

Capabilities commonly assessed using work samples exercises

On this page

[Group exercise](#)

[Role play](#)

[Case study](#)

[In-tray exercises](#)

[Written exercises](#)

Some capabilities are generally suited to being assessed in different types of work sample exercises.

The following examples show these capabilities and why they are suited to the different work sample activities, including:

- [group exercise](#)
- [role play](#)
- [case study](#)
- [in-tray exercise](#)
- [written exercise](#).

For quick reference refer to the [matrix for capabilities commonly assessed using work sample exercises](#). This can be used as a guide or tailored to your own needs.

Decisions about the content of the activity should be based on the capabilities to be assessed. There may be additional capabilities that can be covered or some that are listed which may not apply in certain circumstances. In addition, the example of behaviours that you may be looking for should be contextualised to the role and agency setting.

Group exercise

Capabilities to be assessed

Assessment of the following capabilities is particularly suited to most group exercises:

- Communicate effectively – candidates need to demonstrate verbal communication skills as part of a group situation including speaking, listening and articulating ideas. Behaviours that you may be looking for include: speaking clearly and explaining ideas to the group in a logical way, listening to others and developing their ideas, seeking feedback and encouraging group members to contribute.
- Work collaboratively – group activities often involve collaboration between group members to reach an outcome. Behaviours that relate to this include: actively participating as a member of the group towards a shared objective, being confident in sharing ideas and information and building cooperation within the group.
- Think and solve problems – group activities are usually based on the idea of solving a problem. Behaviours that you may be looking for include candidates' effectiveness in analysing the information provided and making recommendations based on this, generating ideas, identifying and addressing potential problems and thinking creatively or innovatively.
- Display resilience and courage – in the group context, candidates need to be prepared to think on their feet and put ideas forward without necessarily having had a lot of time to prepare. Behaviours that you may be looking for may include: staying calm under pressure or when their ideas are challenged, listening to feedback from others, standing firm on their position when they think it is right.
- Value diversity and inclusion - given that group activities often involve people who don't know each other and can include a mix of people from different backgrounds (e.g. cultural, educational, work experience), there is an opportunity to assess the level of respect shown amid these differences. The behaviours you are looking for may include: candidates' openness to encouraging input from others, and willingness to listen and consider different viewpoints.
- Influence and negotiate - the group dynamic lends itself to resolving issues and conflicts and building consensus. Some of the behaviours that you may be looking for include: the ability of candidates to support their position based on facts, knowledge and experience, influencing others and identifying key stakeholders, and considering avenues for engagement.

Note that decisions about the content of the activity should be based on the capabilities to be assessed. There may be additional capabilities that can be covered or some that are listed which may not apply in certain circumstances. In addition, the example of behaviours that you may be looking for should be contextualised to the role and agency setting.

Role play

Capabilities to be assessed

Assessment of the following capabilities is particularly suited to most role play activities:

- Act with integrity – in role plays, candidates will have an opportunity to demonstrate their ethical and professional values in representing the organisation in their fictitious role. Behaviours that can be assessed include: showing an understanding of ethical obligations, identifying or speaking out about misconduct, illegal and inappropriate behaviour, professionalism in presenting their viewpoint as a representative of the organisation (even when they have a different viewpoint)
- Communicate effectively – candidates need to demonstrate a range of communication types in the role play situation including speaking, listening to the role player and tailoring communication depending on the focus of the role play (e.g. may be different for a face-to-face customer role play compared with providing coaching to a team member). Behaviours shown may include: speaking clearly and explaining ideas so they are understood by the role player, being aware of their own and the role players' verbal cues and adjusting their communication style to suit the audience
- Commit to customer service – role plays are a good way of assessing candidates' commitment to customer service. This can either be for the delivery of frontline services or for dealing with customers internal to the organisation or sector. The behaviours shown in role plays may include: the delivery of high quality customer service through effective communication and problem solving, negotiation with customers and stakeholders on the delivery of services and working cooperatively to identify and resolve issues
- Influence and Negotiate – in a role play the objective is to reach an outcome in an effective way. Whether dealing with a difficult customer, responding to an enquiry or managing a day-to-day work situation, role plays test candidates' ability to resolve issues and conflicts. Some of the behaviours that may be shown are: candidates' effectiveness in reaching an outcome, influencing others based on sound arguments and gaining agreement.
- Demonstrate accountability – in their fictitious role (as in the workplace) candidates need to take responsibility for their actions and adhere to relevant legislation and policy. Behaviours shown in role plays may include: demonstrating awareness of relevant legislation, rules, policies etc. and seeking clarification when uncertain, showing awareness of limits of authority and asking others when in doubt, being proactive in identifying, mitigating and managing risks.

Role plays can be designed to focus on people management capabilities when these are needed for the role. Capabilities that are usefully assessed in these circumstances include:

- Manage and develop people – role plays designed with people management in mind are good for assessing candidates' ability to engage and motivate staff and to develop capability and potential in others. Some behaviours that you may be looking for include: defining and clearly communicating roles and responsibilities within a team or to a team members, coaching or mentoring staff and providing performance-related feedback

- Inspire direction and purpose – this capability relates to the communication of goals, priorities and vision and the recognition of achievements. Behaviours you may be looking for in a customised role play may include: recognising individual and team performance, promoting understanding of organisational priorities and business objectives, and providing direction on achieving goals at the team level.

