

THE GOWER ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Assessment Activities

PART 2

JULIE HAY

**THE GOWER ASSESSMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

The characters and organizations in this work are entirely fictitious and are intended only to represent typical situations for the purposes of simulation.

THE GOWER ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Volume 2 Assessment Activities

Julie Hay

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- British Tourist Authority
- English Riviera Conference Bureau
- Greater Manchester Visitor and Convention Bureau

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Thanks are also due to Janis Kent of Sun Alliance for permission to use the results of consultancy work and some very stimulating sessions inventing simulated organizations together.

Although they are unlikely to read this, thanks are also due to the hundreds of participants who have attended assessment and development centres and thus helped to refine the simulations contained in this manual.



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A short glossary of terms

activity: used to refer to simulations and also to non-simulated tasks, questionnaires, interviews and so on

assessor: a person who observes and then assesses a participant; an assessor may also be a participant or they may be a senior manager or specialist (for example, a psychologist or a personnel officer)

competence, competency: see **factor**

criterion: see **factor**

factor: a quality, characteristic, skill or trait that is to be assessed. We use this term throughout the manual so that it will not clash with any existing lists you have which may be called criteria, competences, competencies and so on

participant: a person who attends an Assessment or Development Centre and is to be assessed

role player: someone who plays a role during an interaction with a participant; this role will be predetermined and described in the documentation for the activity because it is important that role plays are consistent. A role player may be another participant, an assessor, a volunteer who is otherwise not associated with the assessment programme, or a professional actor or actress

simulation: a fictitious situation in which participants are expected to demonstrate their capabilities; designed to eliminate the possibility that existing job knowledge might distort the way the participant behaves (either favourably or unfavourably)



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Welcome to the Gower Assessment and Development Centre

This is Volume 2 of a three-volume manual which contains all you need to run your own assessment or development centres.

Volume 1 contains important programme information, such as

- a range of assessment documentation for you to reproduce
- sample programmes for an assessment and a development centre
- suggestions for introducing and publicising your centres
- example 'lecture notes' for briefing participants and assessors
- administrative guidelines to help you run your centres, including flowcharts
- ideas for evaluating the success of your centres.

Volume 2 contains full documentation for the participants, the assessors and the programme manager for running a range of simulations of:

- meetings where cooperation is called for
- meetings where participants have conflicting aims
- activities where interruptions must be dealt with
- presentations and talks
- one-to-one interviews of various kinds
- report and proposal writing exercises.

Volume 3 contains full documentation for the participants, the assessors and the programme manager for running simulations of in-trays of varying levels of complexity.

Each activity contains:

- briefing papers to explain the exercise to participants
- background information for participants to absorb
- items of correspondence, reports, messages and so on for participants to deal with
- guidelines to help assessors evaluate the actions taken and relate these to assessment criteria.

Telephone Help Line

For help and advice on any aspect of this manual or further guidance on running your Assessment or Development Centre, contact:

MA

Julie Hay on 07000 234683

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Sherwood House
7 Oxhey Road
WATFORD
Herts
WD1 4QF

The coding system

The administration of an Assessment or Development Centre is complex. Administrators, assessors and staff all require their own set of documents for each activity.

We have used a series of reference codes throughout this manual to help you identify the materials that you require for the administration of your Centre.

Those documents that are photocopy masters carry a code indicating the recommended colour of photocopy paper to be used. Using a single colour of paper for a particular type of document will help you ensure that the right people always get the right documents. This is particularly important for restricted documents such as activity briefs and assessor guidelines, which shouldn't be taken away or inadvertently shown to potential participants.

The codings for documents you will be using to run your Centres consist of:

- type of simulation – for example, report writing or presentation
- specific activity names – for example, Erifbus or Mictel
- type of document – for example, participant brief or form for assessor to use
- page and total pages.

So DISC/GARW/PB/1 of 4 would indicate that this is a DISCUSSION type of activity/entitled Garwan Phillips/Participant Brief/and this is page 1 out of 4 pages in all.

Some documents can be used for several activities. In that case, an asterisk will be used to indicate a 'wild card'. For example, INTY/*/PR/1 of 2 indicates the first page of a two-page participant report which can be used with any of the IN-TRAY simulations.

Some documents require you to add details to suit your own requirements. In that case, parts of the coding will have been left blank. For example, INTY/ /OS/ indicates a standard sheet that can be used as an observer guide for IN-TRAY simulations.

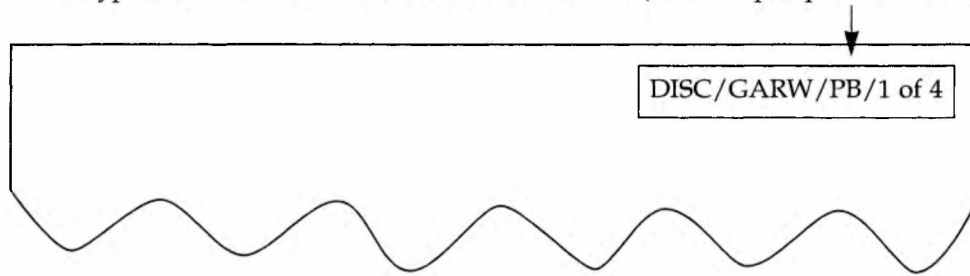
Occasionally an activity will have only one version and will therefore have no specific name. For example, JOBR/PB/1 of 1 is a one-page participant brief for a job report.

