



The Global Research Report:

**An International Survey of
Assessment Centre Practices**

2008

Report by A&DC

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Executive Summary

The Global Research Report (GRR) provides a truly international insight into the various practices employed by organisations across the world, when using Assessment Centre (AC) methodology. This survey by A&DC was the largest ever undertaken, with 443 respondents from over 354 organisations participating and their responses are provided in this report.

It is encouraging to observe that both established and newer organisations, with a variety of staff numbers, are embracing AC methodology within their talent management initiatives around the world. In many respects, there are some encouraging findings which demonstrate an adherence to established Best Practice Guidelines. However, there were also some findings which suggest there is room for improvement. Key observations from the survey are summarised in the following points:

- It was found that 90% of our sample selected their criteria by using either an existing competency framework (35%) or by conducting some form of job analysis (55%), and only 6% were not using any criteria to assess their Participants. Competency frameworks are useful to a certain extent; however, in today's fast-paced working environments, job roles are susceptible to constant change, and having a generic framework of competencies may be accurate for some roles, but not for others, especially in larger organisations with numerous levels and job roles. Therefore before assessing for any role, it is important to obtain a firm understanding of the types of behaviours that are required to perform in that role to an effective standard. It is encouraging that over half of the GRR respondents conducted some form of dedicated job analysis to identify specific job-related criteria, but there is clearly significant scope for more to follow this practice.
- The involvement of Line Managers within the assessment process was encouraging with 53% of the sample suggesting that Line Managers were asked to be Assessors within their organisations. Additionally, a majority of AC and Development Centre (DC) respondents stated that the Assessors of Centres are at least one-level above the Participants. This is a promising finding, as it not only adds credibility to the process to see that they are being assessed by individuals with relevant experience, but it also signals commitment to the Participants and secures the buy-in of key stakeholders at various levels of Management within the organisation.
- It was positive to find that the length of the DCs were generally longer than ACs, given that feedback and subsequent development activities need to be included within the process, as all too often DCs are no more than ACs with a name change! The timings of when results are fed back to the Participants, however, was concerning in some respects, as 49% of DC respondents stated that they provided feedback 'sometime after the centre'. Feedback is recognised as being an inherent part of the DC process, and Best Practice states that ideally it should be provided as the Participant works through the Centre, or at its conclusion. The fact that almost half of the DC respondents provided their Participants with feedback 'sometime after' the DC may impact on how the Participant perceives its purpose. With no immediate focus on development, the Participant may be less inclined to commit to a development plan if they are not made aware of their development needs immediately after the Centre. We would recommend that feedback is integrated into the DC event wherever possible, in order to reduce the anxiety of Participants and allow them to work on their development plan immediately.
- Assessing the criterion 'Diversity Awareness' was the least selected response from a majority of the GRR respondents, which is a surprising finding given the current drive for more diverse working populations and equal opportunities for employees in organisations, especially in the regions with more established AC and DC practices (eg Europe). However, this is evidently not the case and it may be that it isn't high on organisations' agendas as of yet.

- Nearly a quarter of the GRR respondents (21%) used ratios of Assessors to Participants that do not adhere to Best Practice Guidelines, with three or more Participants being used to every one Assessor. This inevitably impacts on the quality of the Assessor's evaluations and it is therefore important for organisations to ensure that they have access to enough trained Assessors (either internal or external) when they are conducting a Centre. Despite 75% of the respondents claiming that they provide training to their Assessors, it is clearly evident that more of this training is required within organisations across the globe, as the majority of respondents from all five regions stated that they had less than five trained Assessors within their organisations. It is clear also that the training provided to Assessors is not sufficient, as 71% of the sample stated that Assessor training is less than two days in duration. This finding is of some concern, as the assessment process is reliant on Assessors making accurate, objective assessments of Participants' behaviours, which necessitates thorough Assessor training. This will be especially important for DC Assessors, as it is evident from the survey that more components are included in their training, such as coaching and feedback skills.
- It was encouraging to find that the most frequently selected Assessor training components across the sample were the role of the Assessor, familiarity with the criteria assessed and the exercise simulations used. However, the fact that only 43% of the sample used the Observe, Record, Classify and Evaluate (ORCE) process is indicative that this behavioural assessment technique is not as widespread as one would expect. This is a worrying finding, as it implies that Assessors are being taught to use less objective and standardised forms of behavioural assessment, or worse still, no form of structured assessment (46% of cases). It may be that some regions are not familiar with the 'ORCE' process, but use their own versions of this technique to observe, record, classify and evaluate behaviour. It is imperative that Assessors are trained in using the ORCE technique in order to evaluate Participants' performances fairly, objectively and without bias.

There were some notable trends identified across the responses of the five continents that are worthy of discussion. These are as follows:

- In terms of adherence to Best Practice Guidelines, it appears that the European respondents are most notable in this respect. Respondents from Europe used the ORCE technique most frequently to evaluate Participants, as well as having the largest proportion adhering to correct 'Assessor to Participant' ratios. This may be due to the degree with which Europe is established in using AC methodology, compared to other regions included in this report, some of which are only just beginning to embrace these processes. It is therefore important for guidelines of Best Practice to be communicated effectively across all regions employing AC methodology, to ensure that, despite cultural differences, fairness in assessment and development is a key priority and is implemented accordingly.
- The Americas seemed to be an anomaly in terms of a couple of the trends found within this report. For example, all regions apart from Americas mostly use Assessors that are one level above the Participant; however, the Americas' respondents most frequently selected Assessors that are the 'same level' as the Participants. Also, respondents from the Americas indicated that they train their Assessors less frequently than the other regions, with only 56% of these respondents suggesting that they train their Assessors compared to at least 70% of respondents from the other regions. However, the small sample size from the Americas and the US in particular may well explain these anomalies and it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions at this stage, until this sample size is increased.

- Key similarities across all five regions included the types of criteria being assessed with Teamwork and Leadership evidently the most frequently selected criteria across all regions. Similarly, the key qualities for Assessors were consistent across regions, with either Listening skills or Objective Judgements selected most frequently. Also, the types of exercises used most often across all regions were either Interview Simulations or Oral Presentations. These trends suggest that there is a consistency across the continents over what skills they require of their Assessors, the criteria that they wish to measure and how (in the form of exercise format) they wish to measure these. If these findings are as consistent across the regions as indicated by our report, then there should be an opportunity to adopt similarly consistent approaches to other aspects of AC methodology, such as the length of Assessor training and types of observation techniques, etc.

It is understandable that Human Resources (HR) practitioners are often constrained by numerous factors, which inevitably effect the implementation of any AC or DC. However, it is hoped that this report will provide some useful information pertaining to the types of AC and DC practices that are currently in place around the world, and that this information can be used in order to improve and implement more rigorous AC and DC processes within your organisation.

Please note that, throughout this report there may be percentages presented that do not add up to 100. This is due to a rounding of the individual figures to the nearest whole integer during the analysis stage, which can occasionally equate to percentages slightly above or below 100 when aggregated.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Global Research Report (GRR) is to detail and discuss the findings from A&DC's global survey of Assessment Centre (AC) practices, the only survey of its kind to explore organisational AC practices on a truly **global** scale. The research has been promoted across all continents via A&DC and our network of International Partners.

The research will be highly useful to all organisations that employ ACs, as it will provide them with unique information about the methodologies used by others with alternative societal and cultural considerations, and how their AC practices reflect these factors.

The GRR contains information from 443 respondents who completed or partially completed the survey, and provides invaluable information pertaining to the types of AC methodologies that they are currently employing within their organisations, for either selection or development purposes.

The GRR provides insights in to the following areas:

- Respondent organisations (eg size, business sector, time established).
- The uses of AC methodology.
- Job analysis and competency frameworks.
- The Assessors (roles, level).
- Centre design.
- Centre evaluation and validation.
- Current and future trends.
- Benefits and concerns regarding ACs.

1.1 Survey Respondents

HR professionals, occupational psychologists and AC practitioners worldwide were invited by email to participate in the research survey which was hosted online. It was necessary that Participants in the research could demonstrate relevant experience in designing and running ACs and/or Development Centres (DCs).

From the 443 respondents, 78% of them were from private sector organisations, with 19% from public sector and the remaining 3% from 'not for profit' organisations. Responses from across 43 countries were grouped into five continents, with the percentage split shown in Figure 1.1.1 below, and the sample sizes across continents in Figure 1.1.2. European respondents formed the majority of the sample (48%), with significant contributions from Asia (23%) and Africa (14%). Oceania formed 8% of the sample, with North America and South America being combined to form the 'Americas', which contributed to 7% of the total sample. The two American continents were combined due to a small representation of respondents from both respective regions. The disappointingly small response from the US in particular makes it difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions regarding US practices, although we will make some guarded attempts in this report.

Furthermore, sample sizes vary from one question to another, as not all respondents completed every question, so where appropriate we have indicated the sample size for that particular question.

A full list of all the countries that participated in this survey and the number of respondents from each country, along with a breakdown of the continents by country can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 1.1 Continental Spread of Respondents

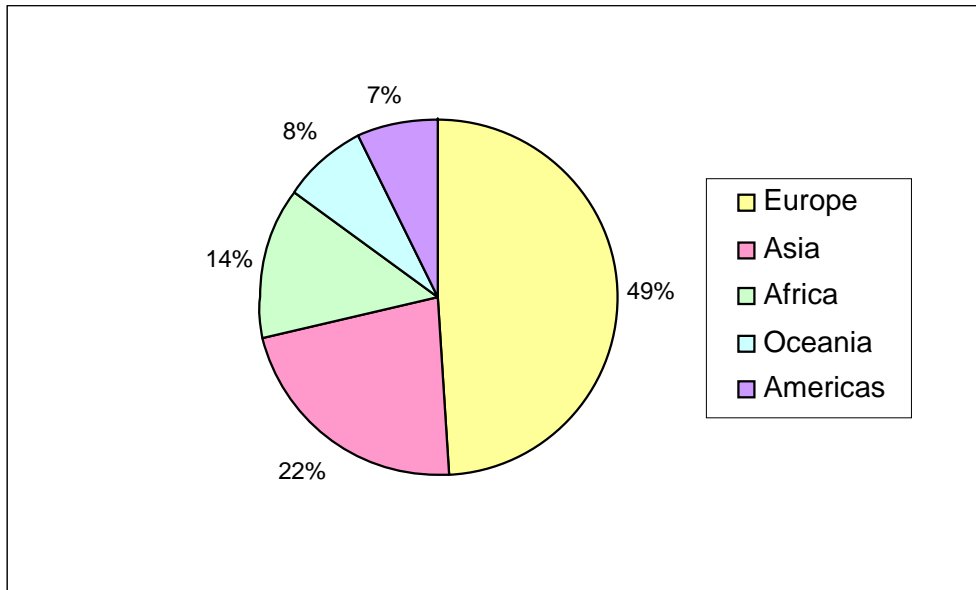


Figure 1.2 Respondent Numbers by Continent

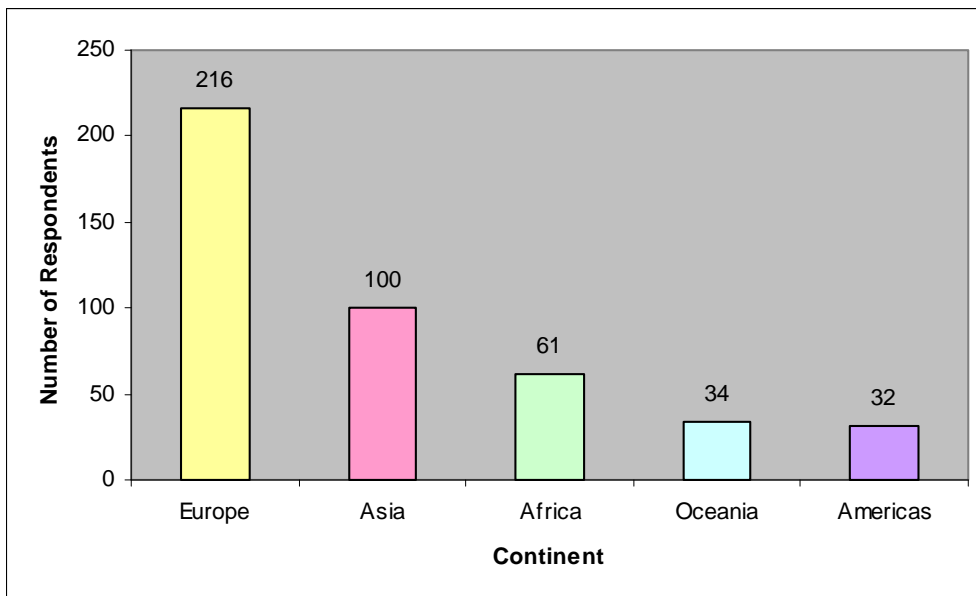
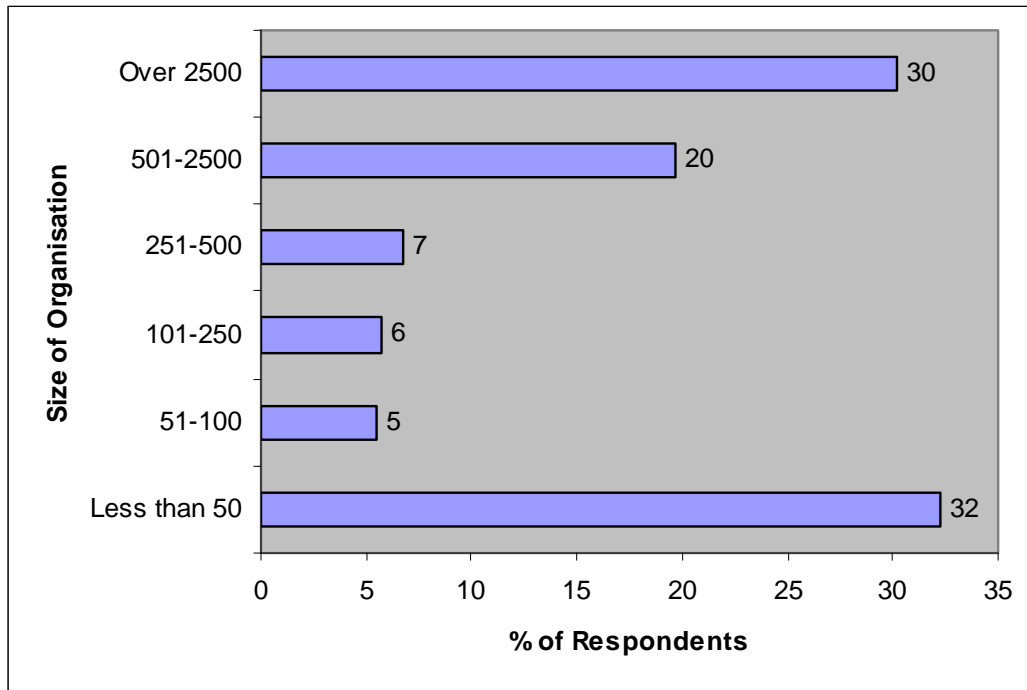


Figure 1.3 shows that the survey supports the notion that ACs, in one form or another, are being run by organisations of varying sizes, as the majority of respondents came from organisations of either less than 50 people (32%) or more than 2,500 staff (30%).

Figure 1.3 Respondent Organisation Size (Staff Numbers)



It is also interesting to note that both older, firmly established organisations and newer organisations formed a significant part of the sample, as 29% of the respondents came from organisations that are over 50 years old, and 17% came from organisations less than 5 years old (see Figure 1.4). This demonstrates that both new and old organisations, of varying sizes, are embracing AC methodologies to assess and develop their staff.

