



**EXPLANATORY GUIDE ON PROCEDURAL MATTERS RELATED TO THE SMS
COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT PRACTICE FOR DEPARTMENTS**

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Description of Terminology

| Terminology | Description |
|---|--|
| Appeals Committee | A committee that evaluates the assessors/observers' appropriate scoring, interpretation, reporting, and explanation of a candidate's psychometric results during a Selection Centre in relation to the job description or a delegate's behaviour linked to competencies during a Development Centre, when the formal appeals process is followed. It does not evaluate the Selection Committee's decision, or the Selection Committee's or the user Department, or any other person/stakeholder's use of a Centre's results. |
| Assessor / Observer | <p>An assessor is an appropriately competent and accredited professional accountable for scoring, integrating, interpreting, reporting, and explaining psychometric results.</p> <p>An Observer is an appropriately competent and accredited professional accountable for observing, noting, classifying, and evaluating the behaviour of a participant during an Assessment Centre, integrating, interpreting, reporting, and explaining results.</p> |
| Candidate | An applicant competing for a job opening who has put themselves forward and/or has been identified as suitable |
| Cognitive Process Profile (CPP) | This is a cognitive psychometric test measuring the way a person thinks when dealing with new information and solving problems of varying complexity. It is an exercise that externalises and tracks thinking processes on thousands of measurement points, integrating results with an algorithmically expert system. It is a capability measure completed under supervision using a computer |
| Delegate / Employee | A person appointed to a position who attends the Development Centre to identify areas needing development and areas of strength in relation to applicable competencies to develop a Personal Development Plan |
| Development Centre | An immersive HR process using simulations and other techniques to evaluate a delegate's competence in relation to applicable competencies. The purpose of a Development Centre is to identify current areas of strength and current areas needing development to create a Personal Development Plan that, when actively implemented, leads to improved performance and career progression |
| Fifteen Factor Questionnaire Plus (15FQ+) | This is a personality-related psychometric test measuring a broad range of personality traits. These traits assess a person's characteristic ways of behaving across a wide range of situations. It is a self-report questionnaire completed under computer supervision. When |

| Terminology | Description |
|---|--|
| | interpreting this profile, specific attention is given to <i>Emotional Intelligence</i> . |
| GIOTTO | This is a personality-related psychometric test that measures a person's habitual style of responding to situations and can reveal strengths and areas for development related to <i>Integrity</i> . It is a self-report questionnaire, completed under supervision using a computer |
| Psychometric Test / Assessment Instrument | A standardised, scientifically developed test or assessment that measures psychological constructs such as cognitive ability, personality, attitudes, interests, emotional functioning, etc. |
| Selection Centre | This is an integral part of the selection process for competitive roles at SMS levels and consists of the use of various selection instruments, such as psychometric tests |
| Service Provider | A company vetted and contracted as one of the approved panel of service providers to conduct SMS assessments |
| User Department | A department that employs members of the SMS and that falls within the power of the authority of the Minister for Public Service and Administration |

Table 1: Description of Terminology

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Public Service has seen the value of competency-based management and specifically the value of competency assessments as a meaningful method of understanding the level of individual competence for Senior Management Service (SMS) members.
- 1.2 Competency-based assessment is a vehicle that the Public Service uses to understand the level of an individual's competence and to determine any skills deficiencies at the early stages of recruitment or during targeted development initiatives.
- 1.3 This guide intends to provide departments, candidates, and delegates/employees who attend these assessments with information about pre-assessment, assessment, and post-assessment procedures. It is further intended to ensure consistency in the practice.
- 1.3 For purposes of streamlining the process, this guide is divided into two parts:
 - a) Part One (1), deals with assessments for the Selection Centres (selection assessments,
 - b) Part Two (2) deals with assessments for the Development Centres,
 - c)

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2024, the Minister for the Public Service and Administration (MPSA) approved the inclusion of additional psychometric assessment instruments into the current SMS competency-based assessment battery. The directive was revised to incorporate the additional psychometric assessment instruments and the change in the assessment approach. The psychometric assessment is part of the selection process. The directive is prepared to guide the departments on implementing the new assessment approach for SMS members in the Public Service. The approved

new assessment approach is outlined under paragraph four (4). The assessment approach will consist of a Selection Centre and a Development Centre.

