

Chief Officer Selection Open Days

Frequently Asked Questions

APPLICATION PROCESS

- **Is there a sifting process for the application form/is the application form assessed?**
There is no sifting process for the application form. During the Assessment Centre, the application form is made available to the Assessor Team prior to the interviews. At this stage assessors **may** use the form to help decide which questions they use and what lines of enquiry they want to use. Access to the candidate's application form provides a degree of understanding of a candidate's previous roles and experience which helps them to put the candidate's examples and responses during the interview into context.
- **How does Examinations & Assessment monitor details of those individuals whose application has not been supported by their force?**
It is not mandatory for unsuccessful applications to be sent to Examinations & Assessment. Examinations & Assessment do however encourage unsuccessful applications to be sent to the team so that unsuccessful applications can be monitored.
- **Is there a time limit attached to the evidence that can be presented on the application form?**
There is no time limit on the evidence, however it needs to be relevant and contemporary. This represents a change from last year when some of the evidence needed to be from within the last three years.
- **For police staff, does the experience that candidates provide have to be limited to the time they have been with the police service?**
No, candidates can draw evidence from any job and there is no time limit on this evidence.
- **Is there a word limit for the application form?**
Yes, the word limit is detailed within the Guidance for Applicants and on the Application Form.
- **Can candidates use the same evidence that they have used on a previous application forms?**
Yes, the same evidence can be used from previous applications. Candidates are advised however to ensure the evidence is as relevant and contemporary as possible.
- **Does the application form have to be signed off by the Chief Constable?**
The ACPO/ACPOS Structured Reference should be completed by the Chief Constable. In cases where the Structured Reference is completed by a nominated ACPO/ACPOS Referee other than the Chief Constable, the signature of the Chief Constable is also required to declare that the candidate's force is endorsing the application. Only in instances where exceptional circumstances mean that the Chief Constable is unable to personally sign off the Structured Reference may it be delegated to the Deputy Chief Constable. Where for additional exceptional reasons

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the Deputy Chief Constable is unable to sign this off it can be delegated to another ACPO/ACPOS Referee, nominated by the Chief Constable.

- **What is the process for candidates currently on secondment?**
If candidates are currently on secondment away from their home force, their application should be forwarded to the Chief Constable (or equivalent) of the seconded force/organisation for review. The ACPO/ACPOS Structured Reference should be completed and signed off by the Chief Constable from the home force (as above) in consultation with the Chief Constable (or equivalent) of the seconded force/organisation where necessary.

Full details of the application process can be found in the Senior PNAC/Senior Police Staff Guidance Notes for Applicants and Line Managers document, available to download from the NPIA website.

PREPARATION

- **How should candidates prepare?**
Advice from previous candidates includes; be flexible in approach, read around key contemporary, national and strategic policing issues, have your own views, learn to manage your time, be familiar with the indicators for each of the competencies and have examples of how you have demonstrated each of them but do not just regurgitate competency indicators, and finally, be yourself.
- **To what extent do candidates need to consider the issues that will be covered in the Strategic Command Course (SCC) when preparing for the Assessment Centre?**
Some issues will be covered both in the Assessment Centre and the SCC. It would be good to think about contemporary policing issues and your own thoughts on these before attending the Assessment Centre. These same thoughts/opinions may be used at the SCC.

PSYCHOMETRICS

- **How are the psychometric tests used in the decision making process?**
The results of the personality questionnaires and situational judgement test will not form part of the selection process and will not be seen by assessors but will be incorporated as part of the feedback to candidates. The feedback from these measures will be useful for candidates in relation to their on-going development whether they are successful or unsuccessful. The results of the ability tests are not a core aspect of the process for deciding if candidates should be successful or unsuccessful. The information is made available to assessors only when reaching their final decision so it may be referred to in borderline cases. The main benefit of this information is that it is built into candidate feedback reports and may be helpful in further development.
- **What is a Situational Judgement Test and what does it measure?**
The Situational Judgement Test (SJT) is a test of managerial judgement, measuring the candidate's ability to weigh up real life managerial situations and decide on appropriate and effective ways of handling them.

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- **When can candidates access the practice on-line ability tests**
Once candidates' endorsed applications have been received by NPIA, they will be provided with a personalised login name and password to enable them to access the online ability tests. The tests provide measures of Verbal Reasoning, Numerical Reasoning and Abstract Reasoning. These tests are similar to, but not the same as, the tests candidates will complete at Senior PNAC and the Senior Police Staff Assessment Process.
- **Can candidates complete the online ability tests if they intend to apply to Senior PNAC/Senior Police Staff Assessment Process next year?**
No, these on-line tests are only available to those who are attending Senior PNAC/Senior Police Staff Assessment Process this year.