Figure 1.4 Years since Respondent Organisation Founded

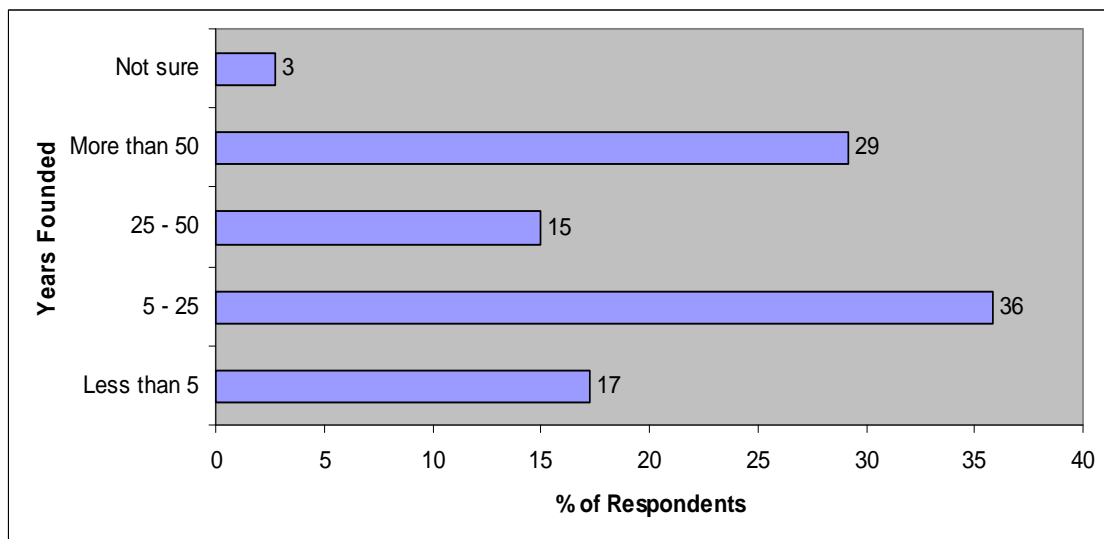
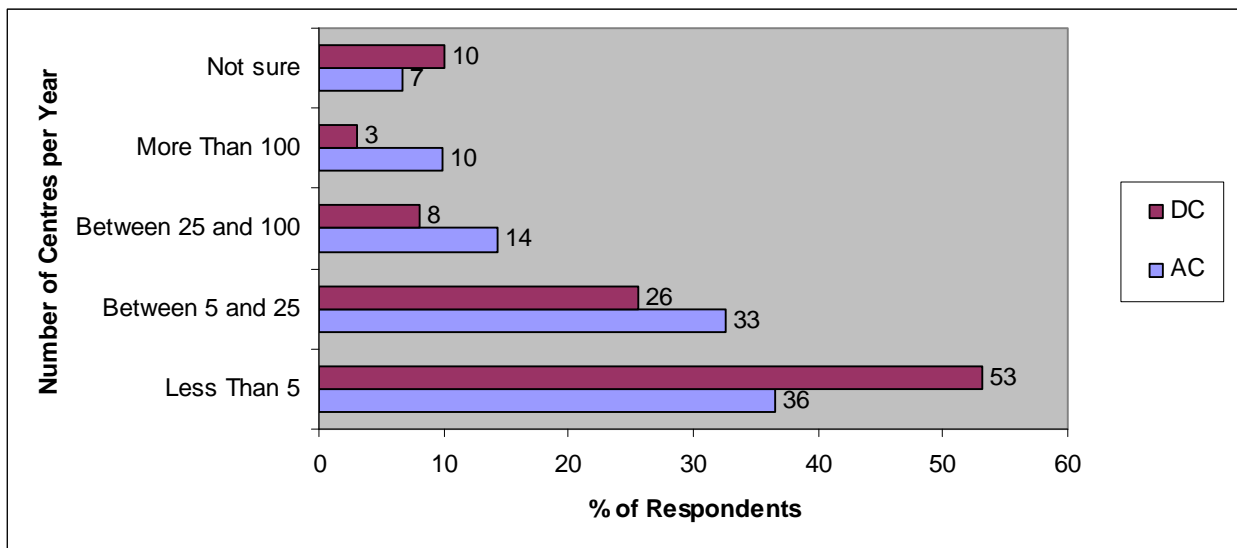


Figure 1.5 shows that there are fewer DCs run by our sample per year than ACs, with over half of the DC respondents (53%) stating that they conduct fewer than 5 DCs a year, compared to the 36% of AC respondents that run fewer than 5 ACs per year. This may be due to the additional amount of resources that DCs require, such as feedback and development action planning sessions. This may often make DCs more costly and time consuming events, with many organisations possibly more willing to invest their money and time into recruiting the right people with ACs, as opposed to improving the capability of their current workforce with development schemes.

Figure 1.5 Number of ACs and DCs Conducted per Year for the Total Sample



Additionally, the size of the organisation correlated with the number of ACs and DCs conducted per year, with larger organisations running significantly more ACs ($r=.208, p<.01$) and DCs ($r=.204, p<.01$) per year. Also, there was a positive correlation between organisations who run both ACs and DCs. Organisations who run a high number of ACs also conduct a high number of DCs ($r=.603, p<.01$). The age of the organisation also positively correlated to the number of ACs and DCs conducted per year (AC, $r=.188, p<.01$, DC= $.139, p<.01$). This finding suggests that larger organisations, which have been established for a longer period of time, may be more likely to adopt AC methodologies, incorporating both ACs and DCs into their Talent Management processes.

Table 1.1 provides a breakdown of the age of organisations, and the number of ACs and DCs they conduct each year. Referring to the subtotal rows within the table, it is apparent that a higher proportion of respondents from older organisations run more than 25 ACs a year compared to younger organisations. This trend is partly true for DCs also, with far more respondents from organisations between 25-50 years old (26%) running more than 25 DCs per year compared to organisations which are less than 5 years old (6%), or 5-25 years old (9%).

Table 1.1 Age of Organisation and Number of ACs and DCs Conducted per Year

Age of Organisation		Less than 5 years old	Between 5 and 25 years old	Between 25 and 50 years old	More than 50 years old
Number of Centres pa					
No. of ACs	Less Than 5	48%	37%	32%	31%
	Between 5 and 25	36%	37%	18%	34%
	Subtotal (Less than 25)	84%	74%	51%	65%
	Between 25 and 100	15%	12%	20%	14%
	More Than 100	1%	9%	20%	10%
	Subtotal (More than 25)	16%	22%	40%	25%
	Not sure	0%	5%	9%	10%
No. of DCs	Less Than 5	63%	54%	47%	52%
	Between 5 and 25	31%	29%	18%	24%
	Subtotal (Less than 25)	93%	83%	65%	76%
	Between 25 and 100	4%	6%	16%	7%
	More Than 100	1%	3%	10%	1%
	Subtotal (More than 25)	6%	9%	26%	8%
	Not sure	1%	8%	10%	16%

Table 1.2 provides a breakdown of AC and DC usage across continents, with ACs favoured more often than DCs. This difference is emphasised the most in the Americas and least within Asia.

Table 1.2 AC and DC Usage across Continents

	Africa		Asia		Europe		Oceania		Americas	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
AC	42	74	50	55	146	72	21	62	21	75
DC	15	26	41	45	56	28	13	38	7	25

412 respondents stated that they would either answer the survey in reference to ACs or DCs. 280 respondents (68%) answered in relation to ACs and 132 (32%) answered in relation to DCs. For the remainder of this report, any comparisons made between AC and DC methodologies will be between the 280 AC and 132 DC respondents of this sample.

1.2 Uses of AC Methodology

Table 1.3 below lists the percentages of responses that our sample gave when asked why they use AC methodology. The most frequently stated response for this was 'other external recruitment' (57%), where 'other' refers to any type of recruitment apart from Graduate recruitment. 56% of the sample stated that they use AC methodology to diagnose development needs within their organisations. This finding demonstrates that AC methodology is considered useful for both assessment (for selection) and development purposes, which may explain why a higher proportion of our sample stated that they use ACs, as they consider these useful for identifying development needs also.

Additionally, a similar percentage of respondents from both public and private sector organisations selected 'other external recruitment' and 'diagnose development needs', but not-for-profit organisations used AC methodology mainly for recruitment purposes (Figure 1.6).

Table 1.3 Uses of AC Methodology (N=437)

Uses of AC Methodology	(%)
Other External Recruitment	57
Diagnose Development Needs	56
Identify High Potential	50
Graduate Recruitment	49
Inform Internal Promotion	45
Succession Planning	38
Skills Audit	22
Career Guidance	21
Inform Performance Management Decisions	16
Develop New Values	12
Part of Induction	12
Aid Cultural Change	11
Other	6

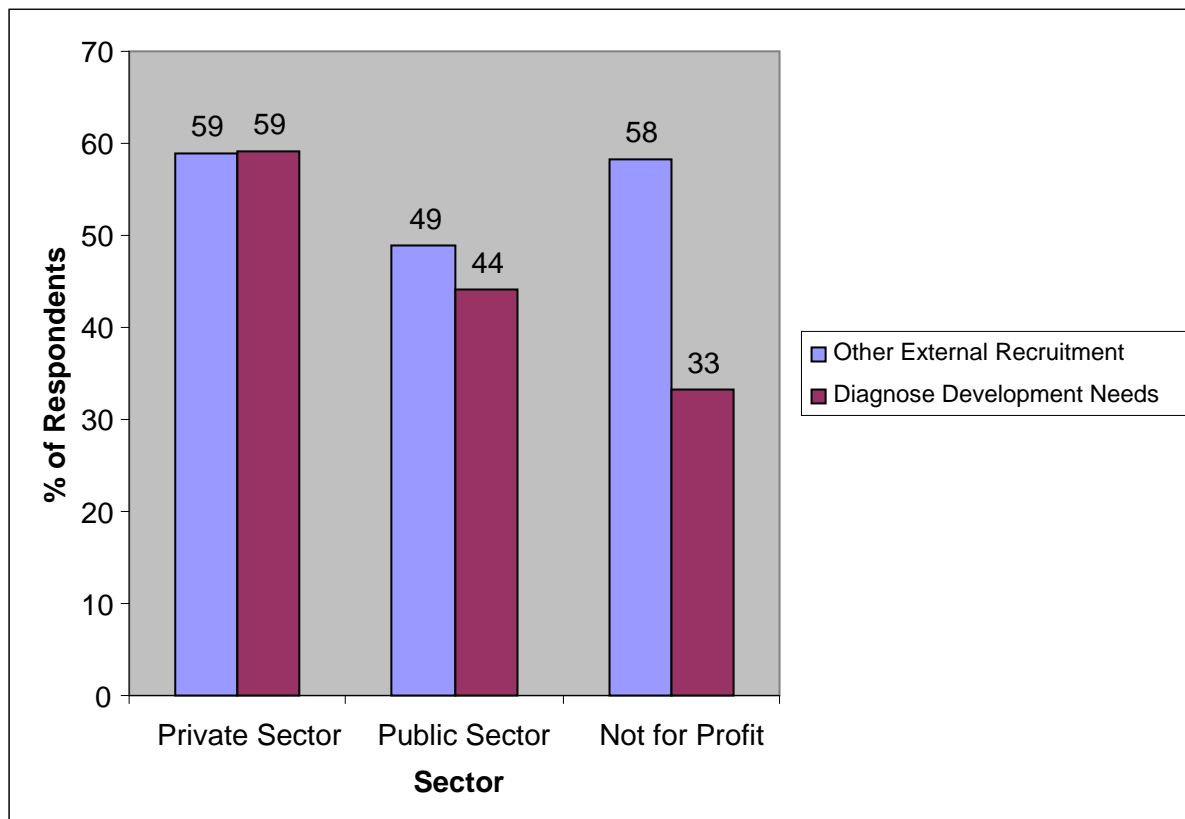
Figure 1.6 Uses of AC Methodology across Business Sectors

Table 1.4 provides details of the top six reasons cited as to why AC methodology is adopted in each continent. It is evident that Europe, Oceania and Asia mostly use ACs in a recruitment drive of some sort (Graduate or External), whereas Africa and the Americas (albeit based on their small sample) use them to evaluate the development needs of their employees. Interestingly, responses focusing on changing the cultures or values of an organisation were least frequently selected by all continents apart from European respondents, who selected using AC methodology as part of an induction the least amount of times.

Table 1.4 Top Six Reasons for Using AC Methodology across Continents *

	Africa		Asia		Europe		Oceania		Americas	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Diagnose Development Needs	74	1	43	3	57	2	50	3	58	1
Identify High Potential	67	2	47	2	48	3	44	4	42	3
Inform Internal Promotion	62	3	53	1	46	5	32	6	39	5
Other External Recruitment	59	4	38	5	69	1	50	2	42	2
Succession Planning	59	5	36	6	33	6	41	5	39	4
Graduate Recruitment	56	6	53	1	46	4	56	1	32	6

* Please note that rounding up or down, accounts for different ranks being awarded to what appear to be identical percentages.

However, across the total global sample, there were no differences between private and public sector organisations regarding the most and least stated reasons why they adopt AC methodology, with 60% of private sector organisations and 54% of public sector organisations using it for Graduate recruitment, and only 5% of private sector and 7% of public sector organisations using AC methodology for diagnosing development needs.

2. Job Analysis and Competency Frameworks

2.1 Job Analysis

Figure 2.1 How Criteria are Chosen on Centres

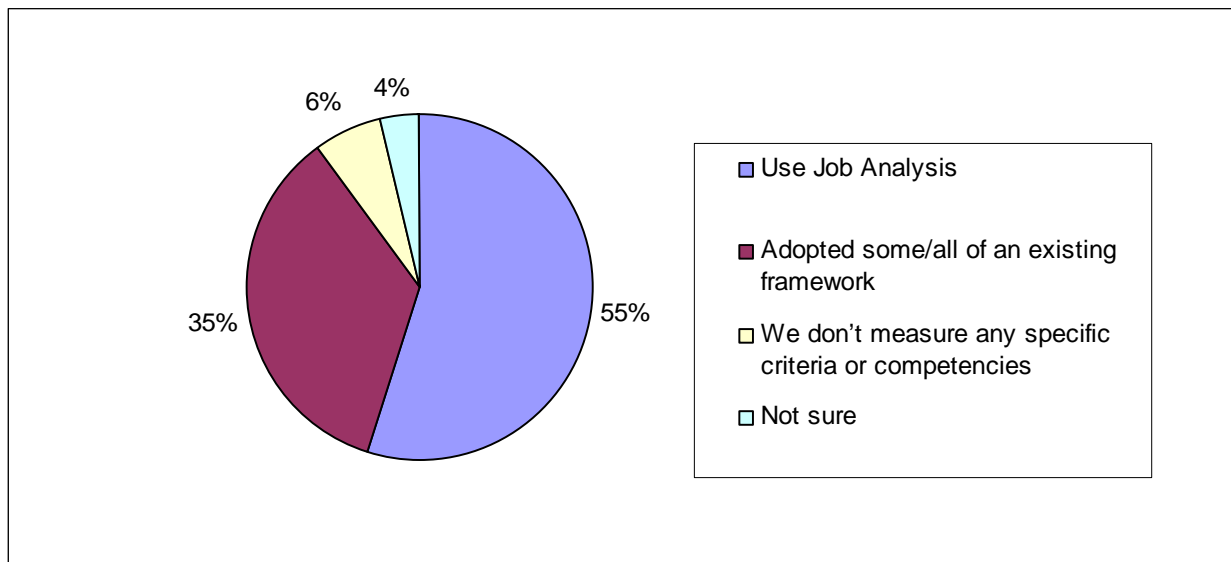
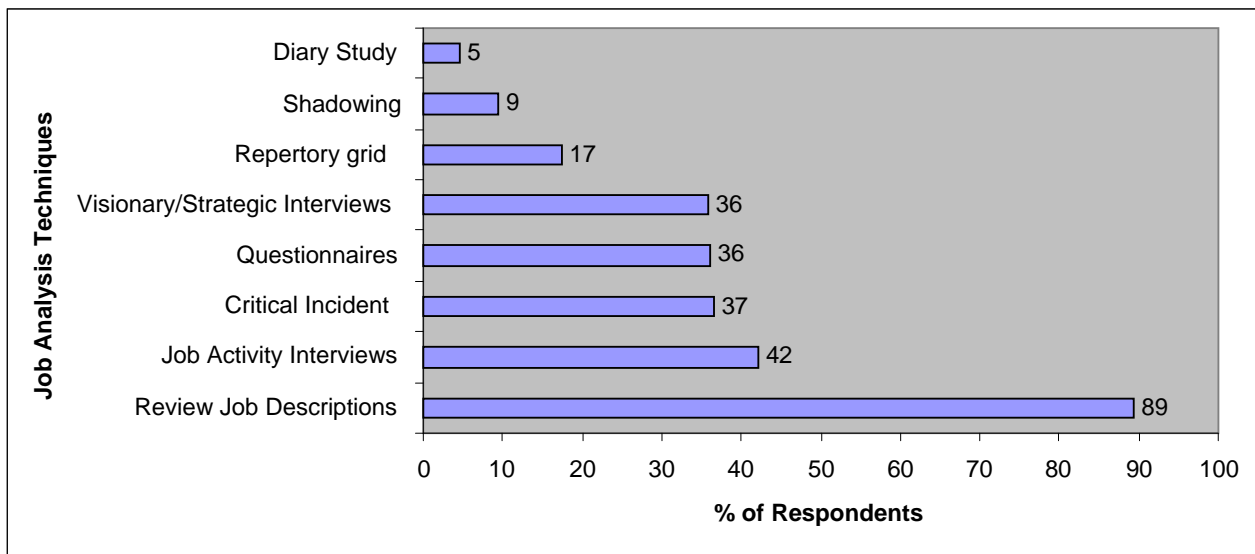


Figure 2.1 shows that over half of the organisations from our sample (N=434) are using a form of job analysis in order to select the criteria to assess on an Assessment Centre (AC) or Development Centre (DC). Also, it appears that a significant number of organisations (35%) are adhering to part or all of an existing framework in their assessments of Participants. Fortunately, only 6% of the organisations in our sample run ACs or DCs without measuring any specific competencies, although this raises the concern of 'what are they measuring?'

Figure 2.2 reveals that the most popular job analysis technique employed by respondents (N=238) was 'reviewing job descriptions', with 89% using this natural starting point for such research within their organisations. This technique was the most popular method for all five continents across our sample. Techniques that were selected least often included shadowing (9% of sample) and diary studies (5% of sample), although these techniques were always used in conjunction with at least two other methods of investigation by the respondents in this survey.