2.2 The Selection Centre encompasses a technical exercise or test, and a structured interview, both compiled and administered by the selection panel, as well as psychometric assessments, including the Integrity tests, Work-based Personality Instrument, and a Cognitive assessment tool, administered by a service provider. The Development Centre comprises simulation exercises such as analysis exercises (case studies), role-plays, and in-box exercises, along with a situational judgment test (SJT) involving scenario-based questions, as outlined in Chapter 5 of the SMS Handbook.

2.3 The Work-based assessment tool

- a) This psychometric test is registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and has applicable South African norms.
- b) This is an off-the-shelf psychometric instrument developed by Psytech.
- c) It assesses a person's behavioural preferences, such as interpersonal, coping, and thinking styles, and it also assesses emotional intelligence, amongst other personality-related constructs. Emotional intelligence, as measured by the instrument, consists of two domains:
 - i. Personal Domain – (1) self-awareness competency cluster (emotional self-awareness; Self-confidence; Accurate Self-assessment) (2) self-management competency cluster (emotional self-control; optimism; achievement orientation; forward planning; conscientiousness; adaptability; trustworthiness).
 - ii. Interpersonal Domain – (1) Social awareness competency cluster (empathy; interpersonal openness; organisational awareness; service orientation) (2) Relationship Management competency cluster (persuasiveness; conflict management; inspirational leadership; change catalyst; team working; open communication).
- d) The test is administered online under the supervision of a professional.

- e) This test takes approximately 30 minutes to complete.

2.4 Integrity Test

- a) The recommended Integrity Test is a psychometric test registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and has applicable norms.
- b) This is an off-the-shelf psychometric instrument developed by Giotto.
- c) It assesses seven factors:
 - i. Prudence (carefulness and attention to detail);
 - ii. Fortitude (commitment to work, perseverance, and reliability);
 - iii. Temperance (self-control, emotional regulation, control of anger and impulsivity);
 - iv. Justice (fairness and justice, respect for rules and procedures);
 - v. Faith (loyalty and dependability, trustworthiness, respect for authority and organisational values);
 - vi. Charity (willingness to support each other, team orientation, transparency); and
 - vii. Hope (positive future orientation, optimism, coping with change)
- d) The test is administered online under the supervision of a professional.
- e) This test takes approximately 30 minutes to complete.

2.5 Cognitive Assessment Tool

- a) The Cognitive Assessment tool used is a computerised cognitive assessment that indicates the typical work environment in relation to structure and complexity that a person is comfortable functioning in, as well as which problem-solving styles a person uses and how information is being processed.
- b) The assessment is administered online under supervision from an accredited professional.
- c) This test takes approximately three (3) hours to complete.

2.6 Development Assessment Centre

The Development Centre evaluates the SMS leadership competencies as part of identifying areas needing development and areas of strength for new and existing SMS members. This evaluation is based on the core generic leadership and management competencies, as well as some process competencies outlined in Chapter 5 of the Senior Management Service (SMS) Handbook. The Development Centre is attended by SMS members who are expected to have these competencies as determined by their job descriptions/profiles. Pure technical specialists remunerated at the SMS level who are not expected to perform managerial duties are not expected to attend a Development Centre.

3. RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

- 3.1 This guide must be read in conjunction with the Public Service Act, 1994 (as amended), Public Service Regulation, 2016, Chapter 5 of the SMS Handbook, the Directives on the implementation of competency-based assessments, training, and development for members of SMS in the Public Service, as well as relevant circulars.

4. APPROVED SMS ASSESSMENT CENTRES

- 4.1 The assessments aimed at selection and the assessments aimed at development have been separated. Figure 1 depicts this separation.

