking I had messed it up. Some aspects were really tough...

During some of the questions I felt like I went off at a tangent, and during the technical interview there were questions I really didn't know the answer to...

And so I suppose when you're worried and under pressure you tend to analyse everything you did wrong rather than look at the positives. But I guess you never really know with assessment centres like these - anything could happen. They said I 'had a really good day', so I thought they must have got me confused!"

– 2016/17 Mechanical Finalist; Rolls-Royce Assessment Centre



Feedback – graduate

“My presentation went well and had that and my interview as soon as I arrived. The written exercise was fine but it was handwritten – something I haven't done for an exam in a few years.

We also had a speed networking (8 minutes each) with the director of JLL Scotland which I actually think went quite well. And then the group exercise went as you said it would, one person was taking over, one girl was sat silent and I tried to mediate and think it went pretty well. Then in the evening there was the networking event that was good as I got to talk to the current graduates and two of them are like me from a non-property background.

– Philosophy Graduate; JLL Assessment Centre (2018)



ed.ac.uk/careers/students/undergraduates/make-it-happen/interviews-assessment-centres

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- Interview formats; how to prepare and practise
- Interview types; how to prepare
- After your interview
- Assessment centres

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Contact us

Ask a student

Interviews and assessment centres

How to prepare and practise for interviews. What to expect, and how to do well, at assessment centres.

Interview formats; how to prepare and practise

How to improve your chances of success at interview. Find out about the preparation you should do and the ways you can practise.

Interview types; how to prepare

An introduction to common types of interview including competency, strengths based, case and technical interviews, and the formats in which you might encounter them.

After your interview

Advice about handling job offers and dealing with rejection, and the benefits of reflecting on this experience

Assessment centres

What to expect at assessment centres, types of exercise, and top tips for performing well

This article was published on 12 Oct, 2020

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Questions?



Good luck

in your assessment centres.

