



College of
Policing

Fast Track National Assessment Centre

Overview for Candidates

2015

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Fast Track Programme

The Fast Track Programme is aimed at opening up entry to the Police Service to members of the special constabulary, police staff and graduates, who will bring new perspectives and diverse backgrounds to support the continuous development of policing.

The programme will offer a development programme and promotion mechanism to enable the most talented individuals to advance to the rank of inspector within three years. The aim is to develop officers with the skills, experience, potential and motivation to reach the senior ranks of the service, at least superintendent level, to impact on and influence the management and culture of the service.

The programme will offer career progression to graduates in line with other professions such as armed forces, finance and industry, law, medicine and accountancy to attract the most talented graduates.

The programme, itself, will focus on leadership, management and operational knowledge and skills. You will be supported by your force and will undergo regular assessments. You will need to meet set standards; those not meeting the standards will exit the programme at the same rank and revert to a traditional career path.

The development programme will equip you with the skills, knowledge and experience required to be promoted to the rank of inspector upon successful completion.

The programme is also aimed at highly talented constables who will join the external candidates (after their first year) and be promoted to inspector after completing a two-year development programme.

If you are successful at the initial application and subsequent force selection stages, you will be invited to attend the national assessment centre. If you are successful at this stage and offered a place on the programme by a force, you will then undertake the first year of the programme.

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The Fast-Track programme will accelerate the first year at constable in your force, streamlining the Diploma and the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP). You will then be joined by successful applicants from next year's assessment centre who are highly talented serving constables and will undertake the two-year programme at sergeant level, which will be more stretching and challenging.

National Assessment Centre

You will have already completed the first stage of the selection process, which is an application form where you were asked to demonstrate the competencies. You may have also completed an internal selection process held by the force that you applied to. Forces have then submitted the names of those applicants who were successful at this stage to attend the National Assessment Centre.

What will be assessed?

The aim of the assessment centre is to measure your suitability for the programme. The key aims of the programme are to identify talented individuals who will bring new perspectives and diverse backgrounds to support the continuous development of policing, to support their development to advance to the role of Inspector within two years and to support their continuing development to reach at least the rank of Superintendent during their careers. You will be assessed against set criteria, namely the competencies from the Policing Professional Framework (PPF) at the 'Senior Manager' level. The PPF is published by Skills for Justice (www.skillsforjustice.com). The competencies are detailed in Appendix A.

The Assessment Centre will also ensure successful candidates meet the legislative requirements for joining the Police Service as a police constable which are otherwise assessed through the Police SEARCH® Recruit Assessment Centre. These are:

- Sufficient competence in written and spoken English and sufficiently numerate.
- Demonstration of behaviour expected from someone joining the Police Service (as set by the Code of Ethics - <http://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Ethics/Pages/Code-of-Ethics.aspx>).

Candidates who fail to meet these standards at any point during the Assessment Centre may be made unsuccessful at the Assessment Centre regardless of their performance across the remaining exercises.

The Exercises

There will be seven exercises that contribute equally to your overall assessment centre result. The exercises are not linked and they have been designed to be independent of each other. Four of these will be work-sample exercises, i.e. exercises that are designed to closely reflect the tasks that a police officer at this level does. They are an Oral Briefing, a Performance Management, a Written In-Tray and a Partnership Meeting exercise. These four exercises are purposefully not set in a policing context, in order to 'level the playing field' for a candidate pool with varying degrees of familiarity with policing and give you the opportunity to demonstrate your management and leadership skills in a non-policing environment. In other words, you will not be expected to be fully familiar with policing terminology or have any specialist knowledge, but the exercises do closely reflect the types of tasks expected of a senior police officer. The other three exercises are a Presentation, an Interview and Cognitive Ability Tests.

These exercises have been designed around the priority areas generated from research into the leadership challenges facing the Police service (Appendix B). They will each measure some of the competencies (Appendix A). For each exercise, you will be given a grade for each competency it measures using the competency grade scale (Appendix C) and you will also be given an overall exercise mark (Appendix C) which will reflect how well you completed the task that were set.

Oral Briefing

In the Oral Briefing, you will be given information about a fictional scenario and 40 minutes to read through the candidate materials to prepare. You will then be asked to give a briefing to two assessors on how you intend to address the issues contained in the scenario. You will have 10 minutes to give your briefing, followed immediately by a further 10 minutes in which the assessors will ask you questions about your briefing.