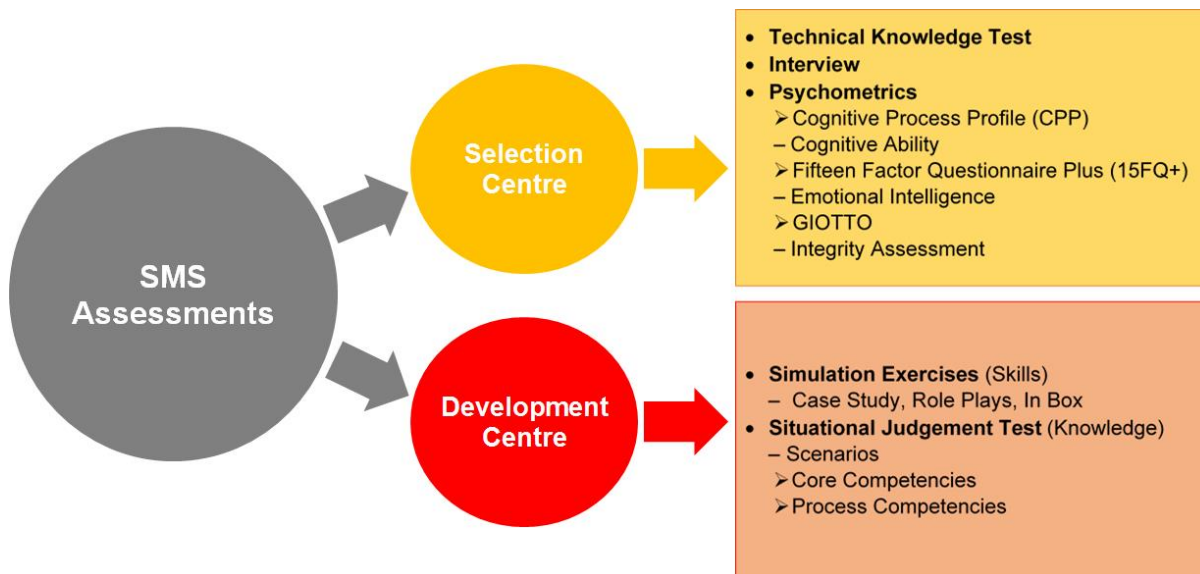


Figure 1: Approved SMS Assessment Approach

4.2 All shortlisted candidates during the selection process shall complete a technical exercise/assessment, which will determine their capabilities for the job role. The selection committee will decide to conduct the technical exercise/assessment before or on the day of the interview. The second assessment will be a structured interview, where all shortlisted candidates will be invited for a structured interview to assess their competencies, experience, and overall suitability for the position in line with the job requirements.

4.3 A maximum of three (3) candidates who obtained higher scores in terms of the technical exercise and the interview and are the *best fit* for the position shall then undergo the psychometric assessments.

4.4 The employee/delegate will only attend the Development Centre once appointed to the SMS level position.

5. WORDING ON THE SMS ADVERTISEMENT

5.1 The following wording is to be included in SMS job advertisements:

All shortlisted candidates for SMS posts will be subjected to a technical exercise and interview. Following the technical exercise and interview, a maximum of three (3) SMS candidates will undergo psychometric assessments to assess cognitive capabilities, behavioural preferences, emotional intelligence, and integrity.

6. ASSESSMENT WEIGHTS AND RATINGS

6.1 Each assessment instrument used during the Selection Centre is assigned a specific weighting, which contributes to the overall selection outcome.

6.2 Assessment Weights

The weights that each assessment instrument will carry in terms of the selection decision are indicated below:

| Assessment instrument | Weight |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Technical knowledge test/exercise | 15% |
| Structured interview | 45% |
| Psychometric tests/assessments | 40% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 2: Weights of each Selection Centre Assessment

6.3 Assessment Ratings

6.3.1 Each assessment instrument uses a 5-point rating scale.

a) Interview and Technical test/exercise

The department will use their approved five-point rating scale. The agreed-upon rating out of five (5) for the technical assessment, as well as the agreed-upon rating out of five (5) for the interview, will be used to populate the selection sheet per candidate (See the Excel spreadsheet: Selection Scoring sheet). For example, if the candidate received a rating of 4/5 for the technical test and a 3/5

for the structured interview, these respective ratings will be used to populate the Selection Score Sheet.

b) Psychometric Assessment

The 40% that the psychometric tests will contribute to the selection decision is calculated by giving each psychometric assessment the following weighting:

- i. Giotto = 40%
- ii. 15FQ+= 30%
- iii. CPP = 30%

- c) The combined overall assessment rating for the psychometric tests, as indicated in the candidate's Psychometric Integrated Assessment Report, compiled by the Service Provider, incorporates the weights of each test when calculating the overall rating. The Selection Committee will only work with the overall assessment rating and populate the scores into the Selection Score Sheet with this rating (see Annexure 1).