Figure 2.2 Types of Job Analysis techniques Employed

In terms of the criteria used to assess Participants within an AC or DC, the most frequently selected from the respondents were Leadership (78%), Teamwork (78%) and Problem Analysis (71%). The least selected criteria were Diversity Awareness (21%), Organisational Sensitivity (23%) and Networking (26%). A breakdown of the selected criteria per continent is provided in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Criteria Selected across Continents (Top Six for all Continents)

	World (Rank)	Africa		Asia		Europe		Oceania		Americas	
		%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Leadership	1	83	2	72	2	78	2	88	1	81	1
Teamwork	2	78	4	74	1	81	1	73	2	77	2
Problem Analysis	3	85	1	65	3	73	4	67	5	48	15
Planning & Organising	4	82	3	41	17	77	3	61	7	65	3
Persuasive Oral Communication	5	65	9	57	6	73	5	73	3	61	6
Decisiveness	6	77	5	57	5	63	6	61	8	65	4
Interpersonal Sensitivity	7	68	6	47	13	59	7	70	4	52	12
Strategic Perspective	8	55	12	51	10	58	8	48	19	58	9
Openness to Change	9	47	16	54	7	56	10	55	9	55	10
Customer Service	10	67	8	58	4	49	18	52	15	42	19

This table shows that there is broad agreement in focusing on Leadership and Teamwork (ranked in the top 4 for all continents), but then some interesting variances stand out. Africa places much lower emphasis on Persuasive Oral Communication (9th) than all other continents, who include it in their top six. Likewise Asia places very low emphasis on Planning & Organising (17th) compared with the other continents, most of whom place it 3rd, except for Oceania who put it 7th. The Americas are alone in giving Problem Analysis a very low rating (15th) whereas all other continents place it in their top five. Asia and the Americas both de-emphasise Interpersonal Sensitivity (ranking it 13th and 12th respectively) when the others place it in their top seven.

Table 2.2 Criteria Measured on ACs and DCs

	Most frequently selected criteria	(%)	Least frequently selected criteria	(%)
AC	Teamwork	83	Diversity Awareness	22
	Leadership	79	Organisational Sensitivity	25
	Planning & Organising	73	Tenacity	26
DC	Leadership	80	Diversity Awareness	17
	Teamwork	74	Organisational Sensitivity	21
	Problem Analysis	69	Networking	23

There is very little difference between the types of criteria measured on an AC when compared to a DC, with both Diversity Awareness and Organisational Sensitivity selected the least by both AC and DC respondents. However, as shown in Table 2.2 it is interesting to note that Teamwork is the most frequently selected criterion for organisations to measure on an AC, and Leadership for a DC. This is not surprising, as many DCs will be for first-line managers or middle managers, therefore there will be a need to assess and/or benchmark their ability to lead people as part of their development. Leadership was the second most selected competency to assess in ACs, behind Teamwork, indicating that an individual's ability to lead, or their potential to lead in the future, is also an important facet for recruiting personnel.

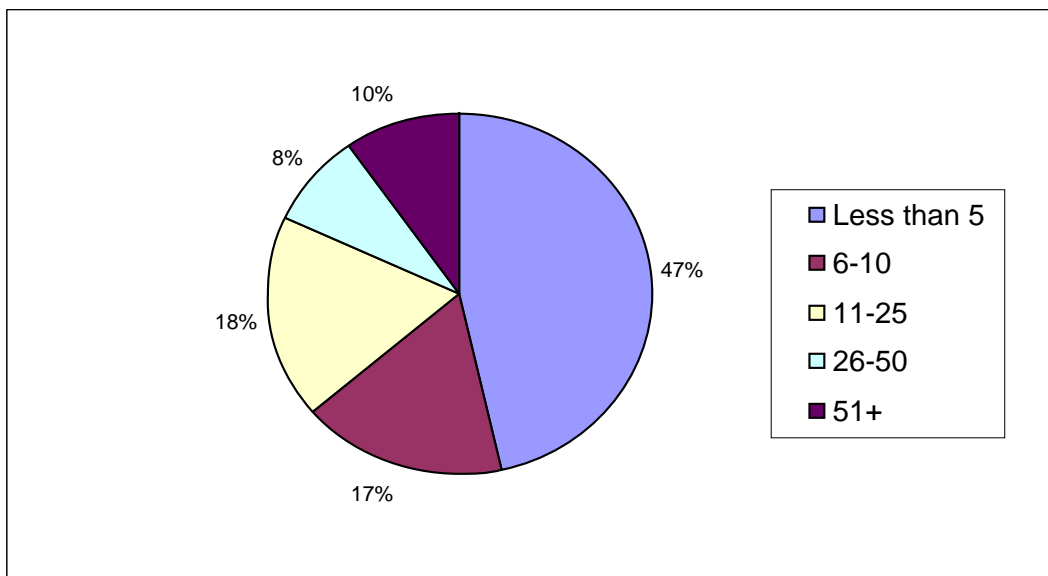
In terms of the numbers of competencies 'commonly assessed' across the total sample, no significant differences were found when they were used for ACs or DCs ($z = -1.014, p > .05$). This means that AC and DC respondents were selecting a similar number of competencies that they use to assess their Participants at an AC or DC. The survey did not ask the respondents to indicate the exact number of competencies that they typically assess during an AC or a DC. Future versions of the GRR will incorporate this variable in to the analysis, as this would be a useful aspect of Centre design to compare across continents.

3. Assessors

3.1 Trained Assessors

Nearly half of the 397 respondents (47%) stated that they have less than five trained Assessors within their organisation (Figure 3.1). The size of the organisation was found to positively correlate to the number of trained Assessors, in that the larger the organisation, the more trained Assessors it has ($r=.502, p<.01$).

Figure 3.1 Number of Trained Assessors within Respondent Organisations



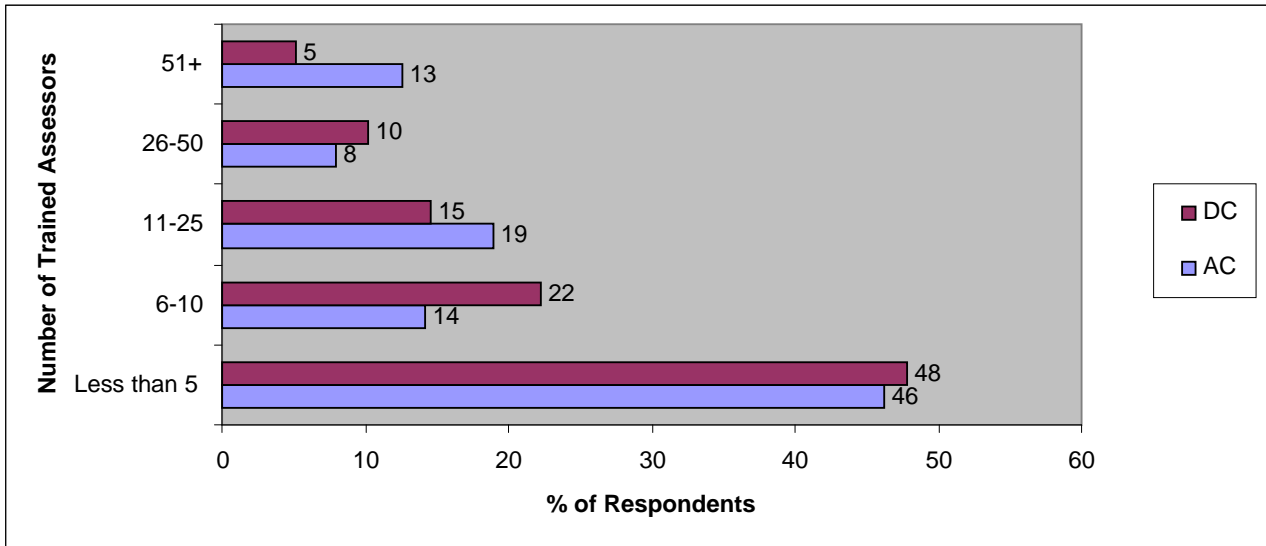
Additionally, respondents from every region indicated most often that their organisations had 'less than 5' trained Assessors, demonstrating that this is a global trend and not specific to any particular region (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Number of Trained Assessors across Continents by %

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Less than 5	41	54	42	48	68
6-10	22	21	16	17	7
11-25	21	17	19	24	7
26-50	5	5	11	7	7
More than 50	10	4	13	3	11

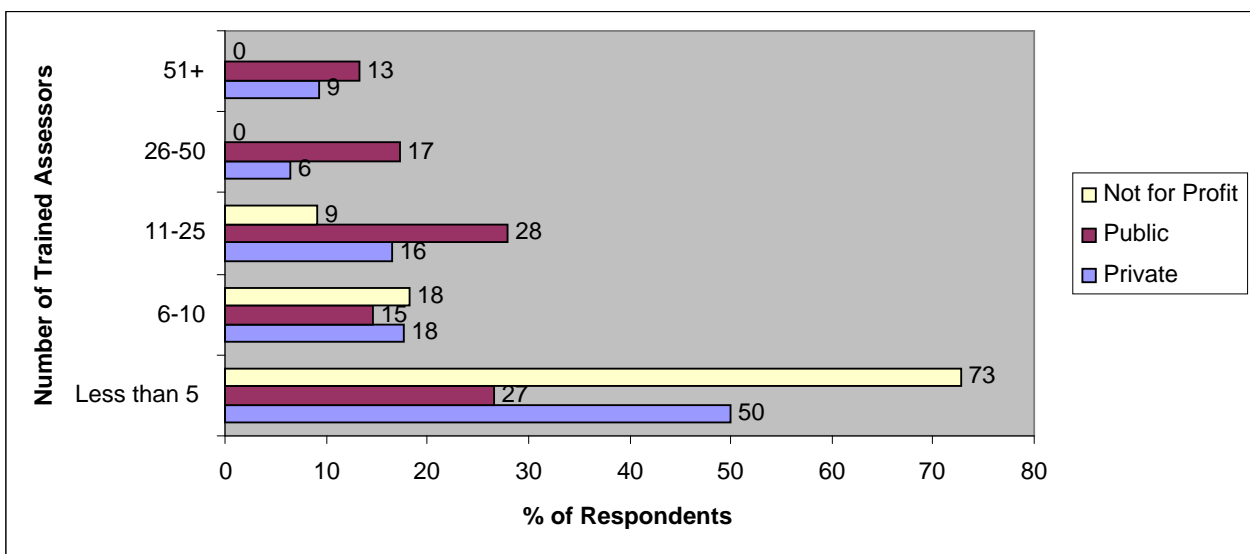
The survey indicates that there are similar numbers of trained Assessors for both Assessment Centre (AC) and Development Centre (DC) organisations (refer to Figure 3.2), and that the majority of these organisations (AC = 46%, DC = 48%) have under 5 Assessors trained within their organisation.

Figure 3.2 Number of Trained Assessors in Organisations running ACs vs DCs



It is also interesting to note that there is a difference between the number of trained Assessors when comparing across private, public and not for profit sectors, where significantly more public sector organisations reported having more trained Assessors than private ($z=-4.107, p<.01$) and not for profit ($z=-3.200, p<.01$) organisations. There was no significant difference between the number of trained Assessors when comparing across private and not for profit organisations ($z=-1.729, p>.05$).

Figure 3.3 Number of Trained Assessors across Sectors



3.2 Level of Assessors

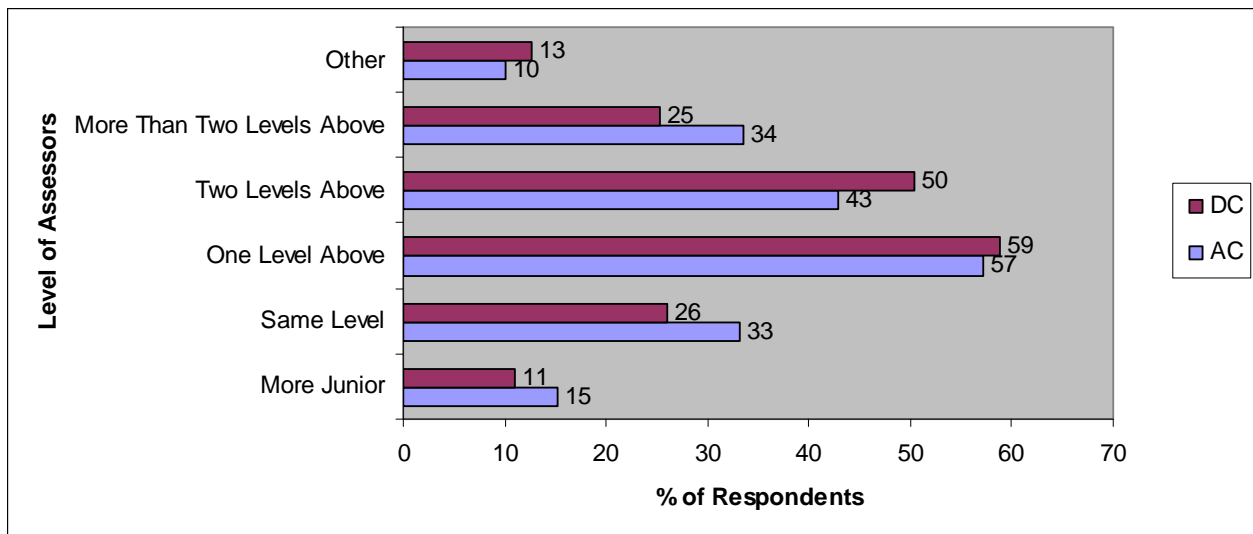
Table 3.2 displays the distribution of responses from across the five continents in terms of the levels of Assessors that operate within their organisations compared to the Participants being assessed.

Table 3.2 Level of Assessors across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
More Junior	16	15	13	17	15
Same Level	28	27	32	27	54
One Level Above	57	44	65	63	46
Two Levels Above	45	38	49	43	35
More Than Two Levels Above	28	31	35	27	19

It is evident that, for all regions apart from the Americas, the majority of organisations use Assessors that are 'one level above' the Participant. The second most frequent response for these regions (apart from the Americas) was using Assessors that are 'two levels above' the Participant. The Americas however, were the only anomaly in this respect, as the most frequently selected level from these respondents (54%) stated that their Assessors were the 'same level' as the Participants, with Assessors 'one level above' the Participant being the second most selected option (46%). Again, this may be due to the inadequate size of the Americas sample.

Figure 3.4 (below) indicates that the level of Assessors used across ACs and DCs are similar. For over half of the AC and DC respondents, the Assessors that are used are 'one level above' the Participants (57% of AC respondents, 59% of DC respondents). This may be due to the involvement of the Line Managers (for DCs) or potential Line Managers (ACs) in the assessment process. This is supported by the data, which shows that out of all the respondents who said Assessors are 'one level above' the Participants (N=106), 64% also stated that Line Managers were asked to be Assessors (section 3.3). It is interesting to observe that the Assessor is either lower or of the same level as the Participant more often for AC respondents than for DC respondents. This may be due to the fact that for development purposes, it may not be perceived as appropriate or credible by the Participant to have a more junior Assessor evaluate their performance. However for recruitment or selection, this may not be as important, or may not be apparent to the Participant and so is seen as more acceptable.

Figure 3.4 Level of Assessors in ACs and DCs

3.3 Who are the Assessors?

Table 3.3 indicates that HR staff are most likely to be used as Assessors according to 61% of the respondents. Not surprisingly, only 3% of the respondents stated that the Participants' colleagues acted as Assessors, and only 2% stated that the Participant assessed themselves at their Centres.

Table 3.3 Who Acts as Assessors?

Who acts as Assessors?	(%)
HR Staff	61
Line Managers	53
External Consultants	38
Psychologists (Internal and External)	29
Staff with Expertise	27
Other	5
Participants' Colleagues	3
Participants Themselves	2

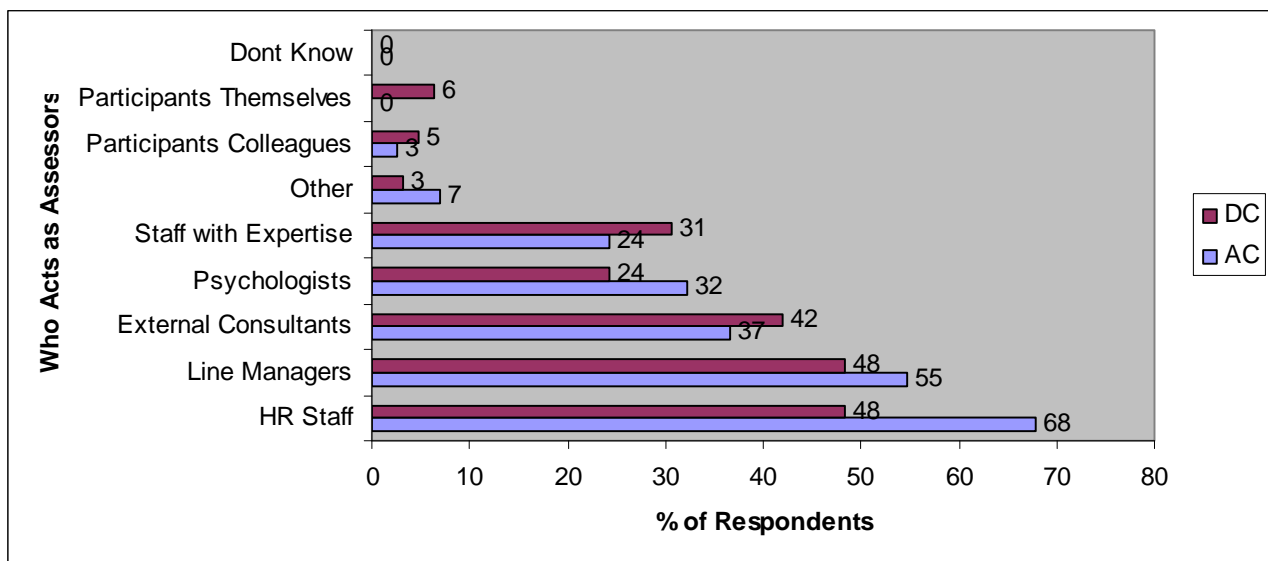
When comparing who acts as Assessors across continents, it is evident that the most frequently selected response from all regions, except Oceania, was HR Staff (Table 3.4). The use of Line Managers was the second or third most popular response for all regions, with Psychologists and/or External Consultants being the other preferred options. It is also interesting to note that Staff with Expertise act as Assessors more often than Psychologists in Asia and Oceania.