Documents like this one, which tell you how to use this manual, will be simply coded MA at the top of the page.

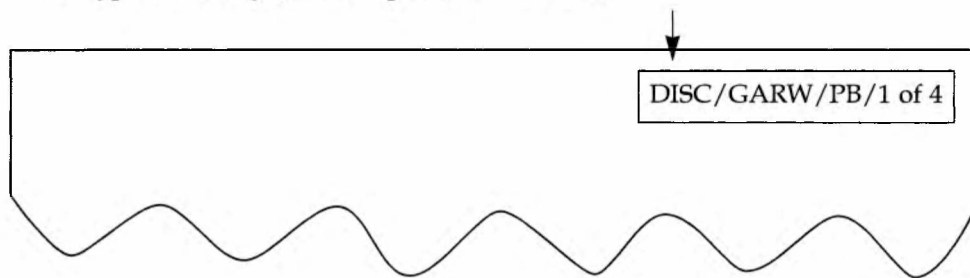
The following examples illustrate the codes and their meanings for different types of document.

All documents

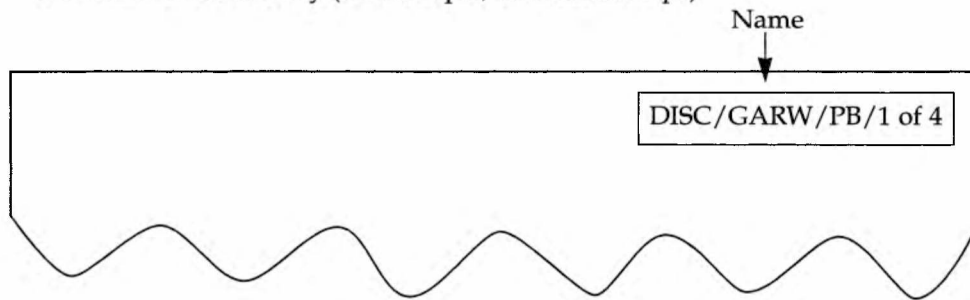
The type of document and for whom it is intended (for example, particular brief).

**Activity documents**

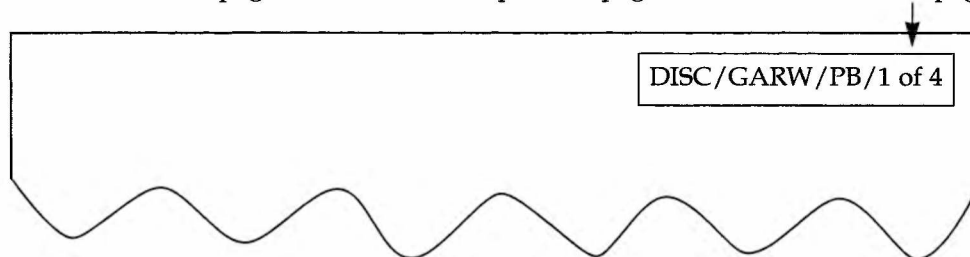
The type of activity (for example, DISCUSSION).



The name of the activity (for example, Garwan Phillips).

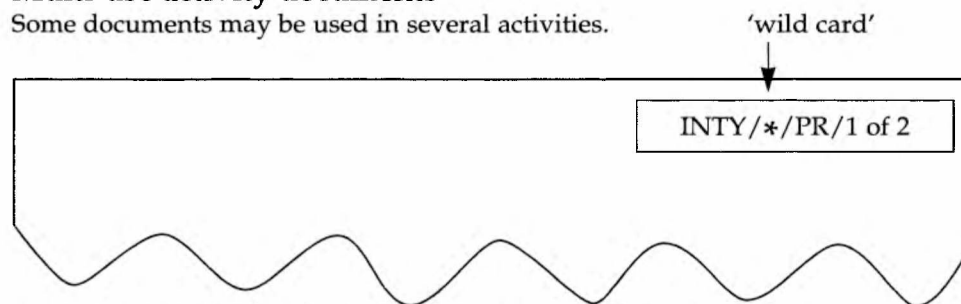


The number of pages in the document plus the page number of the current page.

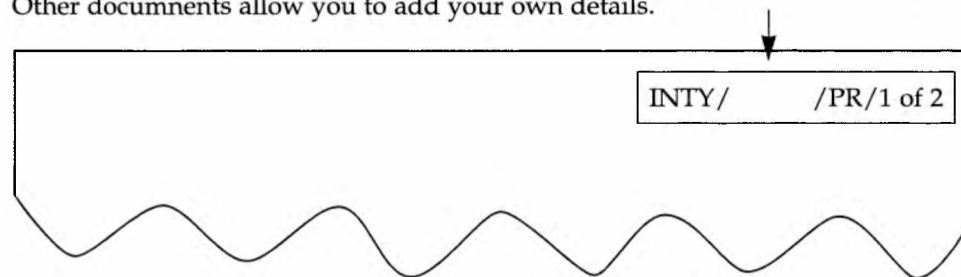


Multi-use activity documents

Some documents may be used in several activities.