6.4 Calculating the Overall Selection Outcome: Considering all Selection Instruments

6.4.1 The final selection decision is based on the results of each selection instrument, considering the weighting allocated to each component in the Selection Scoring Sheet. The Selection Scoring Sheet is completed using the ratings achieved for each selection instrument, as follows:

- a) *Technical Test / Exercise*: The rating out of 5 obtained for the technical test or exercise.
- b) *Structured Interview*: The rating out of 5 obtained for the interview.
- c) *Psychometric Assessments*: The combined overall assessment rating out of 5 for the psychometric assessments, as reflected in the Integrated Assessment Report.

6.5 The combined overall assessment rating indicates the *rating category* out of 5 and should **not** be rounded up or down e.g. 1.60 falls into the rating category of 1 and not 2.

- 6.6 The total weighted score for all selection instruments out of 5 is automatically calculated on the Selection Scoring Sheet.
- 6.7 If the results from the psychometric assessments fall into the rating category of 1 or 2 out of a possible 5, the candidate **should not be considered for appointment**. As an example: if the results from the psychometric tests are - *Overall Assessment Results: 2.66*. The candidate did not score a 3 out of 5 and should not be considered further.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1 The selection committee is responsible for:
- a) Ensuring compliance with recruitment and selection policies.
 - b) Planning and preparing the selection process.
 - c) Ensuring fairness, transparency, and compliance during the selection process.
 - d) Evaluating and scoring candidates individually to maintain objectivity.
 - e) Treating all information about candidates as confidential.
 - f) Decision-making based on the outcome of the assessments and making recommendations to the delegated approval person.
 - g) Documentation and audit trails.
- 7.2 Human Resource Management is responsible for:
- a) The Human Resource Management manager or practitioners are responsible for handling all the assessment processes for selection purposes within their departments.
 - b) Arrange a feedback session for the interpretation of the psychometric assessment results with the appointed service provider and selection panel within one (1) week of the assessment.
 - c) Document all decisions during the selection process.
 - d) Safe storage and handling of all material related to the selection process according to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) 2013 (Act 4 of 2013).

- e) Prepare and submit a report to the DPSA on the assessments conducted for selection purposes on an annual basis based on the template provided by the DPSA.

7.3 Human Resource Development is responsible for:

- a) Human Resource Development Manager or Practitioners handle all assessment processes for developmental purposes within their departments.
- b) Ensure that the employee attends the Development Centre within one month of the appointment of the SMS member(s).
- c) Arrange a personal feedback session about the Development Centre results with the appointed service provider, line manager, and the assessed employee/delegate within two (2) weeks of assessments.
- d) Plan, arrange, and deliver targeted training programmes or interventions to address the identified developmental areas on behalf of the employee
- e) Prepare and submit a report to the DPSA on the Development Centre outcome, the resulting training, and development, as well as the impact of the development.

7.4 A service provider appointed on the panel is responsible for:

- a) Preparing candidates/delegates for assessments.
- b) Conducting the psychometric tests and the Development Centre.
- c) Preparing and submitting an integrated selection assessment report per candidate to the departments.
- d) Providing interpretation of the selection assessment results to the Selection Committee.
- e) Providing personal feedback to the candidates and sharing psychometric test feedback reports with them.
- f) Conducting detailed, personal feedback discussions with Development Centre delegates and line managers, and sharing their detailed Development Report with them, also making relevant development suggestions.

7.5 Line managers are responsible for:

- a) Actively participating in the Development Centre feedback discussion.
- b) Actively supporting the learning and development of employee(s).
- c) Providing an employee with a fair opportunity for training to address development areas.
- d) Monitoring the performance of the employee through the performance management system.

7.6 Candidate/employee (delegate) is responsible for:

- a) Availing themselves of assessments, training, and development.
- b) Incorporating the identified development areas into their Personal Development Plan.
- c) Taking charge and ownership of his or her own development, ensuring that his or her own growth takes place.