The exercise is designed to assess the following competencies:

- Managing Performance
- Professionalism
- Decision Making.

Performance Management Exercise

In this exercise, you will be given information about a fictional scenario and asked to hold a meeting with one individual to address the issues presented. You will meet the trained role actor who will take the role of a character within the scenario. Before the meeting, you will have 20 minutes to read through candidate materials and prepare for the meeting. The meeting will last up to 15 minutes. The exercise is designed to assess the following competencies:

- Serving the Public
- Leading People
- Managing Performance.

Written In-Tray Exercise

You will have two hours to complete this exercise. You will be provided with a set of documents which you are required to work through in order to complete a number of tasks. The exercise is designed to assess the following competencies:

- Serving the Public
- Leading People
- Managing Performance.

You will be required to type your response to the Written In-Tray Exercise tasks and will be provided with a laptop and a separate keyboard and mouse. The laptop computers contain Microsoft Word® word processing software which will have all the usual functions enabled (e.g. spelling and grammar checking, word count, etc).

You will also be provided with blank paper response sheet documents should you wish to include any additional information that you would prefer to handwrite rather than type (e.g. diagrams or tables).

Partnership Meeting

In the Partnership Meeting, you will be given information about a fictional scenario and asked to hold a meeting with one individual to address the issues presented. You will meet the trained role actor who will take the role of a character within the scenario. Before the meeting, you will have 25 minutes to read through candidate materials and prepare for the meeting. The meeting will last up to 15 minutes. The exercise is designed to assess the following competencies:

- Leading Change
- Professionalism
- Working With Others.

Presentation

For this exercise, you will be given a discussion topic about a current policing issue and 30 minutes to prepare. You will then be asked to present in front of two assessors for up to 10 minutes. This will immediately be followed by a further 10 minutes during which the assessors will ask you questions about your presentation. This exercise is designed to assess:

- Serving The Public
- Leading Change
- Professionalism

Interview

The Interview is a competency based structured interview and contains a total of six questions over three competency areas. The questions focus on both previous experience and situations that you may face in the future. The interview lasts 30 minutes. The exercise is designed to assess the following competencies:

- Leading Change
- Decision Making
- Working With Others.

Cognitive Ability Tests

Cognitive Ability Tests as a single assessment method have been found to be the most consistent predictor of job performance, academic performance and school results. The Fast Track Programme will be intensive and will require candidates to take on large amounts of information and acquire knowledge quickly. It is reasonable to expect that candidates who perform better on these tests will be more able to cope with the learning demands of the programme.

The psychometric ability tests you will do as part of this assessment will be short online versions of verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning.

- Verbal reasoning looks at the ability to interpret verbal information and reach correct conclusions and is relevant to work involving communicating ideas or the understanding of written information.

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- Numerical reasoning looks at the ability to analyse and draw inferences from numerical information and data to solve everyday and business-related problems;
- Abstract reasoning looks at the ability to think and act quickly and solve novel problems. It also provides a strong link to the potential to learn new information/tasks.

Your results for the tests will make up one-seventh of your overall performance at the Assessment Centre.

Before you complete these tests, we will provide you with more information and an opportunity to practice.

Decision Making

Once all the exercises are finished your overall performance is considered. Candidates who reach the requisite standard will be 'recommended' to go on to the Fast Track Programme, and those who do not reach the standard will be 'not recommended'.

No final decision will be made until all of your exercises are completed and your performance on each has been evaluated. It is designed to be a challenging process and each exercise in itself is challenging. You are not expected to 'pass' every single exercise or all of the competency areas in order to achieve a grade of 'recommended'. With that in mind, even though you may feel you haven't performed as well as you could in a particular exercise, across the seven exercises, you will have ample opportunity to demonstrate your capability.

In order to be successful and gain a place on the Programme, you must be 'recommended' at the National Assessment Centre **and** be selected by a force.

If you are recommended at the Assessment Centre but are not selected by your chosen force, you may be offered employment by a different force via a system similar to the university 'clearing' process. For example if your chosen force has two places available on the programme, but has three successful candidates at the Assessment Centre and you are not selected, a different force who has too few 'recommended' candidates may have places available. Details of this system will be sent to you at the time if you are affected by this process.