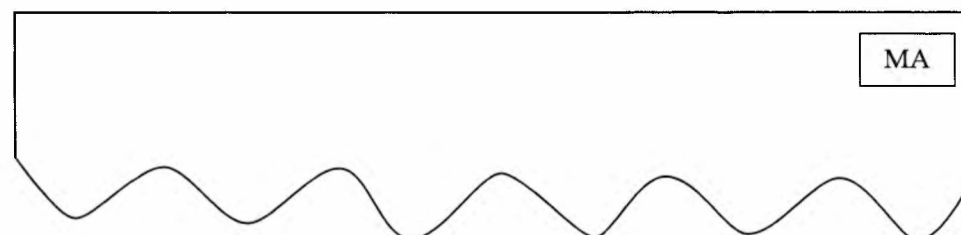


Other documents allow you to add your own details.



Using the manual

Documents telling you simply how to use this manual, rather than providing instructions for running the Centre, carry a simple code at the top of the page.



The tables on the following two pages give:

- the document codes and an explanation of the type of user, together with the recommended colour of paper for photocopying.
- the codes for the different types of simulations available in this manual.

Codings for types of document

Documents		Code	Suggested colour for copying
Using this manual: pages that tell you how to use the contents of this manual		MA	Not applicable
Programme management: used only by the person(s) running the Centre – for example 'lecture notes', description of simulations		PM	Yellow
Programme administration: used by participants and assessors but not taken away afterwards – for example, programmes, seating plans		PA	Pink
Participant briefs: for participants to read and make notes on if they wish – for example, explanations of activities, background information on simulated organizations. Keep in separate folders for each participant for each activity		PB	White
Participant reports: for completion during or after the activities and to be retained in folders with the participant briefs – for example, questionnaires about how they feel they performed		PR	Cream
Observer sheets: used by assessors to note what participants say and do and to be retained in the folders with participant briefs and reports		OS	White
Assessment sheets: used to record assessments of participants and to be collated during the programme so a summary can be written at the end		AS	Green
Assessor briefs: additional information to help assessors follow the content of the simulations		AB	Yellow
Assessor guidelines: guidance for assessors on what to look for when assessing specific activities – these must not be seen by participants		AG	Orange
Role-player briefs: not to be seen by participants unless the Centre is based on peer assessment		RB	Orange
Role-player report: used by the role players to record their reactions to the participant		RR	Cream
General information: information – such as programme descriptions, lists of factors – issued generally to participants, assessors, managers and potential participants		GI	Blue
Miscellaneous: items used outside the Centre, such as programme or assessor evaluations completed by participants, and assessor training handouts		MI	Cream

Codings for types of simulation and other activities

Type	Format	Code
CONSULTANCY	meetings where cooperation is appropriate	CONS
RECOMMENDATIONS	meetings where participants have conflicting aims	RECO
CONTINGENCY	activities where interruptions must be handled	CONT
PRESENTATION	presentations or talks to a group	PRES
REPORT WRITING	reports and proposals to be written	REPT
IN-TRAY	items of correspondence, reports, messages and so on to be dealt with	INTY
DISCUSSIONS	one-to-one activities, such as interviews, briefings or appraisals	DISC
ADMIN	time slots used for test administration and suchlike	ADMN
OPTIONS	time slots used for variety of tasks so that participants have to manage their own time	OPTN
PERSONAL INTERVIEW	assessor interviews participant (not a simulation)	PINT



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CONSULTANCY

**(meetings where cooperation is
required)**



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CONSULTANCY: Introduction

This section contains activities based on meetings or group discussions where cooperation is appropriate. Participants all work to the same brief and are expected to discuss the pros and cons of an issue and put forward their ideas.

Choose a CONSULTANCY activity to start your programme because:

- it gives participants a 'gentle' introduction to the assessment process
- it gives them an opportunity to get to know other participants
- it has no in-built conflict – all the participants share the same objective.

There are four CONSULTANCY activities in the section, all designed for 4–8 participants:

Title	Level of difficulty	Simulation content	Pages
Himberton	Low	Local council projects	17–21
Thatchet	Low–moderate	Working practices in a department store	23–27
Start-up	Moderate	Advising on new business start-ups	29–33
Compofreeze	High	Relocation of frozen food suppliers	35–43

Note: If self-awareness is included in your list of assessment factors, use the participant self-assessment sheet (vol. 1, p. 27) instead of, or in addition to, the participant reports included with specific simulations.