8. PROCESSES TO BE FOLLOWED

8.1 The processes to be followed by the different role-players before, during, and after the assessments are outlined below.

A. Part 1: Selection Centres (Assessments for Selection Purposes)

Figure 2 depicts the process to be followed by user departments for selection assessments



Figure 2: Selection Centre Process

B. Part 2: Development Centres Process (Assessments for Development Purposes)

This assessment shall be conducted within one (1) month of the appointment of the employee. The service provider that administered the psychometric assessments during the selection process shall also be engaged to conduct the Development Centre once the candidate is appointed, to facilitate the integration of reports (refer to paragraph 15.1 (c) of the Directive). Based on the Departmental budgetary arrangements, one purchase order may include assessments for both selection and development purposes. The process to be followed by user departments is depicted in Figure 3.

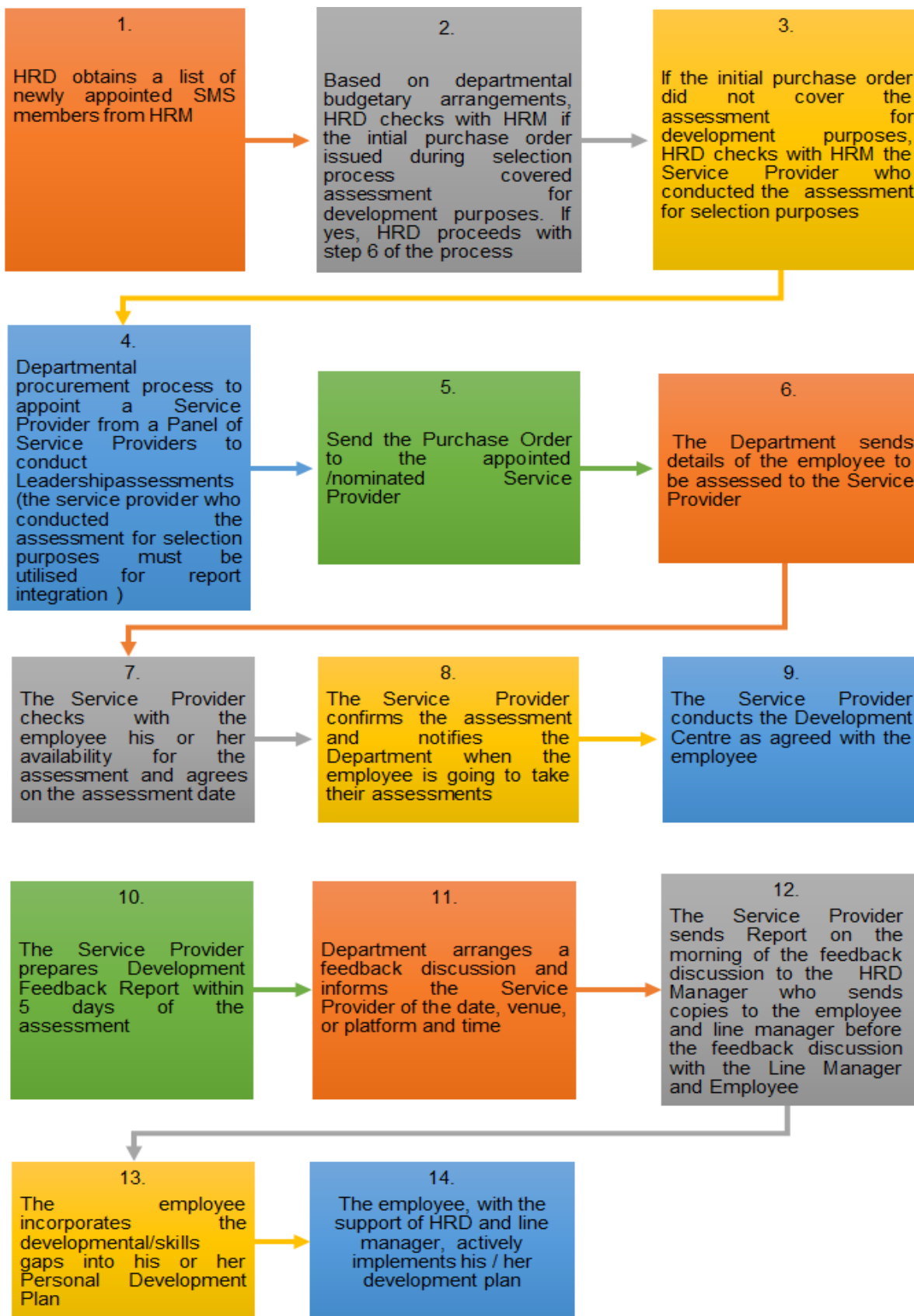


Figure 3: Development Centre Process to be followed by User Departments for Employees

All assessments for existing SMS members, as outlined in paragraphs 9.1(g) and 9.2 of the directives, are to follow the process depicted in Figure 4 below.