Table 3.4 Who Acts as Assessors across Continents?

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
HR Staff	73	64	57	50	59
Psychologists	55	18	31	7	35
External Consultants	36	40	33	57	41
Line Managers	45	60	54	50	41
Staff with Expertise	18	20	33	43	12
Participants' Colleagues	0	2	5	7	0
Participants Themselves	0	2	2	7	0
Others	9	2	8	0	0

Figure 3.5 indicates that HR Staff and Line Managers tend to be more involved in the assessment process than most other groups of people and this is particularly true with ACs (68% and 55% respectively) as compared with DCs (48% and 48% in both cases). It is evident that it is important for Line Managers to contribute to the process as Assessors for both ACs and DCs. This is not surprising when considering that the Line Managers will either be the Managers of the recruits from an AC, or they need a clear understanding of the development needs of their Direct Reports when they attend a DC, so as to ensure they focus on the behaviours which need to change in the workplace. It is also more common for the Participants themselves and/or their colleagues to be involved in the assessment process in a DC rather than an AC. This finding may reflect the use of self-assessment measures and/or 360 degree feedback processes for development purposes.

Figure 3.5 Who Acts as Assessors in ACs and DCs?



3.4 Ratio of Assessors to Participants

Best practice states that the ratio of Assessors to Participants at an AC or DC should be at 1:2, ideally 1:1. A luxury for any AC or DC would be two (or more) Assessors to one Participant, which was the case in 19% of the responses provided (N=393), as indicated in Figure 3.6, which also shows that 61% of the respondents in this survey stated that they adhered to Best Practice Guidelines with either 2:1, 1:1, or 1:2 Assessor to Participant ratios. It is worrying however, that over a third of the respondents are not following Best Practice Guidelines, and are running ACs or DCs where there may be three or more Participants to every one Assessor.

Figure 3.6 Assessor to Participant Ratio of Sample (N=393)

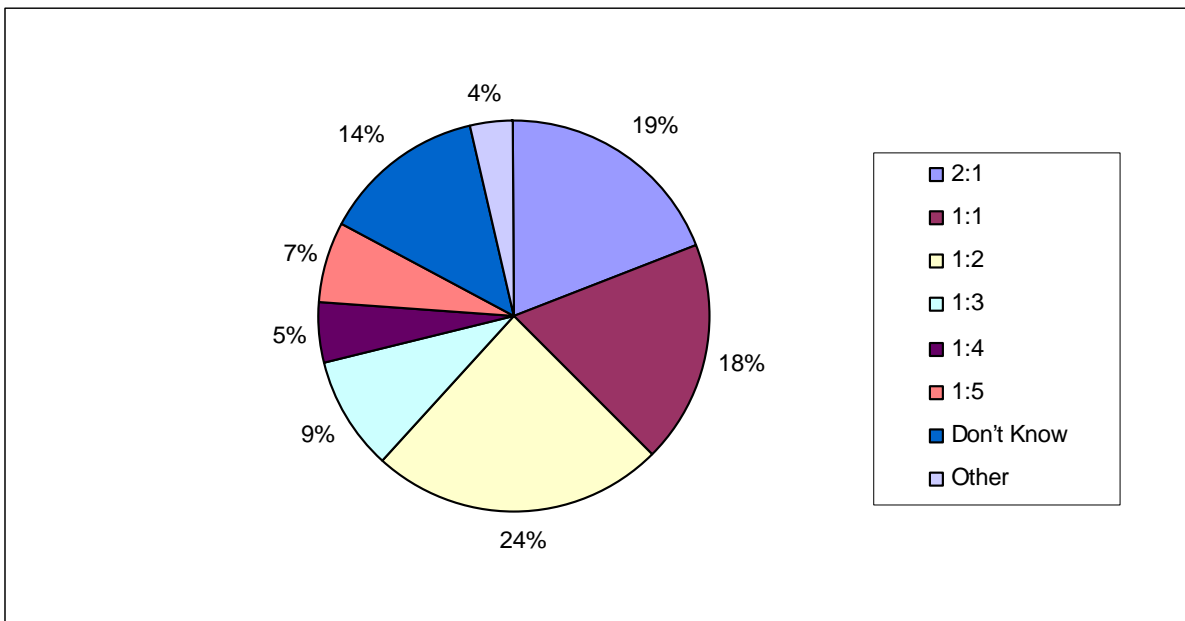


Table 3.5 shows that the majority of European and Oceania respondents (75% and 58% respectively) adhere to Best Practice Guidelines by employing Assessor to Participant ratios of either 2:1, 1:1 or 1:2 within their Centres. However, it is concerning that 50% or fewer of the respondents from Asia, Africa and the Americas are adhering to Best Practice Guidelines. The quality and accuracy of an Assessor’s evaluations of a Participant will be lowered when there are a greater number of Participants for them to assess at any one time. This suggests that action should be taken to minimise the demands made on Assessors in these regions, to ensure a fair and accurate evaluation of each Participant’s performance.

Table 3.5 Assessor to Participant Ratios across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
2:1	14	19	23	7	18
1:1	21	12	21	17	18
1:2	10	18	31	34	14
Best practice	45	49	75	58	50
1:3	9	11	9	14	4
1:4	7	5	4	3	14
1:5	16	10	3	7	4
Don't Know	16	23	7	14	29
Other	9	2	3	3	0

3.5 Observation Techniques

The International Taskforce's Assessment Centre Guidelines and the British Psychological Society's Best Practice Guidelines both state that Assessors need to 'develop skills in the process of observation, recording, classification and evaluation of evidence', otherwise known as the 'ORCE' technique. This is to ensure that the assessment process is structured, and to an extent 'slowed down', so that Assessors are not able to add subjective judgements to their assessments at any stage of the process.

The results given in Figure 3.7 suggest that less than half of the respondents are adhering to this guideline (43%), and instead more organisations selected 'behavioural tick lists' (50%) and 'unstructured observation' (46%) as their chosen method of assessment. Additionally, out of all of the respondents who selected the Behavioural Tick List technique (N=198), only 33% of them used ORCE as well. Similarly, out of the 182 respondents who stated that they used 'Unstructured Observation' as a behaviour assessment technique, only 19% of these used ORCE as well. This is concerning, as employing unstructured observation techniques alone can undoubtedly provide a greater opportunity for bias to enter into the assessment process, and therefore potentially provide inaccurate reflections of a Participant's competence in many areas.

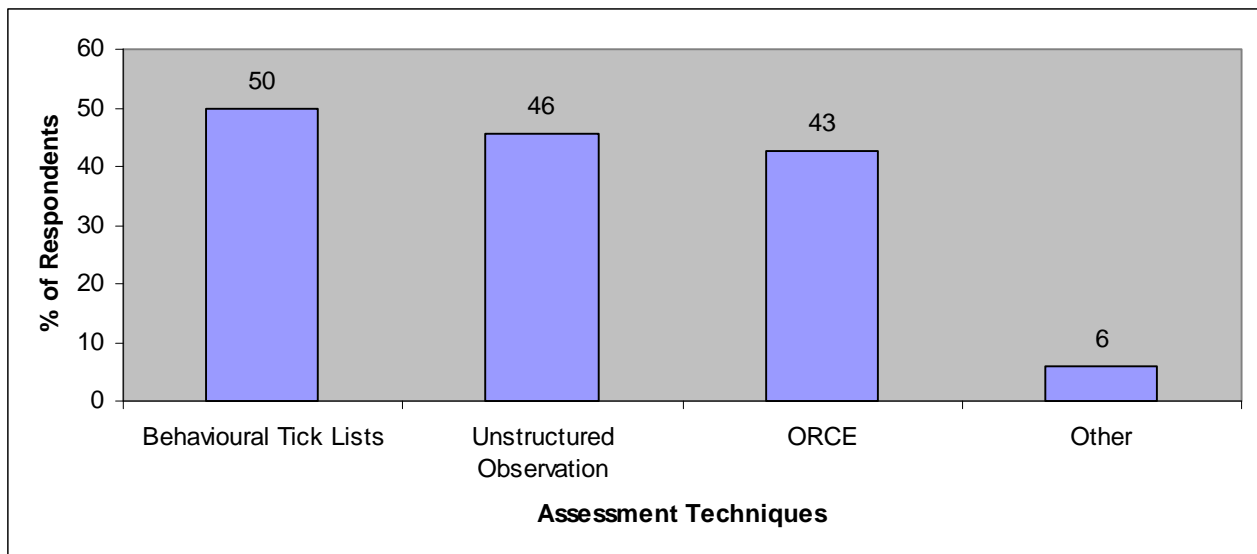
Figure 3.7 Assessment Technique Employed (N=398)

Table 3.6 reveals that Europe advocates the use of the ORCE technique most, with 57% of European respondents claiming to use this type of assessment method. However, for other continents with well-established AC and DC processes (such as the Americas and Oceania), the use of the ORCE technique is low, with only 21% of respondents from Oceania and 30% from the Americas claiming they use this form of assessment method. However, once again the small North America sample size may mean that this finding isn't necessarily representative of what is practiced in this region, given that quite a lot of the academic papers published about ACs in the US do cite the use of the ORCE technique.

Table 3.6 Most favoured Assessment Technique and use of ORCE by Continent

	Most favoured Assessment Technique	(%)	Use of ORCE (%)
Africa	Behavioural Tick Lists	64	31
Asia	Unstructured Observation	49	29
Europe	ORCE	57	57
Oceania	Unstructured Observation	62	21
Americas	Unstructured Observation/Behavioural Tick List	59	30

3.6 Assessor Skills

Respondents were asked to rate 16 different Assessor skills in terms of their importance as either 'extremely', 'reasonably', 'not really' and 'not at all' important. The survey suggests that the respondents were generally in agreement that it is 'extremely' important for Assessors to have Objective Judgement (83%) and Listening Skills (81%). This is not surprising, seeing as the Assessor should be adhering to the ORCE technique of assessment (see Section 3.5) which requires both an objective approach to assessing along with accurate listening skills in order to observe and record behaviour accurately.

Table 3.7 Extremely Important ratings for Assessor Skills

Assessor Skill	(%)
Objective Judgement	83
Listening	81
Feedback Skills	59
Discretion	57
Attention to Detail	57
Commitment To Centre Concept	57

Objective Judgement and Listening were generally rated as being 'extremely important' qualities for Assessors across all regions. They were always selected most frequently or second most frequently, except for the Americas, where Feedback Skills was the second-most frequently rated skill as 'extremely important' behind Listening (69%), closely followed by Objective Judgement (59%). Objective Judgement and Listening were also most frequently rated as 'extremely important' by both AC and DC respondents.

The Assessor qualities that were selected most frequently or second most frequently within each region are presented in bold font in Table 3.8, below.

Table 3.8 Assessor Skills Required Across Continents

	Africa %	Asia %	Europe %	Oceania %	Americas %
Objective Judgement	91	69	89	83	59
Listening	83	67	85	93	69
Feedback Skills	62	50	60	52	66

3.7 Assessor Training

The survey results suggest that three quarters of the respondents train their Assessors, but disappointingly, at least 20% do not (see Figure 3.8). Figure 3.9 shows that comparisons across the continents show some consistency, with the Europeans being most inclined to follow best practice and the Americas the least, but as stated previously, this low response (56%) may be due to the small US sample.

Figure 3.8 Percentage of Organisations that Train Their Assessors

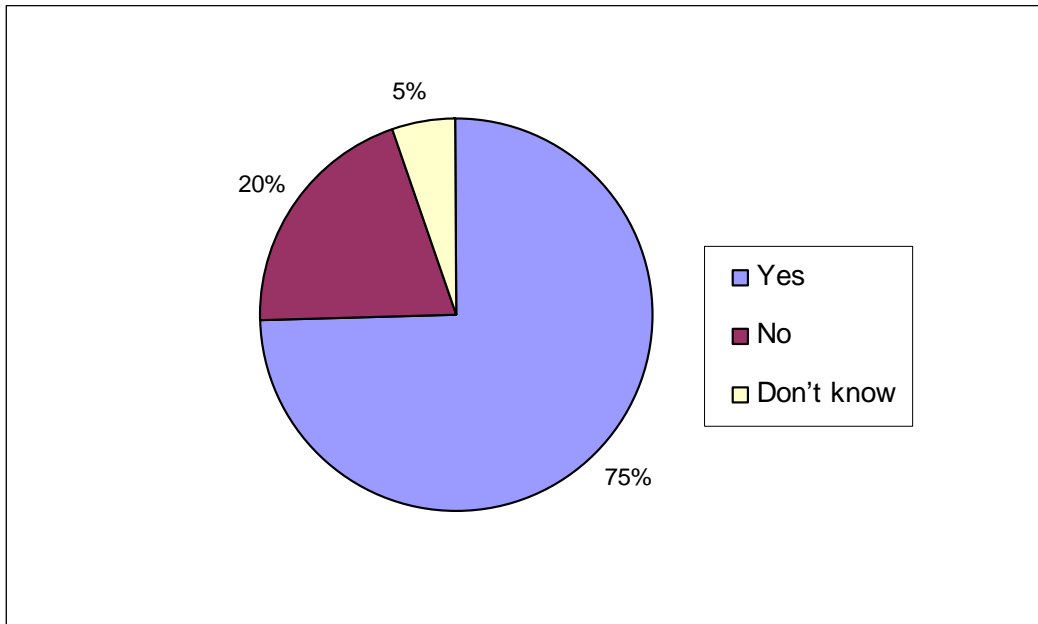


Figure 3.9 Percentage of Respondents who Train their Assessors across Continents

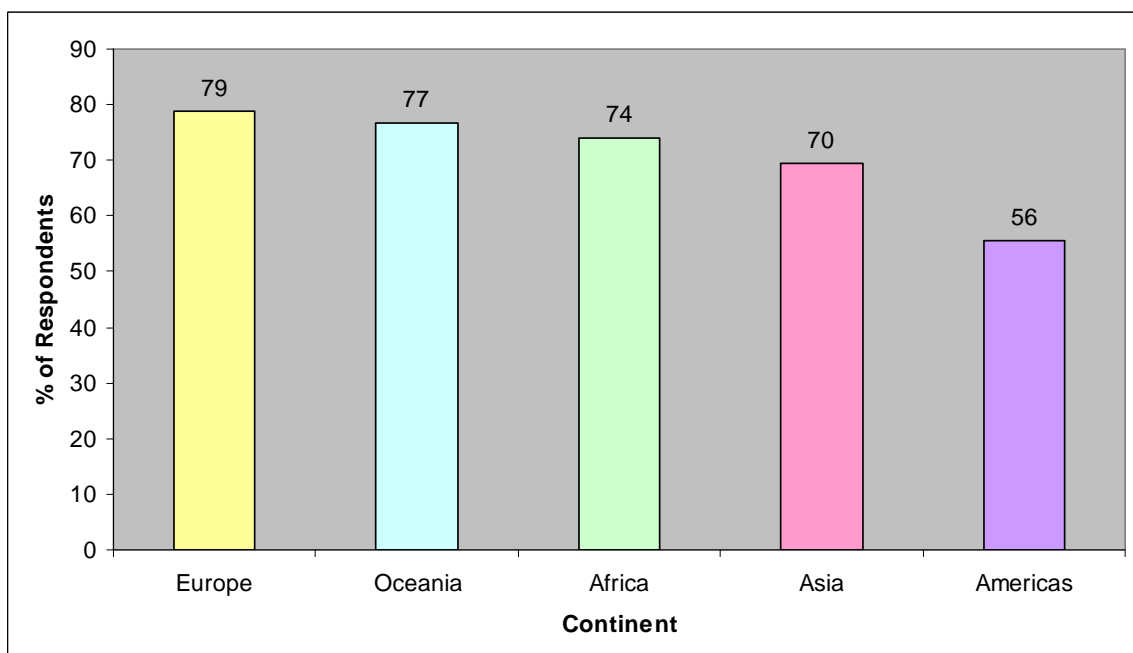


Figure 3.10 reveals that Assessor training duration varied quite considerably among respondents, with a majority (29%) stating that their training duration lasted between half and one day. The British Psychological Society’s Best Practice Guidelines state that Assessor training should be at least two days in duration, therefore the fact that only 24% of the respondents dedicated such time to the process is concerning. Additionally, when Assessor training was compared across continents (Table 3.9), it was interesting to find that respondents from the Americas and Africa dedicated the most time to Assessor training (above two days), and Asia, Europe and Oceania respondents most frequently stated that they dedicated between half and one day to Assessor training. Such short training times may be expected of the less established continents in AC methodology, but in Europe, where AC methodology is well established, it is surprising and quite concerning to learn that their organisations are dedicating such a short amount of time to Assessor training.