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CONSULTANCY: assessor guidelines

Participant _____ Date _____

Professional Factor	Evidence	
A. Absorbs information through reading bulletins, manuals, trade press, etc. Presents information through proposals, reprints, letters.	Check how much is absorbed from the brief (a) through what they say in the meeting (b) through notes while preparing. How are points put over in the report written after the meeting?	
B. Communicates to others via telephone and face-to-face, one-to-one and in meetings, and through presentations and demonstrations.	How much do they say in the meeting? How easy is it to understand? Do they structure their points, give summaries, ask questions, listen to others?	
C. Can track down sources of information. Knows who to contact. Keeps the appropriate people informed. Acts as a liaison between others.	Do they work with others in the meeting to generate a recommendation? Do they consider who else should be involved or consulted?	
D. Anticipates difficulties and spots opportunities. Makes plans for self and others. Identifies potential resources. Alerts management to issues to forestall problems.	What do they say about the future of the organization? Do they identify future opportunities or problems? What plans do they suggest?	
E. Monitors progress, follows up, coordinates work done by self and others. Orchestrates. Initiates action to correct deviations from plan.	Do their suggestions include plans for implementation? Do they propose any follow-up activities? What do they say about monitoring and coordinating?	
F. Gets on with others, individually and in groups. Deals with a wide range of people at all levels, with different styles inside and outside the organization.	Do they get on with others in the meeting? What do they say about the people affected by the situation in the brief?	
G. Can work with or without interruptions. Sets priorities, meets deadlines.	Was the preparation finished on time? Did they act to help the meeting finish on time? Was the report finished on time? Do they suggest any priorities or deadlines related to the brief?	
H. Can influence and get help and information from others. Handles problems without detriment to working relationships.	How do they influence the others in the meeting? Do they get into conflict or stay cooperative? Do they suggest ways that people in the brief might need to be influenced or persuaded?	
J. Understands business of the customer and own organization. Identifies customer requirements. Matches these to available products and services. Recognizes resource and cost constraints.	Do they recognize key business issues? Do they take a broad view of the situation?	



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CONSULTANCY: assessor guidelines

Management Factor	Evidence	
A. Responds positively to change, whether of people, procedures, tasks, constraints or objectives. Initiates change and seeks change as opportunity.	Responsive to group environment, time pressure, being asked to deal with fictitious context and broader range of issues than normal. (This will be especially significant if CONS is the first activity they do.)	
B. Expects and accepts responsibility for self, others, the organization and the environment. Is decisive and in the driving seat, manages proactively for the greater good of the community.	Makes suggestions relating to task or brief. Considers the overall impact. Is willing to put forward own ideas and have them discussed. Prepared to make decisions without any more information being available. Includes recommendations in the report after the meeting. Mentions actions to be taken in preparation working papers.	
C. Behaves confidently, in command of self and situation. Exercises power and influence.	Behaves confidently during discussions. Tries to influence others. Responds well to challenges.	
D. Diagnoses, collects and analyses information. Looks for links and develops new constructs. Intellectually manages complexity and ambiguity.	Prepared before the meeting and understood the content of the brief. Sought more information from the rest of the group. Comments show understanding of the discussions and how different views relate. Produced good report after the meeting – structured, detailed, accurate reflection of discussions.	
E. Shows interest in perspectives of others. Can combine and contrast different disciplines. Understands own part in the total. Sees the whole picture.	Interested in the nature of the simulation. Interested in the content of the brief. Interested in the views and suggestions of others in the group. Offers own views on a range of aspects.	
F. Looks ahead, predicts and forecasts. Prepares, plans, recognizes, and acts in advance of, obstacles. Reads the environment.	Recognizes implications for the future. Highlights potential opportunities and problems. Sees advantages and disadvantages of various options. Suggests plans and considers how to implement decisions made.	
G. Recognizes the worth of others, respects their contributions and empowers people. Spends time on relationships. Empathizes.	Treats other participants with respect. Takes into account the people affected by the brief. Emphasizes the 'personnel' issues related to the brief.	
H. Recognizes the need to communicate and does so consistently. Shares the vision. Puts efforts into making contact, formally and informally.	Makes own views known to the group. Explains reasoning, listens to others, asks questions. Suggests actions related to communicating with people affected by the brief.	
J. Monitors own performance and its impact on others. Is open and honest. Uses feedback to learn. Is self-aware and self-analytical.	Reacts openly to challenges from others in the group. Writes an accurate self-assessment form.	