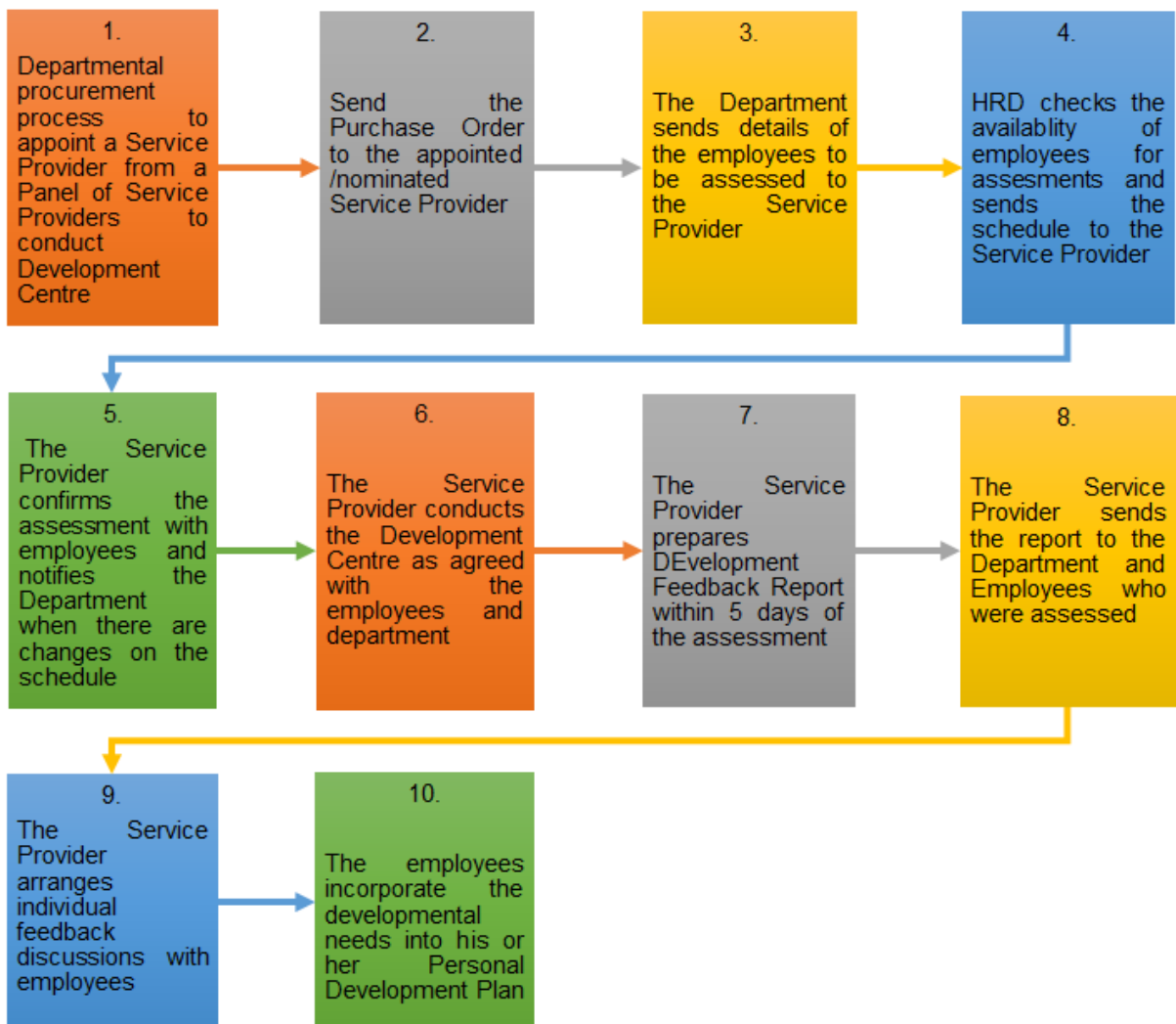


Figure 4: Development Centre Process for Existing Employees

9. GENERAL

9.1 Candidates or employees have a right to seek further clarity regarding their assessment results from the service provider that conducted the assessments.

9.2 Human Resources Managers or Practitioners must make this document available to the Selection Committee, line managers, and other stakeholders within the User Department.

ANNEXURE 1: SELECTION SCORING SHEET

Download the Selection Scoring Sheet through the link below:

[DPSA Selection Panel Score Sheet Converter](#)

1. **How to access the link(s):**

Option: Ctrl + Right-click, click on copy hyperlink, then paste the link on Chrome or Internet Explorer browsers, then press enter, and the Score Sheet will open. Please note that you will not be able to work on the document unless it is downloaded and saved on your computer.

2. **How to download the score sheet**

Once the Score Sheet is opened, go to file and click on " Create a copy", then download a copy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

ON PROCEDURAL MATTERS RELATED TO THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICE (SMS) COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT PRACTICE FOR DEPARTMENTS

| No. | Frequently Asked Questions | Answer |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | What is the purpose of the SMS competency assessment process? | The competency-based assessment process is used to understand an individual's competence level and to identify skills deficiencies at the early stages of recruitment or during targeted development initiatives. |
| 2 | What are the two assessment approaches in the approved SMS assessment model? | The approved assessment approach consists of a Selection Centre and a Development Centre. |
| 3 | What assessments form part of the Selection Centre? | The Selection Centre includes a technical exercise or test, a structured interview, and psychometric assessments. |
| 4 | What is the purpose of the Development Centre? | The Development Centre evaluates SMS leadership competencies to identify areas needing development and areas of strength for new and existing SMS members. |