Figure 3.10 Duration of Assessor Training

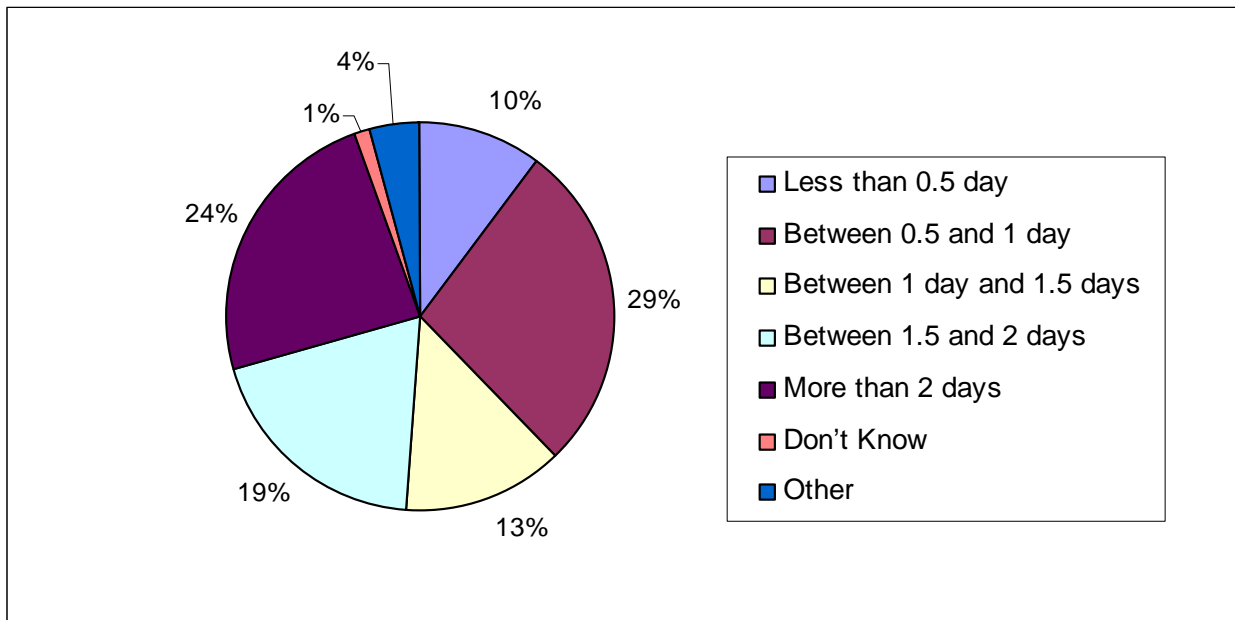


Table 3.9 Duration of Assessor Training across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Less than 0.5 day	5	11	10	9	27
0.5 - 1 day	14	26	31	41	20
1 - 1.5 days	9	17	16	5	0
1.5 - 2 days	23	17	21	18	0
More than 2 days	40	24	18	18	40
Other	0	2	1	5	7

The following Table (3.10) contains different components of Assessor training, and the percentage of respondents who stated that each element is included in the training of their Assessors.

Table 3.10 Assessor Training Content across Total Sample

Assessor Training Content	(%)
Role of the Assessor	85
Familiarity with Organisation's Competencies	76
Practise Assessing on Simulation Exercises	76
How Competencies are Displayed in Exercises	67
Behavioural Observation Techniques	67
Centre Logistics	61
Interviewing Skills	57
Feedback Skills	56
Common Rater Errors	55
Benchmarks for Effective Performance	42
Coaching Skills	21
Other	5

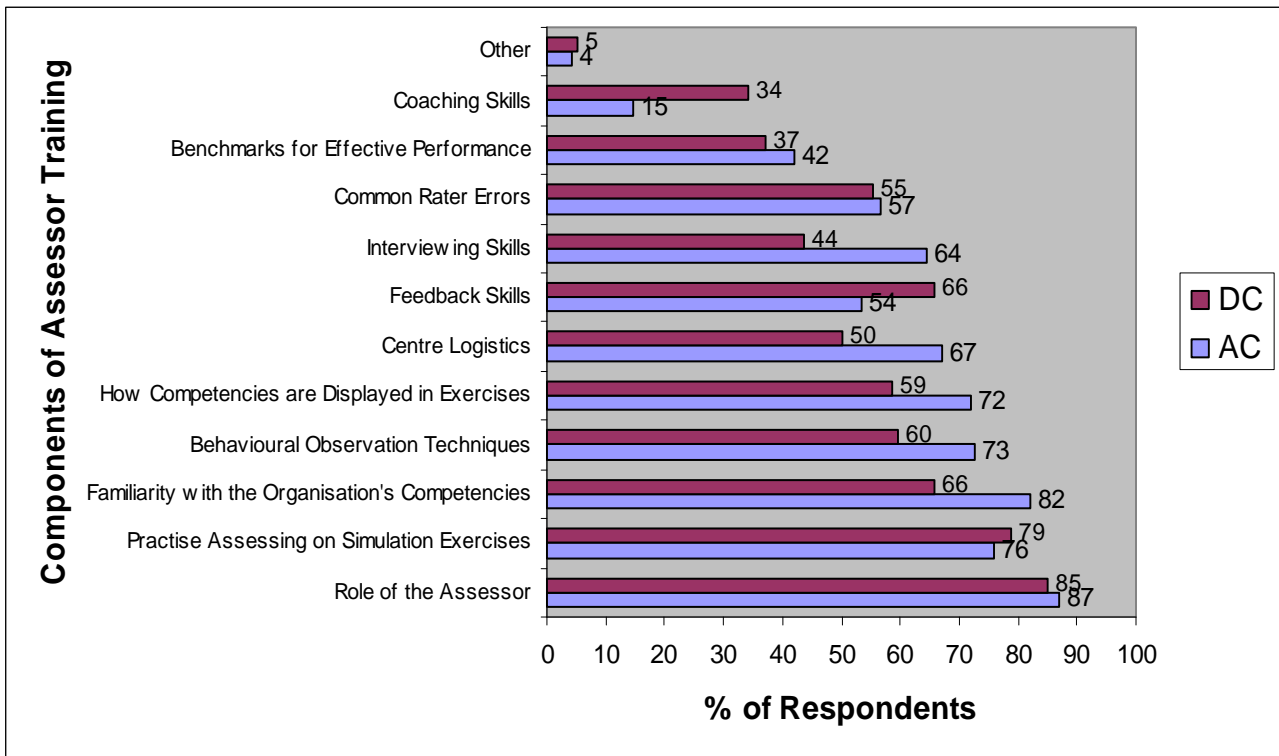
It is evident that the role of the Assessor is the most important aspect of training for a majority of the respondents, with 85% of the respondents who train their Assessors (N=297) selecting this component as 'inclusive' of Assessor training most frequently. Best Practice Guidelines advocate that Assessors should be familiar with the exercises and the competencies that they are assessing the Participants on, and encouragingly, these two aspects were frequently rated as being included in Assessor training by these organisations (76% of respondents for both components).

Table 3.11 Assessor Training Content across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Role of the Assessor	84	75	88	100	73
Familiarity with the Organisation's Competencies	79	53	86	67	12
Practise Assessing on Simulation Exercises	86	70	74	91	60
How Competencies are displayed in Exercises	65	49	76	70	40
Behavioural Observation Techniques	81	47	73	61	40
Centre Logistics	51	35	74	57	47
Interviewing Skills	51	61	58	52	53
Feedback Skills	67	53	53	70	53
Common Rater Errors	51	53	58	70	27
Benchmarks for Effective Performance	37	35	43	61	33
Coaching Skills	23	18	18	30	40
Other	5	2	6	4	7

The 'Role of the Assessor' was selected most frequently from respondents in Asia, Oceania, the Americas and Europe. African respondents selected 'Practice Assessing on Simulation Exercises' most frequently (86%); however, this was only 2% greater than the number of respondents who selected 'Role of the Assessor' (84%).

Figure 3.11 Assessor Training Content across ACs and DCs



An interesting finding is that only 21% of the respondents who answered the questions on Assessor training, indicated that 'Coaching skills' was included in their Assessor training content. This is not surprising given the limited amount of time dedicated to Assessor training according to the majority of the respondents (Figure 3.10 and Table 3.9 above). This indicates that this skill is only included if the Assessor will be required to coach post-Centre, and is not necessarily an important aspect of the Assessor role. In a DC, this component is seen as more important, as 34% of DC respondents include 'Coaching Skills' in their training compared to 15% of the AC respondents. This pattern was also seen for 'Feedback Skills', where 66% of DC respondents indicated that they included it in their Assessor training, compared to the lower 54% of AC respondents. This is not surprising, as the DC is very much the start of a process, where coaching and feedback are ongoing processes after the event itself. Alternatively for ACs, the focus will be more on whether or not the Participant can perform the role to an effective level, and therefore feedback and coaching skills after the event will not be as prominent.

However, for both ACs and DCs, the most frequently selected component of Assessor training was the role of the Assessor, and what is expected of them throughout the process (87% of AC and 85% of DC respondents respectively).

4. Assessment Centre Design

4.1 Designer of Centres

There was a reasonable distribution of responses in terms of who designs the Assessment Centre (AC) or Development Centre (DC); however, most of our respondents stated that they design the AC/DC content internally, using either individuals from Human Resources (35%) or Other Internal Resources (15%), as we can see from Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Designers of AC/DC (N=213)

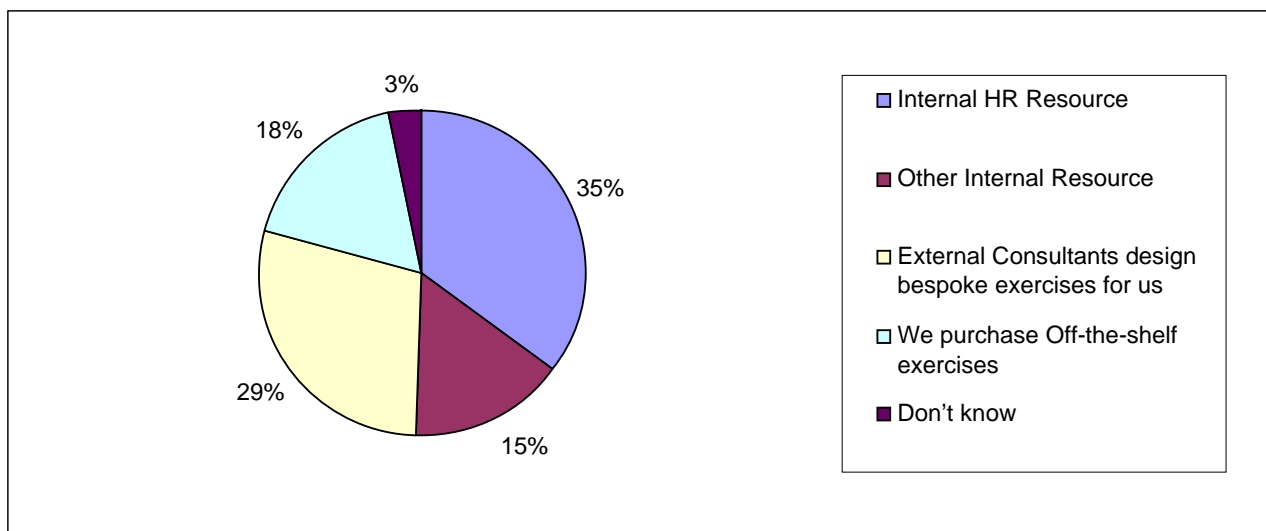


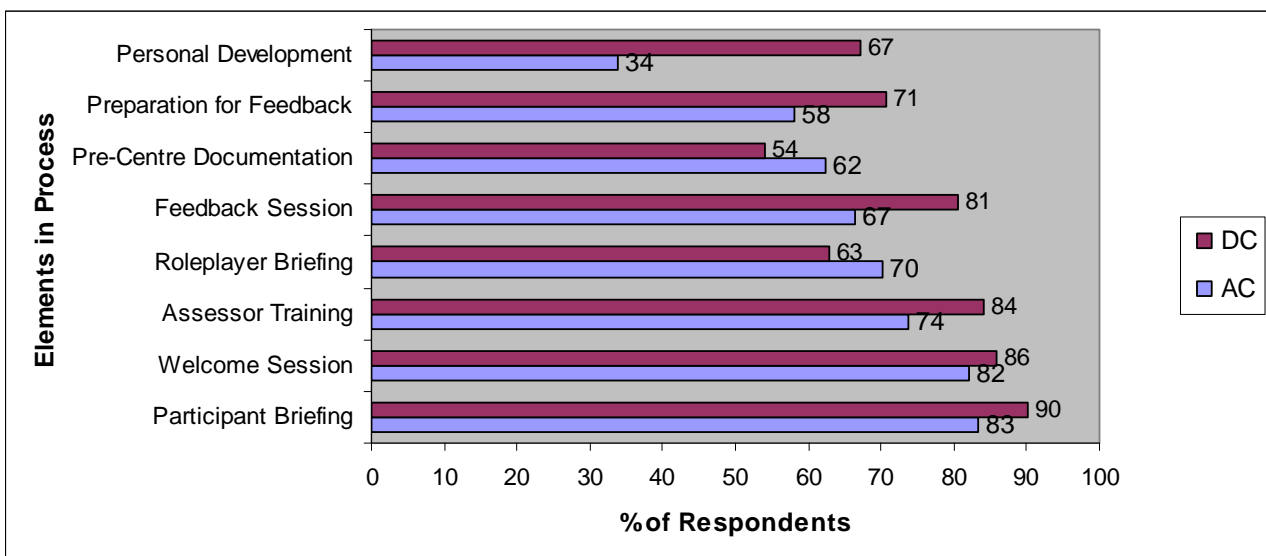
Table 4.1 shows that the majority of respondents from most continents make greatest use of internal resources to design their ACs or DCs; Americas 52% (28% HR, 24% Other); Oceania 55% (38% HR, 17% Other); Asia 54% (44% HR, 10% Other) and Europe 51% (34% HR, 17% Other). At 41% (28% HR, 13% Other) Africa makes least use of internal resources, preferring instead to use external consultants (44%), probably because internal resources are not as experienced in AC/DC design, compared with other parts of the world. It is also interesting to note that Europe and Oceania make the greatest use of off-the-shelf exercises (22% and 24% respectively), along with the lowest use of external consultants at 25% and 21% respectively, suggesting greater self-sufficiency in these territories.

Table 4.1 Designers of AC/DC (N=384) Across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Internal HR Resource	28	44	34	38	28
Other Internal Resource	13	10	17	17	24
External Consultants	44	29	25	21	34
Use 'off-the-shelf' exercises	15	10	22	24	7
Don't know	0	8	2	0	7

The element that organisations most frequently incorporated in the design of their AC or DC was a Participant briefing (see Figure 4.2). Overall, 86% of the survey respondents stated that they briefed the Participant as part of their AC or DC process. This is a positive finding, as it adheres to Best Practice Guidelines that all Participants, especially those whose participation is a requirement of their employment, should be fully informed of the Centre and its purpose, ideally two to three weeks in advance. For DC respondents, there were more frequent selections for ‘feedback sessions’ (81% of DC sample), ‘preparation for feedback’ (71% of DC sample), and ‘personal development’ (67% of DC sample). This is not surprising given that the purpose of a DC is focused on providing Participants with detailed feedback on every aspect of their working behaviours, along with action plans regarding their current performance and how they can improve on identified development areas in the future.

Figure 4.2 Elements most frequently incorporated in the design of ACs and DCs



4.2 Number of Participants

Figure 4.3 Number of Participants on an AC/DC (N=380)

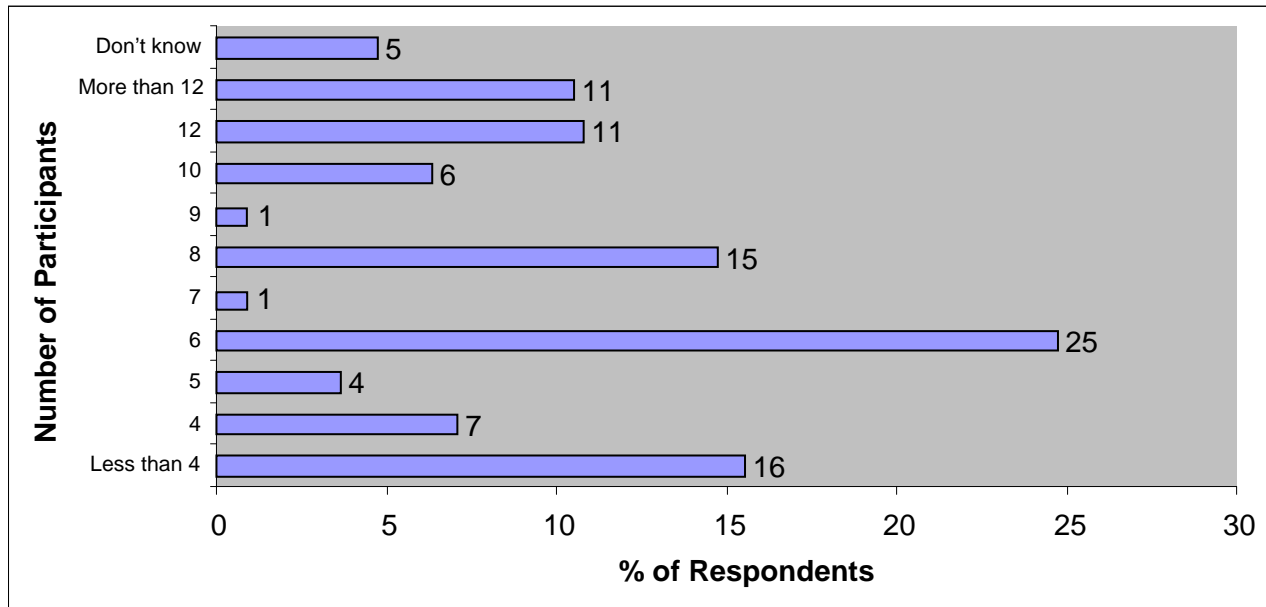


Figure 4.3 shows that the most popular number of Participants at an Assessment Centre is six, (selected by 25% of respondents), which is probably because it is a very manageable number, Table 4.2 reveals that respondents from Africa, Asia and Europe selected six Participants most frequently (19%, 26% and 30% respectively). However, 24% of respondents from Asia and 32% from the Americas stated that they assessed fewer than four Participants on a single Centre. Smaller groups may be an artefact of fewer people needing to be assessed, although this is less true of the US, where travelling distances are a concern, resulting in an increasing emphasis on the use of online assessment methodologies. Additionally, the number of Participants at an AC or DC positively correlates with the number of trained Assessors within the organisation, meaning that those with larger number of Participants to assess tend to train more Assessors ($r=.275$, $p<.01$).