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CONSULTANCY: Himberton programme management notes

Type of activity	CONSULTANCY
Title	Himberton
Level of difficulty	Low
Numbers involved	4–8
Description	A group discussion in which participants discuss the advantages and disadvantages of some ideas put forward by the local council. All participants work to the same brief. This makes a useful first activity to help participants settle down.
Suggested timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 15 minutes reading brief and individual preparation ● 30 minutes group discussion ● 10 minutes to complete the participant reports. <p>Preparation time can be scheduled directly before the meeting or can be done at an earlier time if necessary.</p>
Seating	<p>With separate assessors: Participants around table; assessors seated so that they can see the faces of the participants whom they are observing.</p> <p>With peer assessment: Participants in a row facing a videocamera (it is recommended that there should only be four participants in this case).</p>
Materials	<p>Folder labelled with activity and participant codes, containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● participant brief CONS/HIMB/PB/1 of 1 ● REPT/CONS/PB/1 of 1 (optional – see below). <p>Participant report CONS/HIMB/PR/1 of 1.</p>
Instructions	<p>Give out the folders.</p> <p>Announce the end of preparation time.</p> <p>Collect the folders if the meeting does not follow immediately; in that case return them to the participants when the meeting starts.</p> <p>Announce the end of the meeting (you may want to give a five-minute warning).</p> <p>Distribute the participant reports for individual completion, pointing out that they can ask to refer (without discussion) to any ‘communal’ minutes if the group has decided that one person should take notes on behalf of all of them.</p> <p>Collect the folders containing all the paperwork including the participant reports.</p>

Pass the folders to the assessors with the appropriate assessment documents.

**Optional extras/
associated activities**

See REPORT: Consultancy participant brief (page 371) which asks the participant to write a report based on the meeting. This activity takes 20–30 minutes and will provide better evidence for the assessment of written skills than the short, structured participant report on page 21.

If this option is used, then REPT/CONS/PB/1 of 1 should be included in the folder at the start of the preparation time.

CONSULTANCY: Himberton participant brief

Participant _____

You have time now to read this brief and prepare for the group's first meeting.

You live and work in Himberton, a small to medium-sized town that contains about 12 major employers and a number of small companies. Himberton Council are keen to seek the views of people like you. This is why your organization has chosen you to represent it in the project group.

The project group is expected to discuss some ideas being presented by the local council. You are asked to consider the ideas in general and not just talk about how they might affect your own organization.

Your role in the meeting is to discuss the various ideas within the group and identify as many advantages and disadvantages as possible. The project group is not expected to come to any conclusions at this point. You will be meeting each other again and can therefore ask for more information if you need it for next time.

The initial topics on which the Council are seeking your views are:

- longer opening hours for shops
- increased car parking charges
- setting up more creches and nursery schools
- subsidized bus and train fares for local pensioners and people with disabilities
- turning half the allotments into a sports field
- adding a flume at the local public swimming baths.



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CONSULTANCY: Himberton participant report

Participant _____

- 1. Summarize the main points that were discussed in the meeting.**
- 2. If the meeting reached any conclusions, what were they?**
- 3. Regardless of your answer to Question 2, what key factors would you point out to the management of your own organization?**
- 4. How do you think Himberton Council should communicate with residents and local employers in this matter?**



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CONSULTANCY: Thatchet programme management notes

Type of activity	CONSULTANCY
Title	Thatchet
Level of difficulty	Low–moderate
Numbers involved	4–8
Description	A group discussion in which participants discuss the implications of changes in working practices within a large department store. All participants work to the same brief. This makes a useful first activity to help participants settle down.
Suggested timings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 15 minutes reading the brief and individual preparation ● 30 minutes group discussion ● 10 minutes to complete the participant report. <p>Preparation time can be scheduled directly before the meeting or can be done at an earlier time if necessary.</p>
Seating	<p>With separate assessors: Participants around table; assessors seated so that they can see the faces of the participants whom they are observing.</p> <p>With peer assessment: Participants in a row facing a videocamera (it is recommended that there should only be four participants in this case).</p>
Materials	<p>Folder labelled with activity and participant codes, containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● participant brief CONS/THAT/PB/1 of 1 ● REPT/CONS/PB/1 of 1 (optional – see below). <p>Participant report CONS/THAT/PR/1 of 1.</p>
Instructions	<p>Give out the folders.</p> <p>Announce the end of preparation time.</p> <p>Collect the folders if the meeting does not follow immediately; in that case return them to the participants when the meeting starts.</p> <p>Announce the end of the meeting (you may want to give a five-minute warning).</p> <p>Distribute the participant reports for individual completion, pointing out that they can ask to refer (without discussion) to any ‘communal’ minutes if the group has decided that one person should take notes on behalf of all of them.</p> <p>Collect the folders containing all the paperwork</p>

including the participant reports.

Pass the folders to the assessors with the appropriate assessment documents.

**Optional extras/
associated activities**

See REPORT: Consultancy participant brief (page 371) which asks the participant to write a report based on the meeting. This activity takes 20-30 minutes and will provide better evidence for the assessment of written skills than the short, structured participant report on page 27. If this option is used, then REPT/CONS/PB/1 of 1 should be included in the folder at the start of the preparation time.

CONSULTANCY: Thatchet participant brief

Participant _____

You have time now to read this brief and prepare for a meeting.

You are one of a group of consultants who are in the process of advising a large department store about how to change its working practices and update its image.

The store, Thatchet, is based in the centre of a town and has a very traditional culture. Until six months ago it was still run by the founder's son, Paul Thatchet, in an autocratic yet paternalistic style. Employees were well cared for – with medical schemes, family days, a subsidized canteen and so on – but were not expected to show much initiative.