| 5 | Which candidates undergo psychometric assessments? | A maximum of three candidates who obtained higher scores in the technical exercise and interview and are the best fit for the position shall undergo the psychometric assessments. |
| 6 | What wording must be included in SMS job advertisements? | SMS job advertisements must indicate that shortlisted candidates will be subjected to a technical exercise and interview, and that a maximum of three candidates will undergo psychometric assessments. |
| 7 | What are the assessment weightings for the Selection Centre? | The technical knowledge test or exercise accounts for 15%, the structured interview for 45%, and the psychometric tests or assessments for 40%. |
| 8 | How are the psychometric assessments weighted? | Psychometric assessment will contribute 40% |
| 9 | Can a candidate be considered for appointment if the psychometric assessment results fall into rating category 1 or 2? | A candidate whose psychometric assessment results fall into rating category 1 or 2 out of 5 should not be considered for appointment. |
| 10 | What are the responsibilities of the Selection Committee? | The Selection Committee is responsible for ensuring compliance with recruitment and selection policies, planning and preparing the selection process, ensuring fairness and transparency, evaluating and scoring candidates individually, maintaining confidentiality, making recommendations, and ensuring documentation and audit trails. |
| 11 | When must the Development Centre be conducted after the appointment? | The Development Centre must be conducted within one month of the SMS members' appointment. |
| 12 | What is the process if a candidate or delegate is dissatisfied with assessment results? | The candidate or delegate may have further discussions with the service provider who conducted assessments for clarity. |
| 13 | Does the guide repeal previous instructions or state when it comes into effect? | The directive is revised to incorporate the additional psychometric assessment instruments and the change in the assessment approach. This guide must be read in conjunction with the Public Service Act, 1994, Public Service Regulation, 2016, Chapter 5 of the SMS Handbook, the Directives on the implementation of competency-based assessments, training, and development for members of SMS in the Public Service, as well as relevant circulars. |