Table 4.2 Number of Participants on an AC/DC across Continents (N=212)

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Less than 4	15	24	9	17	32
4	9	9	5	14	4
5	8	3	4	0	4
6	19	26	30	10	11
7	2	0	2	3	0
8	17	8	17	28	4
9	0	0	1	0	0
10	8	5	5	7	14
11	0	0	0	0	0
12	9	8	15	0	4
More than 12	11	12	9	17	11
Don't know	2	5	3	3	18

4.3 Durations of Centres

Figure 4.4 Duration of AC/DCs across Sample (N=379)

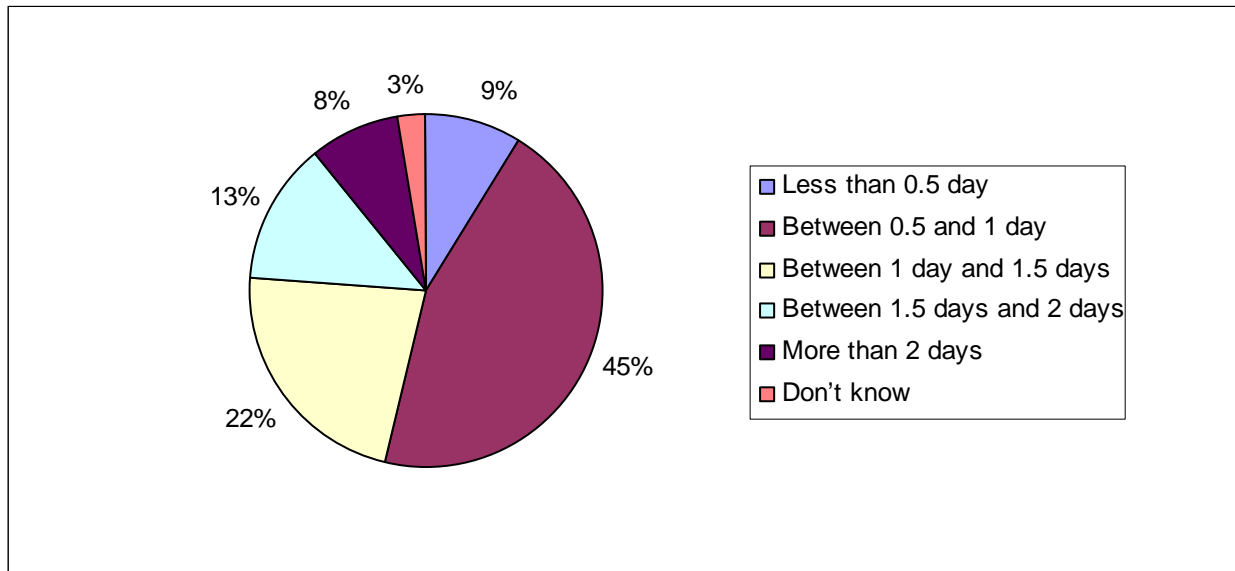


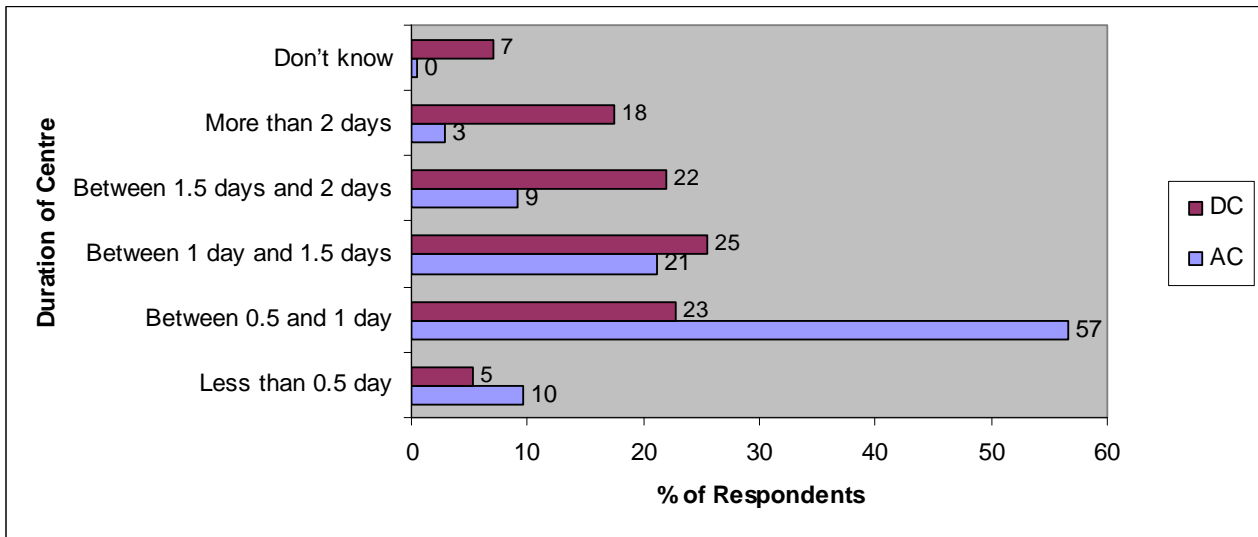
Table 4.3 Duration of AC/DCs across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Less than 0.5 day	6	17	5	3	25
0.5 - 1 day	45	32	50	55	32
1 - 1.5 days	17	21	25	17	25
1.5 - 2 days	19	15	13	10	4
More than 2 days	11	10	7	10	4
Don't Know	2	5	1	3	11

Figure 4.4 shows that almost half of the respondents (45%) stated that their ACs or DCs last between half and one day, with only 8% suggesting that their ACs or DCs last any longer than two days. When comparing across continents, (see Table 4.3), the majority of respondents from every region stated that their Centres last between half and one day, with Oceania and Europe producing the most frequent responses for these durations (55% and 50% respectively).

When comparing AC and DC respondents, it is evident that a majority (57%) of the half to one day responses related to ACs, compared to only 23% for DCs. As one might expect, the durations of DCs are longer than ACs from our sample, as Figure 4.5 below demonstrates. This is because DCs incorporate more components within the process (Section 4.1) such as feeding back results and personal development sessions based on improving Participants' work performances. Additionally, it would be expected that the wash-up session within a DC would be longer than for an AC, as each Participant would be discussed in greater depth on topics relating to their performance, as opposed to an AC wash-up which would be focused on whether or not the Participant could perform to an effective level or not (refer to Figure 4.5 below).

Figure 4.5 Duration of ACs versus DCs



Additionally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a positive relationship between the number of Participants at an AC or DC and the length of the Centre itself, whereby the Centres are longer when more Participants are included ($r=.362, p<.01$). These findings were also reflected in the responses from each of the five continents, with no noticeable differences.

4.4 Decision-Making Processes

It is evident from Figure 4.6 that a consensus discussion in a wash-up is by far the most frequently used decision-making procedure in place to evaluate Participants' overall performances at an AC or DC, with 75% of the sample suggesting that they use such a decision-making method. This is also the most frequently used process across all of the continents (see Table 4.4), and for both ACs and DCs.

Figure 4.6 Decision Making Processes in Place across the Total Sample (N=378)

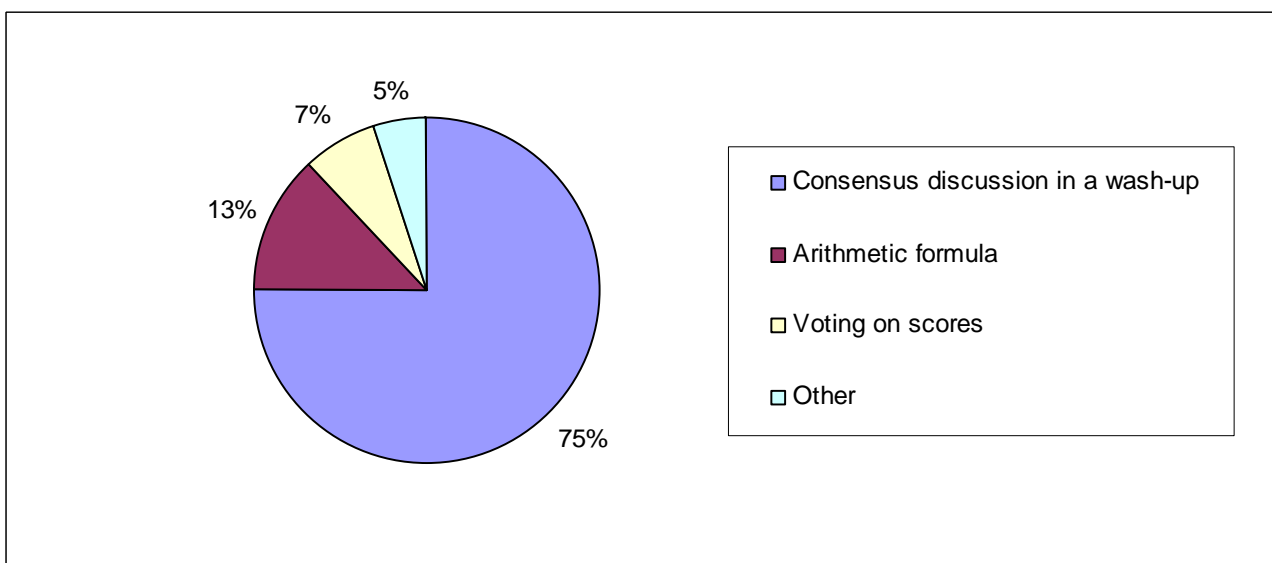


Table 4.4 Decision Making Process across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Consensus Discussion	70	69	79	64	81
Arithmetic Formula	19	18	10	11	12
Voting on Scores	9	10	4	14	4
Other	2	3	6	11	4

Of the majority of respondents who use a consensus discussion session (N=283), most respondents stated that they spent between 11-20 minutes on each Participant (28%), however there is a fair distribution of responses, as Figure 4.7 illustrates.

Figure 4.7 Time Spent Discussing Each Participant in a Consensus Discussion (N=283)

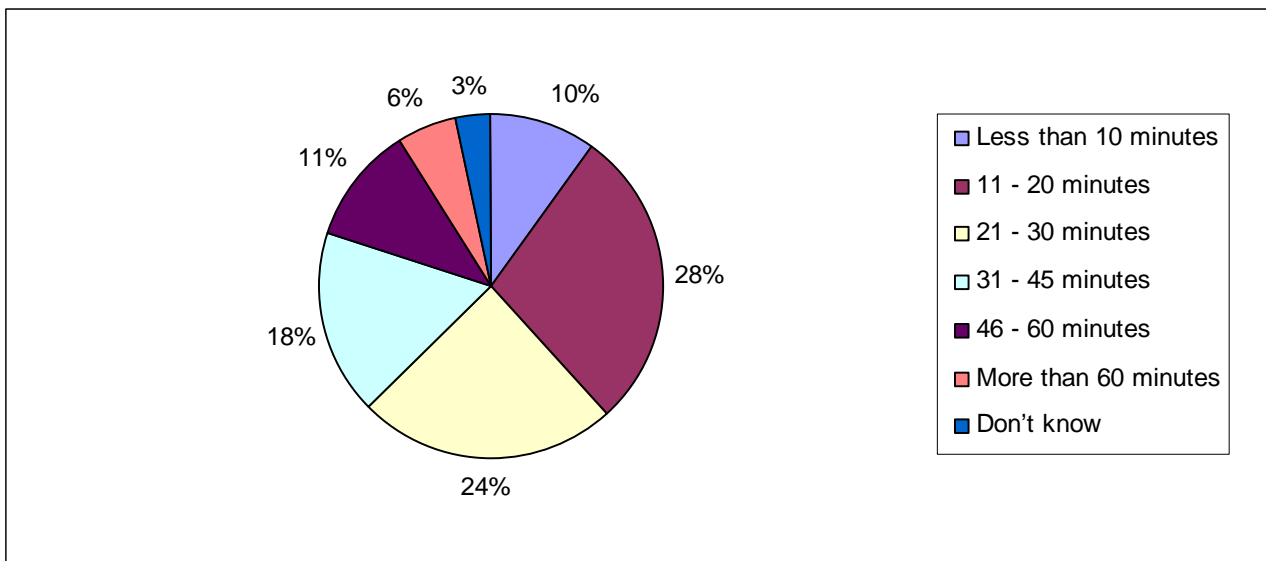


Table 4.5 Consensus Discussion Time for Each Participant across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Less than 10 minutes	11	11	11	0	5
11-20 minutes	36	25	27	35	30
21-30 minutes	19	28	24	24	20
31-45 minutes	14	19	17	29	15
45-60 minutes	11	4	13	12	15
More than 60 minutes	3	9	4	0	15
Don't Know	6	4	3	0	0

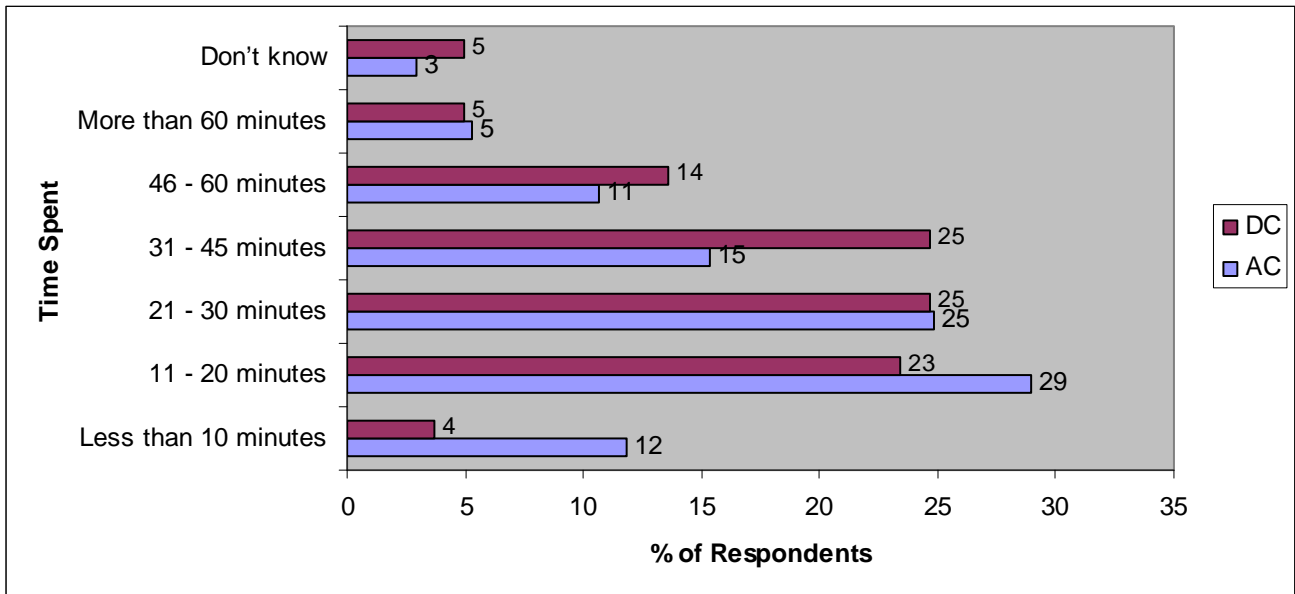
Table 4.5 shows that the '11-20 minutes' and '21-30 minutes' durations are the most popular for all continents, with the exception of Oceania, where '31-45 minutes' was favoured in second place. Oceania was also different to the other continents in that no respondents selected 'less than 10 minutes' or 'more than 60 minutes'. When breaking each continent down into AC and DC respondents (Table 4.6), a couple of additional trends appear. For example, it is evident that, for each continent, the majority of discussions that last for 'less than 10 minutes' are for ACs rather than DCs. This is not surprising, given that more details of a Participant's performance would be discussed during a DC wash-up compared to an AC. Also, it appears that respondents from Oceania devote most time discussing DC Participants' performances, with 40% of the Oceania DC respondents stating that they spend between 46-60 minutes in a consensus discussion.

Table 4.6 Time Spent Discussing Participants in a Consensus Discussion across Continents – ACs Compared to DCs

Minutes	Africa (%)		Asia (%)		Europe (%)		Oceania (%)		Americas (%)	
	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC
Less than 10	17	0	14	5	12	5	0	0	8	0
11-20	26	40	29	23	29	17	42	20	23	67
21-30	30	0	21	36	24	27	25	20	31	0
31-45	13	20	18	23	14	27	33	20	8	33
46-60	9	20	0	5	14	15	0	40	23	0
More than 60	4	0	14	5	3	7	0	0	8	0
Don't know	0	20	4	5	4	2	0	0	0	0

As one would expect, Figure 4.8 indicates that more time is spent discussing Participants on a DC than on an AC. It is not surprising that DC discussions on each Participant will be longer, as every aspect of their performance will need to be considered and fed back to them appropriately. Whereas, in ACs for selection and recruitment, it is more a case of deciding if a Participant can be effective in a certain role or not, which is generally much more straightforward.

Figure 4.8 Time Spent Discussing Each Participant in a Consensus Discussion



4.5 Exercise Types Used in Centres

The survey found that the most frequently used exercise type overall is the Interview Simulation (also called Roleplay), with 67% of the sample selecting this exercise type, as Table 4.7 shows.