ASSESSMENT

- **What if candidates know the assessors who are assessing them.**
Candidates will be asked prior to the Assessment Centre if they know any of the assessors and whether this could provide a conflict of interests, and assessors will be asked the same question based on the candidate list. As far as possible, assessor groups are arranged so that candidates are not assessed by assessors where there could be a conflict of interests.
- **How do you make sure that if the same assessors are used throughout the Assessment Centre they are not affected by assessor bias, such as the 'halo/horns' effect?**
All assessors undergo a three day assessor course as well as specific training regarding the exercises used at the Assessment Centre. This training consists of the principle of effective assessment, including a section on understanding and avoiding the barriers to accurate observation, such as the halo/horns effect.
- **Are candidates able to access the competency framework during the Assessment Centre?**
The Integrated Competency Framework will not be available to candidates during the exercises, but can be accessed on the NPIA website prior to the Assessment Centre. The framework is also included in the Candidate Information packs that candidates receive prior to their attendance and they may bring this to the Assessment Centre. Candidates will be notified which competencies will be assessed in each exercise.
- **How does the process guard against selecting the same types of people each year?**
There are a number of factors built into the exercise design process to guard against this. Firstly, the design of the exercises and the marking guides are underpinned by the competencies. The exercise design team invite all members of ACPO/ACPOS to contribute to the exercise design process each year, thereby using different participants and diluting the views of individual chief officers. The marking guides are guides only and still allow for creativity, and as long as the 'behaviours' are still relevant to the competencies being assessed and the tasks set assessors can reward those outside of the marking guide. Assessors are also trained to be aware of 'barriers to accurate observation' and this includes the 'similar-to-me' and 'prototyping' effects.

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- Do the assessors know about the intricacies of policing in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland?**

Yes, the exercises are developed in consultation with chief officers from Scotland, Wales, PSNI and England. Therefore, the guidance provided to assessors takes into account the different specifics that officers from all jurisdictions have raised / discussed.
- Can candidates apply for a Reasonable Adjustment?**

Yes, candidates can apply for a reasonable adjustment. Any candidate who believes they may be eligible for reasonable adjustment should complete a Notification of Reasonable Adjustment that is available from the NPJA website. A psychologist from the Senior Selection Team will then contact the individual to discuss their needs. At this point they may require a diagnostic report from a specialist. Any decisions regarding reasonable adjustment will be agreed with the individual.
- How do I know that the process is fair, transparent and open for equal opportunities?**

Chief Officer Selection Open Days are intended to help make the process as transparent as possible by providing detailed information regarding the development of exercises for Senior PNAC/Senior Police Staff Assessment Process. Throughout the design process the assessment exercises are checked by an Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Advisor who is independent of NPJA and is contracted to ensure the fairness of the assessment exercises. A different Independent Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Advisor is also involved in monitoring the delivery of the Assessment Centre.

ASSESSMENT CENTRE EXERCISES

- Is the terminology used in exercises adapted to reflect Scottish policing?**

The terminology used within the exercises is adapted to reflect differences in policing throughout the UK. Differences in terminology will also be highlighted in the assessor guidance to ensure assessors are aware of this when marking candidates.
- Are some exercises weighted/more important than others?**

No, all exercises are weighted equally.
- Will the media exercise be filmed in one take this year?**

Yes, there will only be one take. The way this exercise is assessed is slightly different from previous years. The exercise will not be seen by the assessors in real time but watched at a later point. The assessors will get an opportunity to watch the clip twice; the first time to observe it and the second time to assess it. However, candidates will film the interview as if it were live and will be allowed only one opportunity.
- Will I need to complete the written exercise(s) on computer?**

During the design process for this year's Senior PNAC and the Senior Police Staff Assessment Process research has been undertaken as to the feasibility of candidates using computers to respond to the written exercise(s). The outcome of this research has indicated that this option would not currently be practicable for both logistical and assessment reasons and therefore candidates will continue to hand-write their responses. Further research and consultation with candidates will

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be conducted during the assessment processes held later this year in order to further explore the provision of this facility in future.

- **Are the Senior PNAC/Senior Police Staff assessment processes biased towards Home Office based forces?**

The Senior PNAC/Senior Police Staff assessment processes are not biased towards Home Office forces. The processes are underpinned by the generic Integrated Competency Framework and cover contemporary policing issues which are wider than any particular force, ensuring that candidates from no particular forces are advantaged or disadvantaged.