Results

Following the completion of the Assessment Centre and collation of grades, results are ratified at a meeting by a Debrief Panel, after which the results are issued to candidates and forces by email. Results will be released by the end of the day on 5 May 2015.

Feedback

All candidates, whether successful or unsuccessful, will receive a personalised written report on their performance at the Assessment Centre.

Who are the Assessors?

At the Assessment Centre, you will be assessed by a number of different assessors. Each assessor team is made up of one Service Assessor and one External Assessor. The Service Assessors are currently serving officers at the rank of Superintendent or above, currently serving officers at the rank of Inspector or above who are members of the High Potential Development Scheme, Police Staff members at the equivalent rank of Superintendent or above or retired officers drawn from a reserve list (which is held to assist where current serving officers may be unable to attend in unforeseen circumstances) from forces throughout the United Kingdom. The External Assessors are people who are entirely independent from the Police Service who are involved in selection at senior levels within the public and/or private sector.

All assessors are appropriately trained in the generic principles and skills associated with the objective and fair assessment of others. Assessors also receive training in the specific exercises used at the Assessment Centre.

Who else will be there?

Alongside your fellow candidates at the Assessment Centre, there will be a number of staff, who keep the process running smoothly and some visitors.

Director and Co-Directors

The role of the Directors is primarily one of quality assurance, to ensure common standards across all candidate groups, but also to assess the process on behalf of the Police Service.

Assessment Centre Quality Assurance

The most important aspect of any assessment centre is the accuracy and consistency of the assessment. All assessors will be trained in the exercises they will use. Quality assurers will occasionally sit in on live exercises, to review assessments, to monitor standards and to support assessors, thereby adding value to the confidence that you, assessors and the Police Service can have in the robustness of the process. In addition, the overall management and administration of the Assessment Centre is overseen by an on-site management team.

Visitors

The Fast Track Programme represents a significant change for policing and as such, the Assessment Centre will be of interest to a number of stakeholders involved in policing. As a result, there will be a number of visitors interested in observing the process. Therefore in addition to the assessors and role actors, there may be a visitor observing the exercise. They will have no input whatsoever on how the assessors evaluate your performance and are not there to make an evaluation of you.

Assessment Centre Details

The Assessment Centre will be held over two days between the dates of 16 April to 27 April 2015.

How are the exercises designed?

The psychologists within College of Policing Examinations and Assessment Senior Selection Team use a structured Exercise Design Model as the basis of the development of the exercises.

The Exercise Design Model consists of a series of stages that each exercise goes through to create a set of exercises that are reliable, valid, relevant, realistic and fair to all candidates. The design model starts with 'Stakeholder Consultation' and progresses through a series of subsequent stages which include 'Critical Scenario Interviews', 'Exercise Writing', 'Exercise Consultation', 'Pilot' and 'Training Development'.

At each stage, senior police officers and stakeholders from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are consulted about the content of the exercises, and their

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associated marking guides, to ensure that the exercises are realistic and relevant to the target level. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights (EDHR) advisors are involved in the design of the selection process.

Appendix A

Senior Manager Competencies from The Policing Professional Framework

Serving the public

Promotes a real belief in public service, focusing on what matters to the public and will best serve their interests. Ensures that all staff understand the expectations, changing needs and concerns of different communities, and strive to address them. Builds public confidence by actively engaging with different communities, agencies and strategic local stakeholders, developing partnerships and ensuring people can engage with the police at all levels. Understands partners' perspectives and priorities, and works co-operatively with them to deliver the best possible overall service to the public.

Leading change

Establishes a clear future picture and direction for the operational unit, focused on delivering the force vision and strategy. Identifies and implements change needed to meet force objectives, thinking beyond the constraints of current ways of working, and is prepared to make radical change when required. Thinks in the long-term, identifying better ways to deliver value for money services that meet both local and force needs. Encourages creativity and innovation within the Operating Unit.

Leading people

Inspires people to meet challenging organisational goals, creating and maintaining the momentum for change. Gives direction and states expectations clearly. Talks positively about policing and what it can achieve, building pride and self-esteem. Creates enthusiasm and commitment by rewarding good performance, and giving genuine recognition and praise. Promotes learning and development, giving honest and constructive feedback to help people understand their strengths and weaknesses, and invests time in coaching and mentoring staff.