The granddaughter of the founder, Brandon Thatchet, has now taken over as Chief Executive after experience of working in several large department stores in the USA and France. She wants to make significant changes, including:

- opening for longer hours. At present the store opens late on two evenings only. It is also closed all day on Wednesdays. Ms Thatchet wants to shift to 'supermarket' hours such as 0800–2200, six days a week. She is also considering Sunday opening.
- changing the working hours for existing staff and recruiting more part-time workers for greater flexibility.
- expecting staff to change departments readily to suit seasonal and other demands. At present this rarely happens; some employees have been in the same sections for 20 years or more.
- setting up a task force to monitor the way changes are made to incorporate employee feedback.

During the meeting you are expected to consider the implications of the proposed changes. You have also been requested to suggest how the task force should be set up – how to select its members, what terms of reference it should have, how often it should meet, plus any other aspects you think are important.

Your group does not have to reach a consensus during the meeting. However, Ms Thatchet will be expecting to receive a clear set of recommendations from you on what to do next.



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CONSULTANCY: Thatchet participant report

Participant _____

1. Summarize the main points that were discussed in the meeting.
2. If the meeting reached a conclusion, what was it?
3. Regardless of your answer to Question 2, what key factors would you point out to Ms Thatchet?
4. How do you think Ms Thatchet should communicate with employees in this matter?



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CONSULTANCY: Start-up programme management notes

Type of activity	CONSULTANCY
Title	Start-up
Level of difficulty	Moderate
Numbers involved	4–8
Description	A group discussion in which the participants discuss the factors that should be considered by entrepreneurs planning to set up new businesses. All participants work to the same brief. This makes a useful first activity to help participants settle down.
Suggested timings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5–10 minutes reading the brief and individual preparation ● 30 minutes group discussion ● 10 minutes to complete the participant report. <p>Preparation time can be scheduled directly before the meeting or can be done at an earlier time if necessary.</p>
Seating	<p>With separate assessors: Participants around table; assessors seated so that they can see the faces of the participants whom they are observing.</p> <p>With peer assessment: Participants in a row facing a videocamera (it is recommended that there should only be four participants in this case).</p>
Materials	<p>Folder labelled with activity and participant codes, containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● participant brief CONS/STAR/PB/1 of 1 ● REPT/DISC/PB/1 of 1 (optional – see below). <p>Participant report CONS/STAR/PR/1 of 1.</p>
Instructions	<p>Give out the folders.</p> <p>Announce the end of preparation time/start of meeting.</p> <p>Announce the end of the meeting (you may want to give a five-minute warning).</p> <p>Distribute the participant reports for individual completion, pointing out that they can ask to refer (without discussion) to any 'communal' minutes if the group has decided that one person should take notes on behalf of all of them.</p> <p>Collect the folders containing all the paperwork, including the participant reports.</p> <p>Pass the folders to the assessors with the appropriate assessment documents.</p>

**Optional extras/
associated activities**

See REPORT: Consultancy participant brief (page 371) which asks the participant to write a report based on the meeting. This activity takes 20–30 minutes and will provide better evidence for the assessment of written skills than the short, structured participant report on page 33. If this option is used, then REPT/DISC/PB/1 of 1 should be included in the folder at the start of the preparation time.

CONSULTANCY: Start-up participant brief

Participant _____

You have time now to read this brief and prepare for a meeting.

You are to be one of a group of consultants who are going to advise some entrepreneurs who intend to set up new businesses.

The aim of your group is to alert these entrepreneurs to the range of factors they should take into account. Examples are location, finance, advertising - you will need to identify the full list.

As you identify this list, you should also discuss the relevant implications. Your aim as a group is to produce a detailed summary of everything these entrepreneurs should be thinking about, together with any recommendations you believe are appropriate.



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CONSULTANCY: Start-up participant report

Participant _____

1. Briefly summarize the main points that are to be suggested to the entrepreneurs.

2. What is your opinion of the conclusions of the meeting?

3. What, if anything, would you add? Which aspects do you think should be emphasized most strongly?

4. How would you suggest that the information from the meeting should be conveyed to the entrepreneurs?



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CONSULTANCY: Compofreeze programme management notes

Type of activity	CONSULTANCY
Title	Compofreeze
Level of difficulty	High
Numbers involved	4–8
Description	A group discussion in which participants discuss whether an organization should centralize or decentralize. All the participants work to the same brief. This makes a useful first activity to help participants settle down.
Suggested timings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 15 minutes reading the brief and individual preparation ● 30 minutes group discussion ● 10 minutes to complete the participant report. <p>Preparation time can be scheduled directly before the meeting or can be done at an earlier time if necessary.</p>
Seating	<p>With separate assessors: Participants around table; assessors seated so that they can see the faces of the participants whom they are observing.</p> <p>With peer assessment: Participants in a row facing a videocamera (it is recommended that there should only be four participants in this case).</p>
Materials	<p>Folder labelled with activity and participant codes, containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● participant brief CONS/COMP/BP/5 of 5 ● REPT/CONS/PB/1 of 1 (optional – see below) <p>Participant report CONS/COMP/PR/1 of 1.</p>
Instructions	<p>Give out the folders. Announce the end of preparation time. Collect the folders if the meeting does not follow immediately; in that case return them to the participants when the meeting starts. Announce the end of the meeting (you may want to give a 5-minute warning). Distribute the participant reports for individual completion pointing out that they can ask to refer (without discussion) to any 'communal' minutes if the group has decided that one person should take notes on behalf of all of them.</p>

Collect the folders containing all the paperwork, including the participant reports.