For more information regarding the Assessment Centre processes, please see the Chief Officer Selection Open Day slides.

RESULTS AND FEEDBACK

- **How do assessors reach the decision of 'successful'/what's the decision making process?**

At the Assessment Centre the trained assessors use the ORCE (Observe, Record, Classify & Evaluate) model of assessment, which is a widely recognised and applied model for assessing.

The assessors observe candidates' performances 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. In addition, the assessors evaluate candidates' performances in the exercise overall on a 1 – 6 rating scale.

Once all assessments of candidates' performances have been completed (this will be after candidates have left the Assessment Centre) their performance is considered overall. This is done by collating all of the performance evaluations from all exercises completed during the Assessment Centre. The ratings obtained in competency areas and exercises are considered by the group of assessors. This process is not purely a mechanical totalling of marks; it aims to include all information available throughout all of the Assessment Centre, including performance on all exercises and competencies, and the psychometric ability tests.

Candidates are not required to 'pass' any one exercise or competency area; they are required to achieve satisfactory or above in the majority of exercises and competencies. Anyone who reaches the standard will be successful.

- **Do assessors get to see previous reports?**
The assessors do not have access to any previous results or reports until after they have reached their final decision. At this stage this information is provided to assist assessors in providing feedback and direction of possible future development candidates may consider.
- **How many people will get through the process this year – will there be a limit imposed?**
No, there will be no limit. Anyone who is successful will be eligible to attend the SCC.
- **Who provides the feedback to candidates?**

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The feedback session will be led by an occupational psychologist from Examinations & Assessment. The Senior Selection administration team from Examinations & Assessment will contact candidates following the distribution of their results to organise a two-hour session. Candidates will be provided with the potential dates for the feedback sessions prior to the assessment centre to help with diary management.

Candidates are encouraged to take up the offer, as the feedback session helps them to interpret the feedback in the context of their personal style and in the context of what they already know about themselves from other sources of feedback. This process can be highly beneficial, and help them to clarify and prioritise their development needs.

- **Is it possible that candidates can pass first time around?**
Yes, 55.9% (33) of candidates who were attending the Assessment Centre for the first time were successful at Senior PNAC last year.
- **Is there a qualification at the end of Senior PNAC/Staff Assessment Process?**
No. Successful candidates are offered a place on the Strategic Command Course.

NSCAS/SCDS

- **How does the NSCAS service work? Is it 1 to 1 or remote?**
The NSCAS advisers usually work with clients on a face-to-face basis, however, some sessions may be conducted via email or phone by agreement between the adviser and the client.

STRATEGIC COMMAND COURSE (SCC)

- **Is there a maximum number of places on the SCC?**
No, there is no maximum number of places on the SCC.
- **Which organisations will attendees on the SCC be working with?**
Attendees will work with both corporate and Government organisations. New organisations can be sourced by attendees. Attendees perform 5 days of consultancy work and then present their findings to the company.
- **How important is it for attendees to disengage from their force?**
It is very important for attendees to disengage from their force. The SCC is very intensive, and so it is not recommended that attendees continue to engage with force business.

Some forces may not be able to accommodate disengagement from jobs, and this may be something that attendees will have to manage and negotiate with their Chief Constable.

- **Once the SCC has finished are there any ongoing development strategies?**
No, not at the moment.
- **Do the successful police staff candidates attend the same SCC as the successful police officers?**

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Yes, they do exactly the same course.

- **What is the success rate of completing the SCC and getting a job as a chief officer?**
This depends on the number of jobs available. The vast majority of last year's attendees have a chief officer position. However, this varies from year to year.
- **What type of experience is the SCC for police staff? What type of experience do you need as police staff?**
The feedback from both police officers and police staff who have attended the SCC has been very positive. The course is about development and learning from each other. The assessment processes are different, but everyone works together on the course.
- **What are the criteria for deferred entry?**
This is able to be managed under exceptional circumstances. The reasons for deferral would need to be discussed with Peter Fahy and the SCC Directors.
- **What have police staff who have been through the SCC done with their qualification? How are police staff being encouraged to use their training following the SCC?**
Unlike for police officers, the SCC doesn't link directly to eligibility for chief officer roles. However, it can help attendees to perform more effectively in their jobs and add value to their CV.
- **How is the SCC viewed by other organisations?**
Positively. Completion of the SCC shows a significant commitment of effort and time, and there is an appreciation of the quality of development involved.

For more information on the SCC, please see the SCC section of the NPIA website.