Managing Performance

Creates a clear plan to deliver operational unit performance in line with force strategy and objectives. Agrees demanding but achievable objectives and priorities for the operational unit, and assigns resources to deliver them as effectively as possible. Identifies opportunities to reduce costs and ensure maximum value for money is achieved. Highlights good practice and uses it to address underperformance. Delegates responsibilities appropriately and empowers others to make decisions. Monitors progress and holds people to account for delivery.

Professionalism

Acts with integrity, in line with the values and ethical standards of the Police Service. Delivers on promises, demonstrating personal commitment, energy and drive to get things done. Defines and reinforces standards, demonstrating these personally and fostering a culture of personal responsibility within the operational unit. Asks for and acts on feedback on own approach, continuing to learn and adapt to new circumstances. Takes responsibility for making tough or unpopular decisions. Demonstrates courage and resilience in difficult situations, defusing conflict and remaining calm and professional under pressure.

Decision making

Assimilates complex information quickly, weighing up alternatives and making sound, timely decisions. Gathers and considers all relevant and available information, seeking out and listening to advice from specialists. Asks incisive questions to test facts and assumptions, and gain a full understanding of the situation. Identifies the key issues clearly, and the inter-relationship between different factors. Considers the wider implications of different options, assessing the costs, risks and benefits of each. Makes clear, proportionate and justifiable decisions, reviewing these as necessary.

Working with others

Builds effective working relationships with people through clear communication and a collaborative approach. Maintains visibility to staff and ensures communication processes work effectively throughout the operational unit. Consults widely and involves people in decision-making, speaking to people in a way they understand and can engage with. Treats people with respect and dignity regardless of their background or circumstances, promoting equality and the elimination of discrimination. Treats people as individuals, showing tact, empathy and compassion. Sells ideas convincingly, setting out benefits of a particular approach, and striving to reach mutually beneficial solutions. Expresses own views positively and constructively, and fully commits to team decisions.

Appendix B

PRIORITY AREAS FOR FAST TRACK SCHEMES

This information will be used alongside information from role holders on the tasks that are critical to successfully performing as senior officer to help inform the types of tasks and the content of exercise scenarios that candidates will be set.

Future challenges facing the Police Service over the next 5 years.

1. Maintaining service delivery during on-going austerity.
2. Changing types of crime (e.g. cyber, cross border, population demographics).
3. Internal organisational change needed (e.g. structure, service length, low morale, CPD culture).
4. Need for wider and deeper collaboration (e.g. new partners, mergers).
5. Effective use of new technologies by the Police.
6. Responding to increased scrutiny, accountability, and demands for transparency.
7. Increasing influence of the political environment.
8. Maintaining public confidence.
9. The need to redefine success (e.g. incentive based Govt funding, increased victim focus).
10. Increasing demand beyond just 'cutting crime'.

The abilities, skills and characteristics needed by future leaders to deal with the challenges the Police Service will face.

1. Personal integrity and commitment to public transparency (e.g. exemplary personal integrity and actions, able to communicate and set standards for others, greater demonstration of transparency).
2. Flexible transformational leadership skills (e.g. move beyond command and control, trusting staff to get on with their jobs and applying discretion, empower and engage staff, leading a corporate organisation over operational management).
3. Resilience and positivity (e.g. a positive attitude to making things work, able to work under pressure and with uncertainty, staying calm under pressure and stick by decisions).
4. Internal business and financial skills (e.g. business acumen, deal with the challenge of on-going budget reductions, able to hold deliverables to account, understanding commissioning and procurement).
5. Building integrated strategic partnerships (e.g. develop partnership working on a strategic level outside policing, more radical and integrated collaboration, sharing power and autonomy with others).
6. Able to lead effective organisational change (e.g. positive to create momentum for change, comfortable with facilitating organisational change, leading staff through change, using continuous improvement).
7. Holding a long term, strategic, vision (e.g. thinking about the longer term benefits for the organisation/service beyond personal tenure, a strong vision with the ability to translate this).
8. Creativity and innovation (e.g. to identify new ways of doing things).
9. Open-minded and willing to challenge existing culture and practice (e.g. look beyond what has always been done with a fresh perspective, challenge the status-quo, a willingness to challenge authority).
10. Humility and self professional development (e.g. reflective of own practice and influence from others, a willingness to compromise).
11. Political astuteness (e.g. greater political awareness at local and national level, a more outward facing approach politically, how to influence political leaders).