Pass the folders to the assessors with the appropriate assessment documents.

**Optional extras/
associated activities**

See REPORT: Consultancy participant brief (page 371) which asks the participant to write a report based on the meeting. This activity takes 20–30 minutes and will provide better evidence for the assessment of written skills than the short, structured participant report on page 43. If this option is used, then REPT/CONS/PB/1 of 1 should be included in the folder at the start of the preparation time.

CONSULTANCY: Compofreeze participant brief

Participant _____

You are one of a group of management consultants and have been retained by an organization which is considering whether to change locations.

The organization, Compofreeze Ltd, manufactures frozen foods and distribute via warehouses situated across the UK. They do not operate retail outlets but sell to various shops, supermarkets and specialist frozen food retailers. Details of the company are attached.

Currently all departments are centralized on a large site in West London, but the company is in financial difficulties and wishes to sell this valuable site. Because they have had difficulty finding a site elsewhere in the UK which is suitable to relocate to, they now wish to consider decentralization.

Your job is to advise the management of Compofreeze about such a plan. You should consider the problems and implications, both of remaining centralized and decentralizing. You should also devise guidelines on actions which Compofreeze might take to minimize the problems with either decision.

In your meeting you should exchange ideas and opinions on as many aspects of this business situation as possible. The group does not necessarily have to reach a consensus before the end of the meeting, although it would be helpful if it did.

CONSULTANCY: Compofreeze Ltd

Compofreeze was established in 1969 by two partners, Stan Taylor who is the current Chief Executive and Mervyn Simmons, who is Research and Development Director. The company grew rapidly until the late 1970s. Growth was only moderate from then on and it has now slackened off so that there is an urgent need to cut costs and/or to increase profits. Staff are well aware of this problem, as it has affected their bonus payments which are tied to company performance. Morale is therefore fairly low at the moment.

The company employs just under 4900 employees. An organization chart and a map showing the locations of the warehouses are attached.

The Production department has four main sections. Purchasing, with approximately 200 staff, handles all of the buying of raw materials. Much of this involves contracts with farmers for regular, bulk supplies. The buyers call on the expertise of the quality control staff in the Research and Development department. Production Planning, with 75 staff, is responsible for scheduling the uses of the processing and freezing equipment to produce the products. Food processing, with 2000 staff, is the company's largest department and actually prepares and cooks the food. Many of the staff employed here are trained as chefs; however, there are also many unskilled staff who operate machines for straightforward tasks such as peeling potatoes. The Freezing section, with 270 staff, is a highly automated unit, with a mix of technicians and operators who use sophisticated equipment to freeze the products.

The Distribution department contains the warehouses; there are 29 of these across the country and each has a staff of between 20 and 40. These staff are mostly involved in unloading and reloading goods as they pass through the warehouses. The Transport department, with 300 staff, operates a fleet of vehicles which convey the frozen goods out to the warehouses. Some vehicles are based at the warehouses and handle onward transmission to purchasers. The Product Packaging department (130 staff) organizes both the packaging of individual products (for example, as separate meals) and the packaging into cases and crates for transportation to warehouses. They use the services of the Purchasing department to obtain suitable packaging products.

The Engineering department has two sections. The Plant Maintenance department (55 staff) consists of engineers who maintain and service the equipment throughout the plant (not the vehicles, which are maintained by the Transport department). There is also a group of 45 staff who work in Plant Development – this section is engaged in designing new items of equipment to meet the special needs of the company.