Table 4.7 Exercise Types – Frequency of use across Total Sample

Exercise Types	Frequency of use (%)
Interview Simulations or Roleplays	67
Oral Presentation Exercises	62
Group Discussion – Non-Assigned Role	57
Analysis Exercises	57
In-Basket/In -Tray/Inbox Exercises	53
Group Discussion – Assigned Role	33
Scheduling or Planning Exercises	32
Fact Find Exercises	30

When compared across continents, respondents from all regions apart from Europe and Oceania selected Interview Simulations most frequently. For both Europe and Oceania, Oral Presentations were selected most frequently, making it the second most selected exercise type overall (62%). This finding may indicate that respondents prefer simulations that are based on Participants being able to demonstrate effective communication (Oral Presentation) or their ability to work with one other person (Interview Simulation). It is interesting to note that, despite most respondents stating that they frequently assessed Teamwork and Leadership criteria in their Centres (section 2.2), they have most frequently selected exercises that are more effective at eliciting oral communication and interpersonal sensitivity. However, in many exercise scenarios, it could be possible to assess Leadership within an Interview Simulation, with for example, the Participant playing the role of a boss to a direct report.

The least selected exercise overall was the Fact Find exercise, which is used by only 30% of respondents (N=443). This trend was repeated across regions, as the majority of continents (apart from Oceania and Europe), selected the Fact Find exercise least often (refer to table 4.8). Interestingly, respondents from Oceania selected Assigned Role (AR) Group Discussions the least amount of times, indicating that these types of exercises, which assess persuasive oral communication and influencing skills, are not used or required by many respondents from this region.

Table 4.8 Exercise Types Used in Centres across Continents

	Most selected Exercise	(%)	Least selected Exercise	(%)
Africa	Interview Simulations	77	Fact Find	34
Asia	Interview Simulations	61	Fact Find	24
Europe	Oral Presentation	70	Scheduling or Planning	32
Oceania	Oral Presentation	68	Group Discussion – AR	21
Americas	Interview Simulations	66	Fact Find	13

Figure 4.9 shows that the usage of exercises did not vary across AC or DC users. Both AC and DC respondents selected Interview Simulation exercises most frequently (AC = 67%, DC = 68%), and Fact Find exercises were least frequently selected for AC respondents (31%) and Scheduling exercises for DC respondents (27%).

Figure 4.9 Exercise types used in ACs and DCs

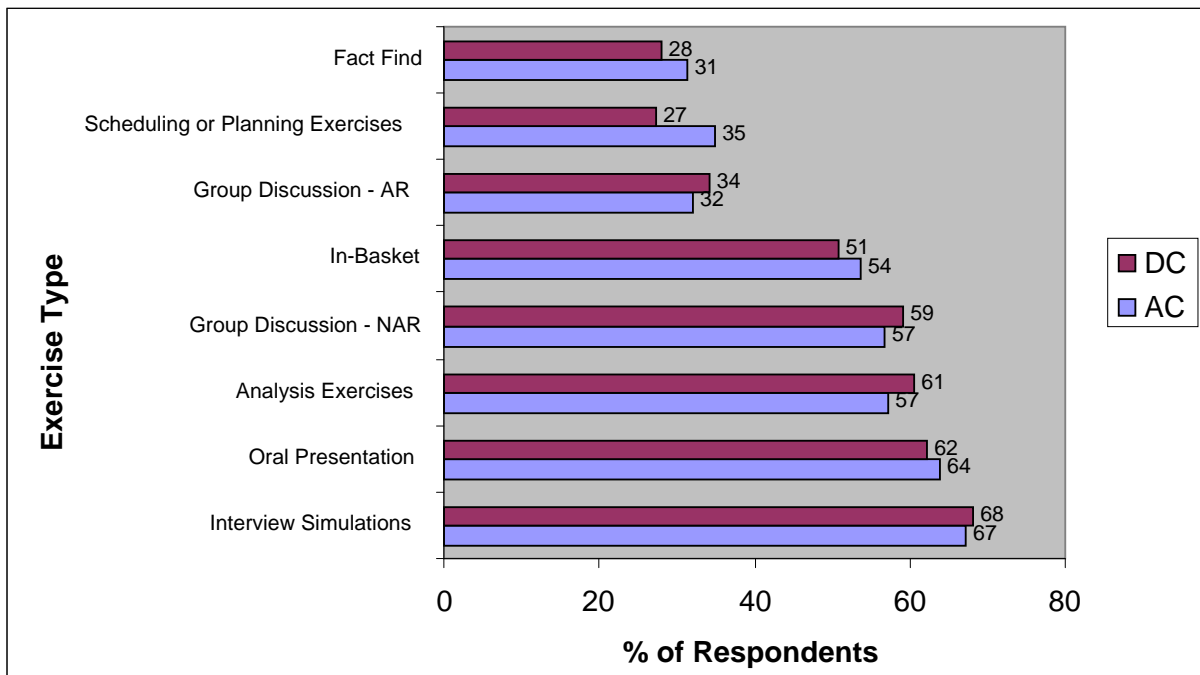


Table 4.9 Top Six Exercise Types Used Most Often in Centres across Continents

	Africa		Asia		Europe		Oceania		Americas	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
In-Basket/In-tray or Inbox exercises	69	2	46	4	56	5	41	5	38	5
Interview simulations or Roleplays	77	1	61	1	68	2	59	2	66	1
Group Discussion - Non Assigned Role	51	5	49	2	64	3	53	4	47	3
Analysis exercises	62	4	47	3	62	4	59	3	41	4
Oral Presentation exercises	66	3	44	5	70	1	68	1	53	2
Group Discussion - Assigned Role	43	6	30	6	36	6	21	8	22	6

Table 4.9 shows the top six exercise types selected across the different continents and it shows that Interview Simulations are generally the most popular exercise type. Africa stands out as the exception, as they favour the In-Basket exercise more than other regions, with 69% of respondents from that continent highlighting this choice. Asia selected Oral Presentations less frequently than other regions, with 44% of respondents from this region using this type of simulation.

Figure 4.10 Popularity of Assessment Tools

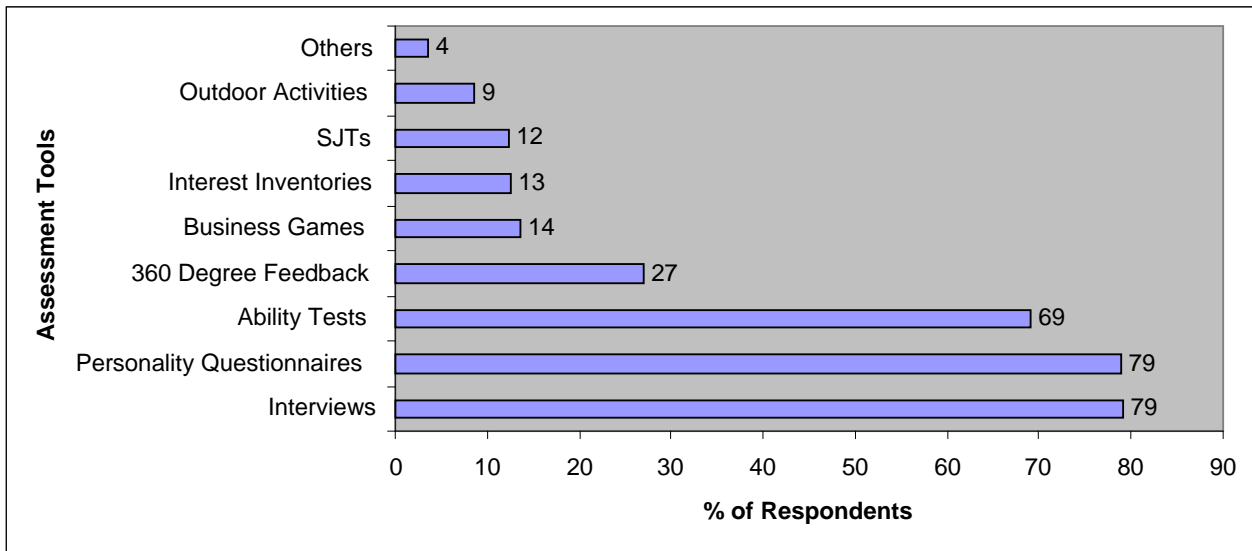


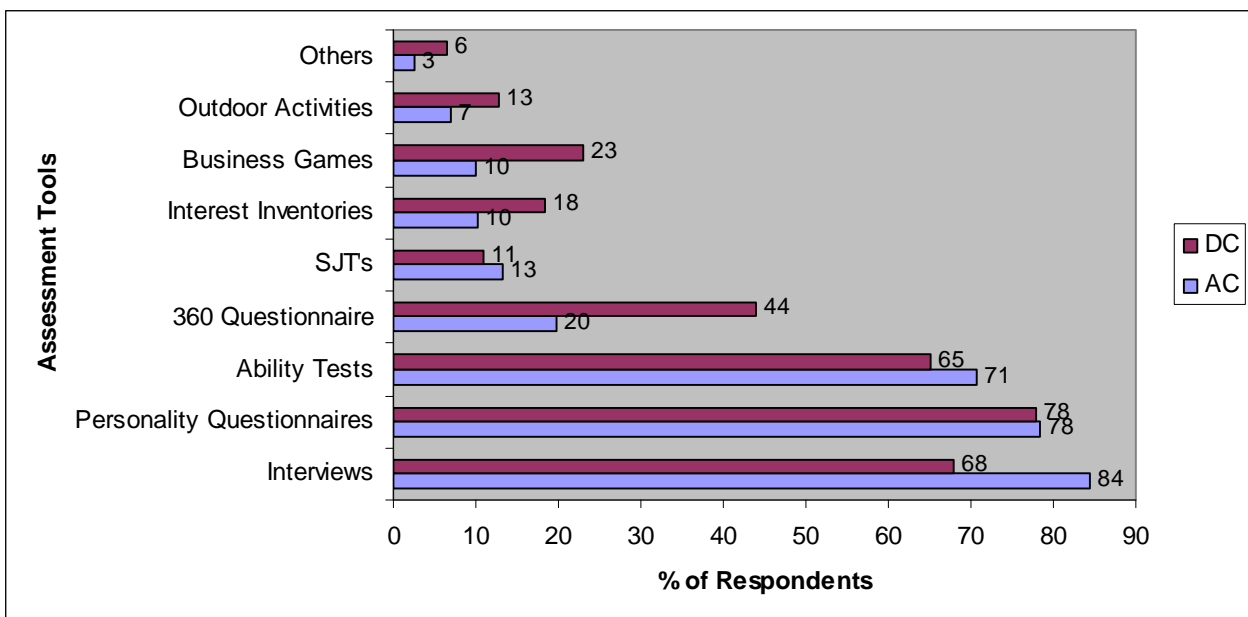
Figure 4.10 shows that, in addition to exercise simulations, respondents most frequently use Interviews and Personality Questionnaires as additional assessment tools within their Centres (79% of respondents for both tools), with ability tests being popular as well (69% of respondents). Outdoor activities were selected least frequently (9%). This pattern was consistently adopted across all continents as shown in Table 4.10. The results also showed that Outdoor Activities, Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs) and Business Games were selected least often across the five regions.

Table 4.10 Additional Assessment Tools Most Frequently Used across Continents

	Africa		Asia		Europe		Oceania		Americas	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Personality Questionnaires	80	1	72	2	80	2	92	1	77	1
Interviews	75	2	74	1	84	1	81	2	69	2
Ability Tests	71	3	63	3	73	3	81	3	46	3
360 Degree Feedback	37	4	35	4	20	4	31	4	31	4

When comparing the use of additional tools on ACs and DCs (Figure 4.11), Interviews are most frequently selected on ACs (84%), with outdoor activities selected least often (7%). For DCs, the most frequently selected tool was Personality Questionnaires (78%), and SJTs were the least frequently selected tools (11%), which is of little surprise as they are most commonly used as sifting tools within the selection process. Personality assessment in development and assessment (for selection) may be useful for evaluating the extent to which an individual’s values and motives fit with the culture of the organisation, and how these may be affecting that person’s working performance at that time (for a DC), or the likelihood of them fitting in with the organisation’s values and culture on commencing employment (for an AC). Interviews however, may be more common in assessment for selection because they enable the Assessor to gain an understanding of the level of ‘fit’ that a Participant may have with the organisation through face-to-face interactions, as well as an understanding of their previous relevant experiences (if competency-based).

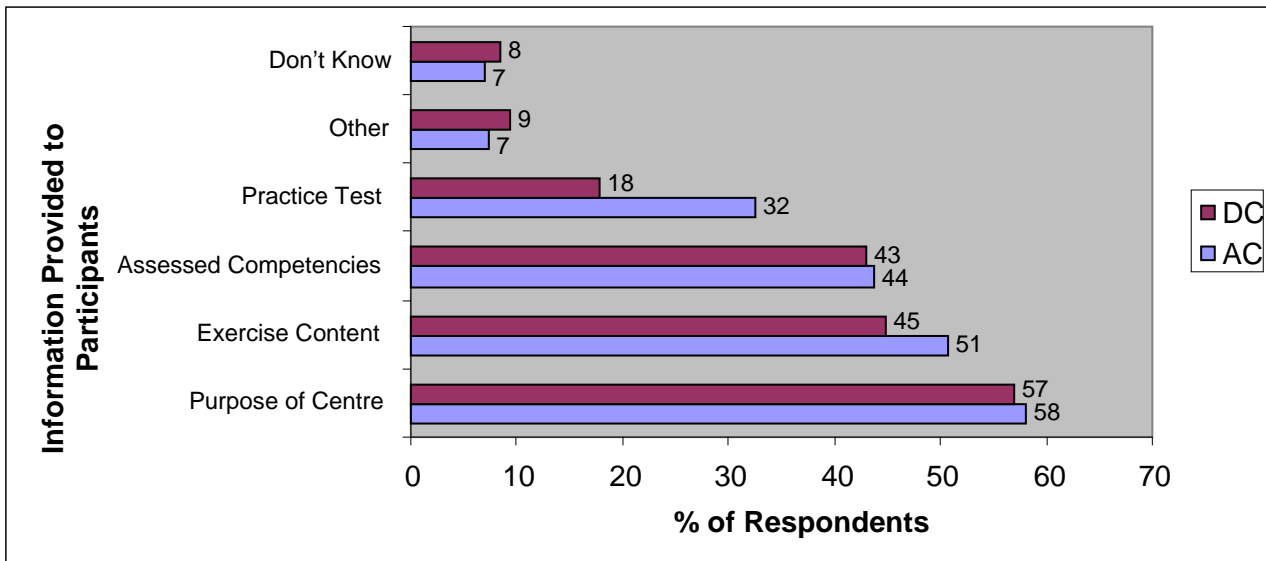
Figure 4.11 Additional Assessment Tools Used on ACs and DCs



4.6 Information Provided to Participants

The survey results displayed in Figure 4.12 show that the most common piece of information for Participants to receive prior to the Centre, for both ACs and DCs, was the Centre's purpose (58% for ACs and 57% for DCs). The most notable difference between information provided when comparing ACs and DCs was that practice tests for Participants were supplied 32% of the time for ACs and only 18% for DCs. As Figure 4.11 shows that ability tests and personality questionnaires are used to the same degree on both ACs and DCs, this difference must be due to the perceived impact of these Centres on the Participants, with the need to provide practice opportunities being less apparent for DCs than ACs. This could be because the outcome of the DC is less critical or the experience less threatening, or it could be that the types of tests that they will be doing on the DC will be similar to their working roles, therefore providing practice tests beforehand may be less important. However, for many ACs (for selection), there may be a mixture of internal and external Participants with a variety of relevant experience relating to the target role. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to provide the same information to Participants prior to the Centre (in the form of a practice test) in order to enhance fairness and the objectivity of the assessment process.

Figure 4.12 Information Provided to Participants Prior to ACs and DCs



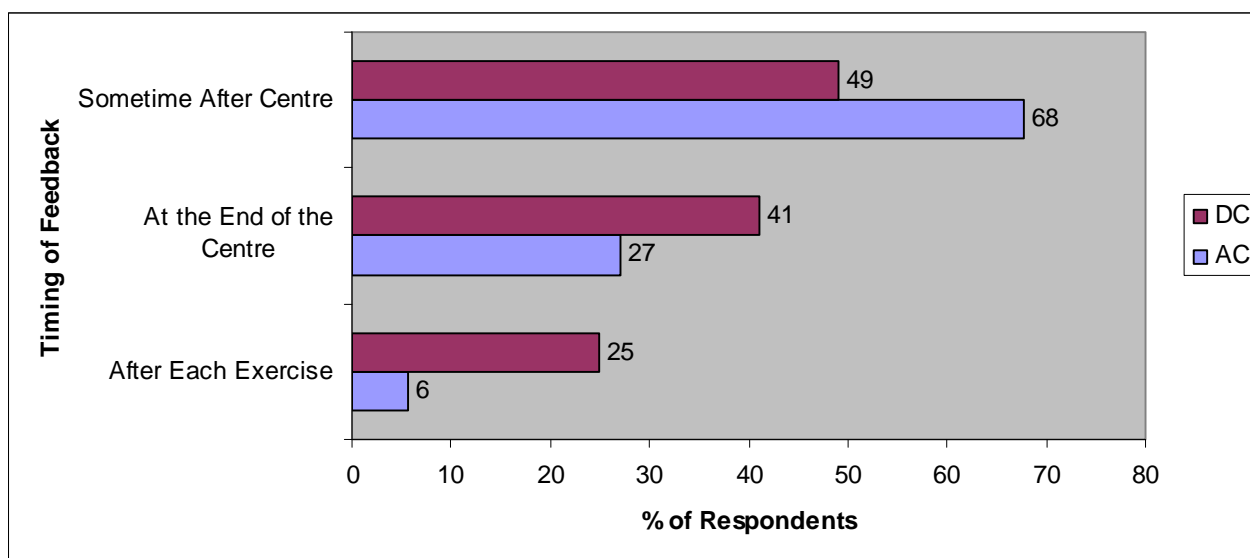
Across the five regions within the survey, respondents from all regions apart from Asia selected 'Purpose of the Centre' most frequently when suggesting the type of information that is provided to their Participants before a Centre. Interestingly, over half of the respondents from Asia (53%) stated that their Participants were provided with information relating to the 'exercise content' most frequently, more often than knowledge of the purpose of the centre (37% of Asian respondents).