The abilities, skills and characteristics that the Police Service would benefit from bringing in through Fast Track.

1. Challenging existing culture and practices (e.g. prepared to think independently, ask why things are done this way, less deferential to rank).
2. Taking learning from other organisations (e.g. an outward focus to learn from other organisations, experience of how things can work differently, sharing best practice).
3. Greater creativity and innovation (e.g. able to think of new ways of solving problems, radically innovative, willingness to take risks, supporting the ideas of others).
4. Leading effective organisation change (e.g. positive about change and able to persuade others of its value, able to implement transformational change, delivering rapid change).
5. Financial confidence and commerciality (e.g. commercial awareness and confidence, entrepreneurial skills).
6. Able to lead staff through challenging times (e.g. able to adapt leadership style, making bold decisions, inspire others to achieve goals, have a greater influence).
7. Supportive staff management (e.g. effective general management skills such as performance management, welfare, and development, able to engage staff).
8. Political astuteness (e.g. understanding the political dynamics, able to operate in a more political environment).
9. A focus on customer service and victim support (e.g. understanding victim experience, listening to the public, ingrained customer service ethos).
10. Comfortable with accountability and transparency (e.g. comfortable with public scrutiny, understand public perception of what is acceptable, honesty when mistakes are made).
11. Effective internal and external communication skills (e.g. using language the public understand).

Appendix C

Rating Scales

The assessors use the ORCE (Observe, Record, Classify & Evaluate) model of assessment, which is a universally recognised and applied model for assessing.

The assessors observe candidates' performance and make a record of what they said and did; then they classify this evidence against the competency related criteria. Once assessors have done this they evaluate candidates' performance in each competency area using an A to D rating scale (see below). Assessors then award an overall exercise mark using a 1 – 6 Exercise Mark scale (see overleaf). Assessors initially decide upon grades and exercise marks for candidates' performances independently of one another and then collectively agree final competency grades and exercise mark for each candidate for each exercise.

Competency Grade Scale

This scale requires assessors to evaluate both the quantity (frequency) and quality (strength) of the evidence provided when awarding grades.

A	Substantial positive evidence of the competency observed with regard to the quality and quantity of the evidence, and few or no areas for development observed.
B	Positive evidence of the competency observed and some areas for development but on balance more positive evidence with regard to the quality and quantity of the evidence.
C	Some positive evidence of the competency observed but on balance more areas for development with regard to the quality and quantity of the evidence.
D	Substantial areas for development identified and little or no positive evidence of the competency observed, with regard to the quality and quantity of the evidence.

Exercise Mark Scale

The Exercise Mark Scale is used to award the candidate an overall exercise mark for the exercise. The two statements at each point on the Exercise Mark Scale are intended to be considered together and not as separate statements.

1	<p>Very Effective Task Performance The candidate performed the task very effectively and almost entirely achieved the aims of the exercise. Performance on competencies was exclusively high grades.</p>
2	<p>Effective Task Performance The candidate performed the task effectively and mostly achieved the aims of the exercise. Performance on the competencies was mostly high grades.</p>
3	<p>Satisfactory Task Performance The candidate performed the task to a satisfactory standard and met some of the aims of the exercise although some elements were not satisfactory. On balance performance on competencies was more high grades than low grades.</p>
4	<p>Just Below Satisfactory Task Performance The candidate performed the task to a below-satisfactory standard overall and did not quite meet the aims of the exercise, although there were some areas that were effectively handled. On balance performance on competencies was more low grades than high grades.</p>
5	<p>Ineffective Task Performance The candidate performed the task largely ineffectively and did not meet the aims of the exercise, although there were some areas that were acceptable. Performance on the competencies was mostly low grades.</p>
6	<p>Very Ineffective Task Performance The candidate performed the task very ineffectively and did not meet the aims of the exercise, although there may have been some minor areas that were acceptable. Performance on the competencies was exclusively low grades.</p>