Note that decisions about the content of the activity should be based on the capabilities to be assessed. There may be additional capabilities that can be covered or some that are listed which may not apply in certain circumstances. In addition, the example of behaviours that you may be looking for should be contextualised to the role and agency setting.

For example, the Value diversity and inclusion capability can be assessed in a customised role play. In assessing this capability, you may look for behaviours including: seeking out others' opinions and views and observing how the candidate adapts to individual differences and working styles.

Case study

Capabilities to be assessed

Assessment of the following capabilities is particularly suited to most case study activities:

- Communicate effectively – case study activities allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to communicate ideas or information in a clear, succinct and persuasive way. They can be based on either written or verbal communication skills depending on how the findings are presented. Behaviours you are looking for may include: communicating in plain language and tailoring communications to the audience, analysing and interpreting information and communicating this in the format required (verbal or written) and using written or verbal communication in a way that is clear, logical and persuasive
- Deliver results – there is potential for case studies, particularly for senior roles, to draw out the capability of achieving results through the efficient use of resources and a commitment to quality outcomes. Behaviours that you may be looking for include: encouraging or creating a culture of achievement where effective budgeting and achieving outcomes are highly valued, progressing organisational outcomes and using resources effectively
- Plan and prioritise – case study activities can be used to assess candidates' approach to planning to achieve outcomes while dealing flexibly with changing circumstances. Behaviours that you may be looking for include: planning business goals and thinking about contingency provisions, having plans in place to monitor progress of initiatives while considering the need to make adjustments, and evaluating achievements
- Think and solve problems – being able to think, analyse and consider the broader context to develop practical solutions is a key part of case study activities. Behaviours that you may be looking for include: analysing information and drawing conclusions based on the evidence available, exploring

possibilities or opportunities and weighing up alternatives, and taking account of the business context when choosing options

Case study activities can be designed to focus on people management capabilities when these are needed for the role. Capabilities that are usefully assessed in these circumstances include:

- Optimise business outcomes – case study activities designed with people management in mind are good for assessing candidates' ability to manage resources effectively and apply sound workforce planning principles. Behaviours that you may be looking for include: developing workforce plans that are aligned with organisational outcomes and planning workforce needs to achieve these outcomes.

Note that decisions about the content of the activity should be based on the capabilities to be assessed. There may be additional capabilities that can be covered or some that are listed which may not apply in certain circumstances. In addition, the example of behaviours that you may be looking for should be contextualised to the role and agency setting.

For example, the Value diversity and inclusion capability can be used in case studies to assess candidates' initiative in seeking out stakeholder views and opinions and considering these views and the impact on their work. Behaviours you are looking for may include: development of project plans that involve stakeholder consultation, approaches to dealing with differing stakeholder views.

In-tray exercises

Capabilities to be assessed

Assessment of the following capabilities is particularly suited to most in-tray exercises:

- Communicate effectively – in-tray exercises allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to examine information and to take action to complete the required tasks. This may involve communicating with others in response to requests, to get something done or to diffuse a situation. Behaviours you are looking for may include: communicating in plain language and tailoring communications to the audience, analysing and interpreting information and communicating this in the format required (written or verbal), using an appropriate structure for the written or verbal response that is clear and easy to follow.
- Plan and prioritise – a central part of in-tray exercises is for candidates to plan and prioritise so that they can manage a range of different tasks to achieve the required outcomes. Behaviours you may be looking for through in-tray exercises may include: taking a planned approach to sorting through information and setting clear priorities, taking appropriate action to respond to or escalate issues requiring immediate attention and understanding broader context of organisational goals when priorities own and others' work.
- Think and solve problems – in resolving the issues presented through in-tray exercises candidates need to think and examine the information they are given and develop practical solutions by either responding or assigning to someone else. Behaviours you are looking for may include: identifying

issues and potential problems and choosing an appropriate solution, thinking about different options for resolving the problem(s) and considering the impact of the chosen approach.

Note that decisions about the content of the activity should be based on the capabilities to be assessed. There may be additional capabilities that can be covered or some that are listed which may not apply in certain circumstances. In addition, the example of behaviours that you may be looking for should be contextualised to the role and agency setting.

Written exercises

Capabilities to be assessed

Assessment of the following capabilities is particularly suited to most written exercises:

- **Communicate effectively** – written activities are highly focused on the ability to write clearly, succinctly and present well-structured information in an appropriate format. Behaviours you may be looking for include: communicating in plain language and tailoring communications to the audience, analysing and interpreting information and communicating this in writing and structuring the response in a way that is clear and easy to follow
- **Plan and prioritise** – planning and prioritising may be part of the written exercise in the way candidates present solutions or objectives going forward, particularly when preparing a position paper or a response to a business problem. Behaviours you are looking for may include: supporting solutions with realistic timeframes, prioritising recommendations in a logical way and incorporating criteria for evaluating outcomes
- **Think and solve problems** – written exercises usually involve developing a position or resolving a problem with candidates needing to show how they think and analyse the issue to develop practical solutions. Behaviours you are looking for may include: identifying issues and potential problems and interrelationships, thinking about different options for resolving issues and considering the impact of the chosen approach, including in relation to the wider business context.

Note that decisions about the content of the activity should be based on the capabilities to be assessed. There may be additional capabilities that can be covered or some that are listed which may not apply in certain circumstances. In addition, the example of behaviours that you may be looking for should be contextualised to the role and agency setting.