

# In Brief

## Step 9 – Preparing for Assessments

### Introduction

An increasing number of legal recruiters are now using 'assessments' as part of their selection procedure.

### What to expect, and what the recruiter is looking for

The possibilities are almost endless, but some of the most common exercises are:

#### 1. Case study materials

While not a test in itself, case study materials frequently form the basis of other tasks such as group work, presentations or written assessments, and may consist of a set of documents relating to the activities of a client. There are three key things the recruiter will be looking for in your use of the materials:

- Technical understanding: and whether you have understood the contents
- Application: whether you can apply and use the information constructively
- Analytical skills: the ability to extract the most important information.

#### 2. Group work/team games

Usually these involve group discussions/decision making, and tend to cover either hypothetical scenarios (eg survival situations) or business decisions. Irrespective of the actual task given, the recruiter will be looking for:

- Team working: whether you contribute to the whole team effort
- Listening and communication skills: whether you listen, acknowledge, and speak clearly and confidently (summing up or recapping can be useful)
- Interpersonal skills: remembering and using each person's name is a good tactic
- Leadership: although there is a difference between 'leading' and 'dominating'
- Negotiation: whether you are able to 'give and take' in the interests of moving forward to an agreed and desirable outcome
- Assertiveness: for example, if the team is going off topic, or over-running, can you bring the group back to focus on the task in hand?

#### 3. Presentations

You may be given advance notice and several weeks to prepare, or a presentation may be sprung on you on the day. The recruiter will be assessing:

- Communication skills: be clear, use appropriate language, tone and pace
- Public speaking: be confident, use eye contact, remember to smile
- Logical and clear structure: keep it focused, simple, and easy to follow
- Key facts and issues: identify the main points; answer any questions
- Time management: stick to the time allotted without rushing

- Use of visual aids: use them appropriately, do not turn your back on your audience to look at a screen, or bury your head in a script.

#### 4. Written assessments

A wide range of written assessments are used: some are clerical tests, checking your ability to proof-read, spell and use grammar correctly. More commonly however, you are asked to write a letter of advice to a client, or write a report or memo for a senior member of staff (often based on a bundle of case study materials).

Typically you will be assessed on:

- How you write: your spelling, grammar, clarity of expression, etc.
- Tone: is it appropriate – are you persuading, advising or informing?
- Detail: who is the recipient and what is their likely level of knowledge?
- Analytical ability: have you identified the relevant issues?
- Time management: have you completed the task in the time allotted?
- Client focus: do you have the client's best interests to the fore?
- Professional obligations: have you considered and fulfilled them?
- Commercial awareness: are you able to give commercially minded advice?

#### 5. In-tray exercises

As the name suggests, you may be given a full in-tray, with the objective of dealing with its contents as efficiently and effectively as possible. The recruiter is assessing:

- Analytical skills: your ability to get to the heart of the matter
- Organisation and planning
- Working under pressure
- Business acumen: realising the importance of certain tasks or information
- Common sense: as demonstrated by your prioritisation and decision making
- Ability to write: if you have to respond to an item in the in-tray.

#### 6. Psychometric tests

There are three types of psychometric test most commonly used in legal recruitment:

- Verbal reasoning: how you assimilate information and make use of it
- Critical thinking: understanding *how* you think and reason
- Numerical reasoning: fairly straightforward mathematics – with the focus on whether you can make sensible use of numerical information.

You may also encounter:

- Personality tests: insights into your personality traits, motivation, preferred working style and so on
- Situational judgement tests: how you respond in 'common sense' situations
- Role play scenarios: for example, a negotiation or a client interview.

Look at the Resource Book, Weblinks and Activities for Step 9 for further information on how to prepare, what to expect, and how to impress.