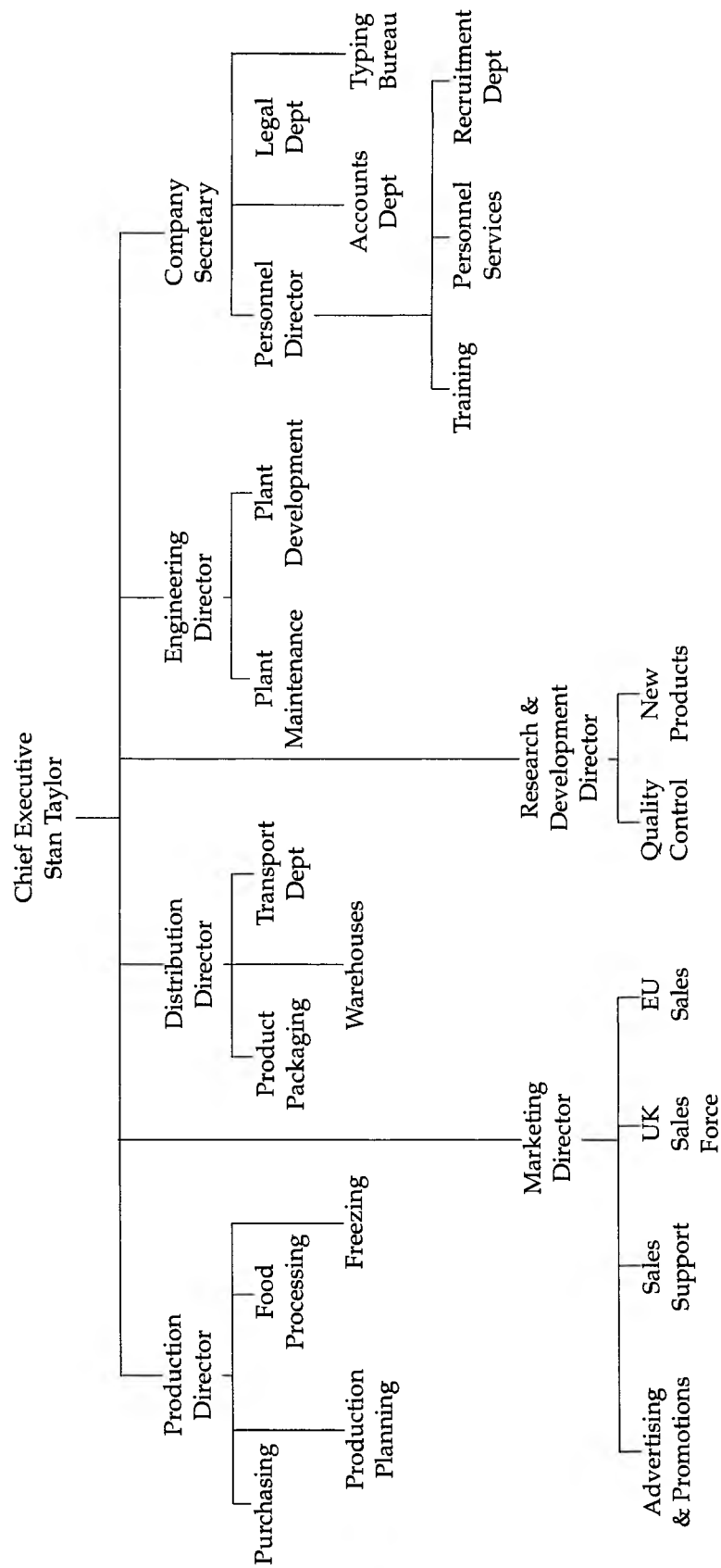
The Company Secretary controls three sections. The Personnel department is headed up by its own director and consists of a Training section (36 staff), the Personnel Services Unit (127 staff), and a Recruitment department (38 staff). The Training section provides a full range of in-company training, including induction, technical training on equipment operation, food processing (cooking) training, safety training and management training. Personnel Services consists of personnel and welfare officers who each have responsibilities for specific parts of the company. The Recruitment department acts on behalf of the whole company; there is a regular requirement for more staff, particularly in the food processing, transport and warehouse units. There is also an Accounts department (55 staff) which handles all payments into and out of the Company. Within the remit of the Company Secretary there is also a Legal department of 15 staff who are mostly

engaged in drawing up contracts with suppliers and with retail chains who want to purchase products and present them as their own brands. There is also a Typing Bureau of about 20 staff, who handle nearly all of the typing for the whole company. Only the Directors and the Company Secretary have secretaries of their own.

The Marketing department has four sections. The largest of these is the UK Sales Force, with 220 staff. These are spread throughout the UK, with five regional offices: one on the London site and the others based in appropriate warehouses to cover the North, South-east, Midlands and East Anglia, Wales and the West, Scotland and Ireland. There is also a small group of five people who are now working on sales of potential exports to Europe. There is a Sales Support Office of 65 staff, who provide back-up to the sales force and also process orders. Finally, within Marketing, there is an Advertising and Promotion section (25 staff) who produce price lists, brochures, advertising and promotional activities.

The Research and Development Director, who was one of the original founders of the company, now heads up two units, the largest of which is a Quality Control section (210 staff). Much emphasis is placed on quality control, not least because of the financial implications if the company were to cause food poisoning. All supplies are checked for quality, all processed products are checked for quality, and there are spot checks made at the warehouses. The Research and Development Director also pays close personal attention to the New Products Unit (60 staff), which researches and develops new ideas, whether in terms of new ingredients, new recipes, or new ways of presenting products.

Compofreeze Ltd: organization chart



Compofreeze Ltd: locations





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CONSULTANCY: Compofreeze participant report

Participant _____

- 1. Summarize the main points that were discussed in the meeting.**
- 2. If the meeting reached a conclusion, what was it?**
- 3. Regardless of your answer to Question 2, what key factors would you point out to the Compofreeze management?**
- 4. How do you think the Compofreeze management should communicate with their employees in this matter?**



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RECOMMENDATION

**(meetings where participants have
conflicting aims)**



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