4.7 Feedback

Over half of respondents (62%) stated that they provide feedback to their Participants 'sometime after the Centre', with 32% suggesting that feedback is provided at the end of the day, and only 12% claiming that they provide feedback after each exercise. However, when comparing these results across ACs and DCs, it is evident that there are some differences in the practice of providing feedback between the two types of Centre.

Figure 4.13 shows that a quarter of DC respondents provide feedback to their Participants after each exercise, compared to only 6% of AC respondents. This finding reflects the fact that many DCs will be for identifying individuals' development needs (as opposed to assessment for succession planning or to identify future potential), and focusing on ways to improve these. With immediate feedback provided, the Participant will be able to reflect on their performance on a particular exercise, and begin to focus on how they could improve in subsequent exercises or in the future.

What is concerning, however, is that nearly half of DC respondents (49%), stated that they provide feedback to their Participants 'sometime after the centre'. This may be acceptable for DCs that are more assessment-orientated (for succession planning or to identify future potential), but when a DC is for development purposes, delaying the feedback for this long may detract from the very nature of the process, which is to provide the Participant with an accurate reflection of their performance at that time, and ways in which they address their development needs in the future.

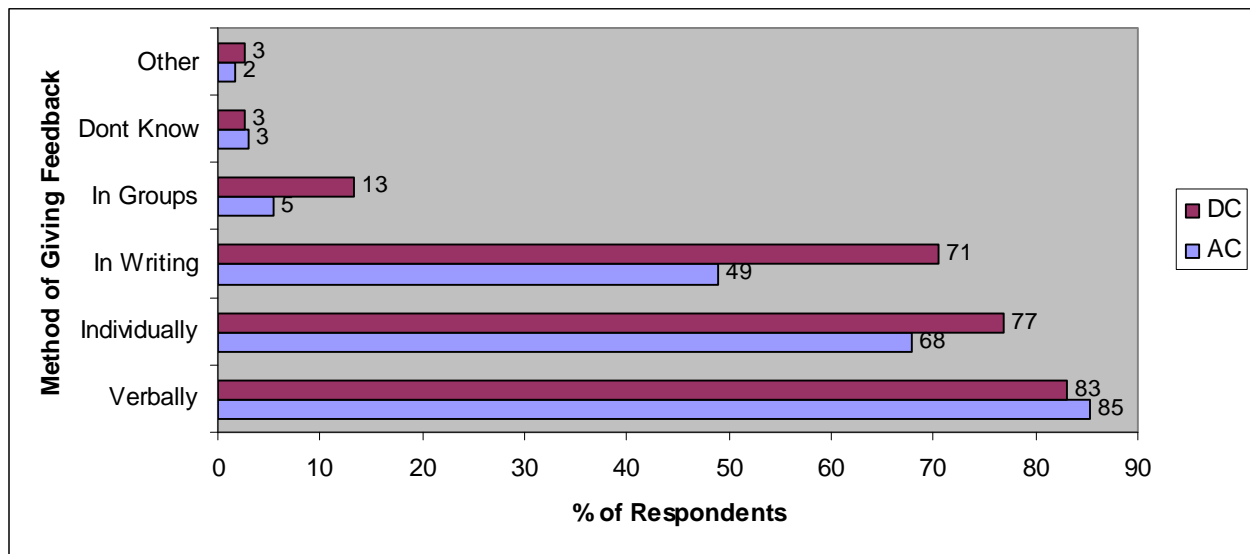
Figure 4.13 When Feedback is Provided for ACs and DCs (N=365)

It is evident that feedback on DCs takes place at various times, presumably depending on the purpose, nature, structure and duration of the DC. When the timing of feedback is viewed across continents (Table 4.11) it is apparent that feedback 'after each exercise' is significantly more popular for DCs than ACs and this is consistent with the developmental purpose of these Centres. There were no respondents from Africa or Oceania who selected providing feedback 'after each exercise' for an AC, and only few respondents from Europe (4%) adopted this practice on ACs. Providing feedback 'sometime after the Centre' was by far the most popular time to give feedback for ACs and it was also more common on ACs than on DCs, across all continents.

Table 4.11 Timing of Feedback across Continents for ACs and DCs

	Africa (%)		Asia (%)		Europe (%)		Oceania (%)		Americas (%)	
	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC
After each Exercise	0	33	13	19	4	24	0	38	17	25
At the end of the Centre	31	58	28	22	24	51	33	31	33	50
Sometime after the Centre	72	42	44	31	77	69	67	31	50	25

Figure 4.14 indicates that feedback is provided orally to Participants about 84% of the time across ACs and DCs, with individual feedback provided 71% of the time (77% for DCs and 68% for ACs). Written feedback is generally provided to participants 55% of the time, with this rising to 71% for DCs and falling to 49% for ACs. This is not surprising, as the whole point of a DC is to provide Participants with detailed reports and feedback regarding their performance at a Centre, so that they can work on their development needs after the event. An AC for selection purposes does not require the Participant to have such detailed feedback, as their key concern is whether or not they have been selected for the role. However, feedback of some variety should always be provided to AC Participants, and it is encouraging to see that many respondents who deliver ACs are providing feedback in one form or another.

Figure 4.14 Method of Giving Feedback (N=373)**Table 4.12 Method of Giving Feedback across Continents on ACs and DCs**

	Africa (%)		Asia (%)		Europe (%)		Oceania (%)		Americas (%)	
	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC	AC	DC
Verbally	81	92	70	66	91	90	88	85	89	100
Individually	58	100	58	78	74	73	63	62	72	100
In Writing	61	75	35	59	51	76	25	77	61	50
In Groups	11	33	10	16	2	10	6	0	11	25
Don't Know	3	0	8	6	2	2	0	0	6	0
Other	8	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0

The responses from every region, shown in Table 4.12, followed a similar pattern as in figure 4.14, with individual oral feedback being the preferred approach across most continents, sometimes supplemented by written feedback. Written feedback was more frequently given on DCs in Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania (75%, 59%, 76% and 77% respectively), compared to ACs (61%, 35%, 51% and 25% respectively). However, in the Americas, it was the opposite trend, with written feedback being given more frequently on ACs with 61% compared to DCs with 50%.

Figure 4.15 shows that for both ACs (47%) and DCs (58%), the Assessors were the most frequent providers of feedback to Participants regarding their performance. The most notable differences are that HR staff were used more often to provide feedback with ACs (37%) than for DCs (21%), whereas Line Managers would provide feedback more often with DCs (29%) than with ACs (20%). These findings are consistent with the fact that HR staff would often communicate the decision after an AC for external recruitment and Line Managers would often provide feedback to staff within their functional departments to support their development process in a DC.

Figure 4.15 Feedback Provider across Sample (N=366)

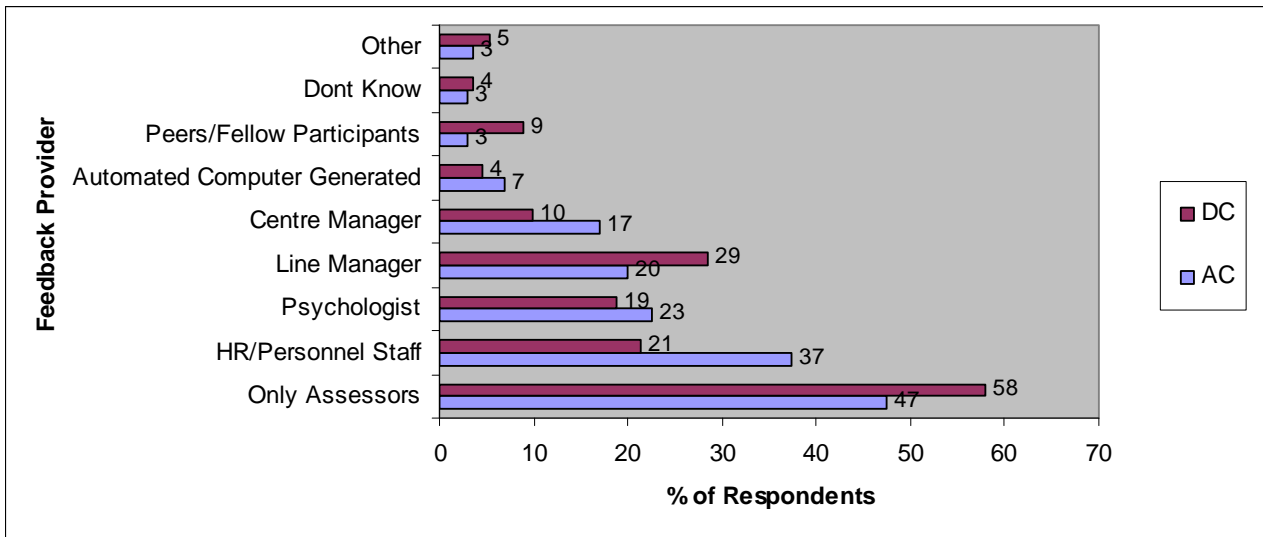


Table 4.13 Feedback Provider across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Only Assessors	64	44	47	69	42
HR/Personnel Staff	28	24	36	45	31
Psychologist	40	11	19	24	23
Line Manager	22	25	22	28	23
Centre Manager	14	11	19	17	4
Automated Computer Generated	10	8	5	3	8
Peers/Fellow Participants	2	3	4	24	0
Don't Know	0	8	2	0	4
Other	2	0	5	7	4

Table 4.13 indicates that 'Only Assessors' are the most frequently selected provider of feedback across every continent. For Europe, Oceania and the Americas, the second-most frequently selected provider of feedback was HR Staff (36%, 45% and 31% respectively). However, for African respondents, the second-most frequently selected response was for 'Psychologist' (40%), suggesting that organisations in Africa depend on Psychologists more than other continents when providing feedback to their Participants. This corresponds to Africa's use of Psychologists as Assessors 55% of the time also (Table 3.4). 'Line Managers' were selected second-most frequently for Asian respondents, with 25% selecting these employees as feedback providers within their organisations.

Participants are generally rated by one or more means and 71% of the total sample did so by competency, 51% by exercise and 34% awarded Participants with an Overall Rating. Of those using an Overall Rating, nearly two-thirds were for ACs and just over one-third for DCs, which given the focused 'Yes/No' outcome of an AC, makes an Overall Rating an appropriate mechanism.

Table 4.14 How Participants are Rated across Continents

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
By Competency	73	68	73	66	68
By Exercise	44	42	57	59	36
Overall Rating	46	19	38	45	16
No Rating	2	5	1	3	8
Narrative Summary Only	6	14	4	3	16
Other	0	0	2	3	0

When comparisons are made across continents (Table 4.14), it is evident that respondents from all five regions rated their Participants by competency most frequently. However, it is interesting to note that nearly half of the respondents from Africa and Oceania (46% and 45% respectively) also use an Overall Rating to assess their Participants. One of the factors that would influence the use of an Overall Rating is that it is more commonly used for an AC than a DC, so the low response in Asia (19%) could be due to their proportionally less frequent use of ACs (see Table 1.2). The Americas also report a lower use of an Overall Rating (16%), but this could be due to the small sample size as mentioned previously. However, it is interesting to note that both Asia and the Americas make significantly greater use than others of a Narrative Summary, (Asia 14%; Americas 16%).

5. Evaluation of Centres

5.1 Validation of Centres

The responses regarding validation of centres indicated that 53% of respondents carried out some form of validation/evaluation of their Centres, 33% of respondents carried out no form of validation/evaluation and the remaining 14% did not know whether they validated their Centres. Figure 5.1 compares the level of validation between Assessment and Development Centres and shows there is only a very slight difference between the two, as Development Centres appear to be validated more often (58%) than Assessment Centres (50%).

Figure 5.1 Validation of ACs Compared with DCs

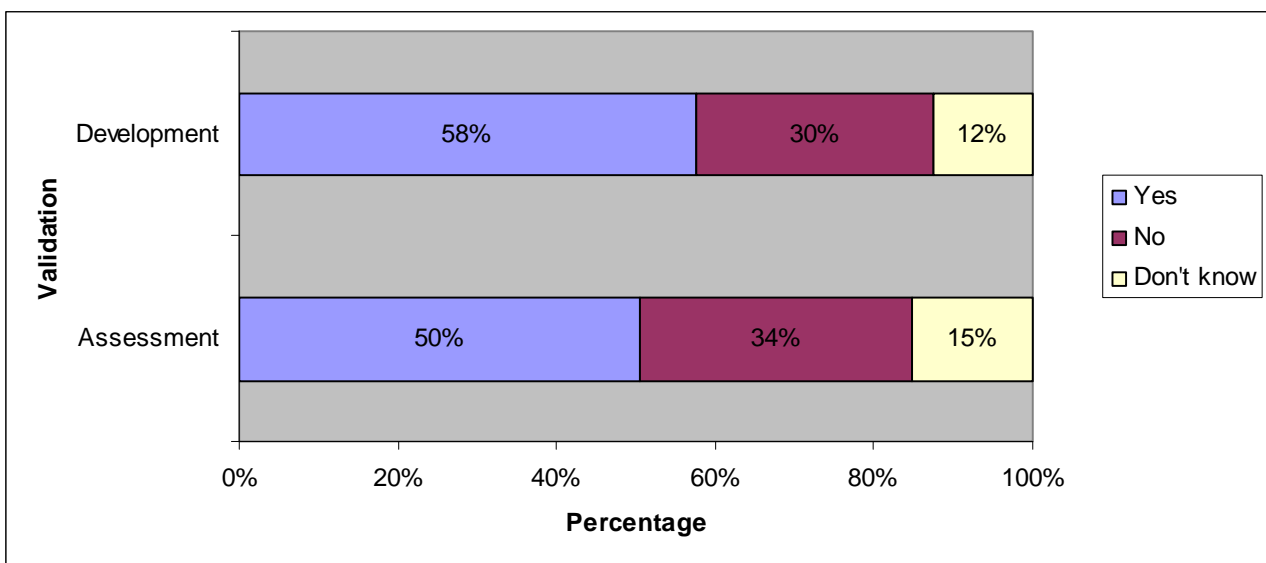
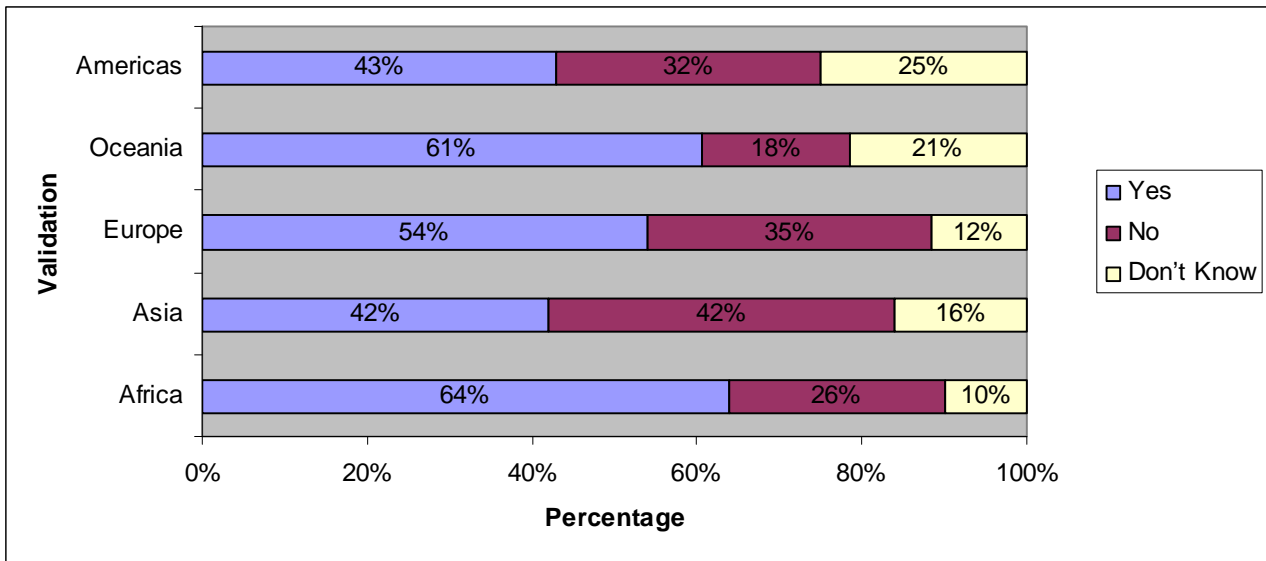


Figure 5.2 below compares the level of validation of Centres across continents and identifies Africa as the leading continent in terms of validating their Assessment Centres (64%), with Asia being least inclined to validate their Centres (42%). It is concerning to note that such a high proportion of the Centres run in Asia are not subject to any form of Centre validation. This could mean that any flaws in the AC or DC design will go undetected and perhaps lead to the inaccurate evaluation of a Participant’s performance or their ability to carry out a given role to an acceptable level.

Figure 5.2 Validation of Centres across Continents



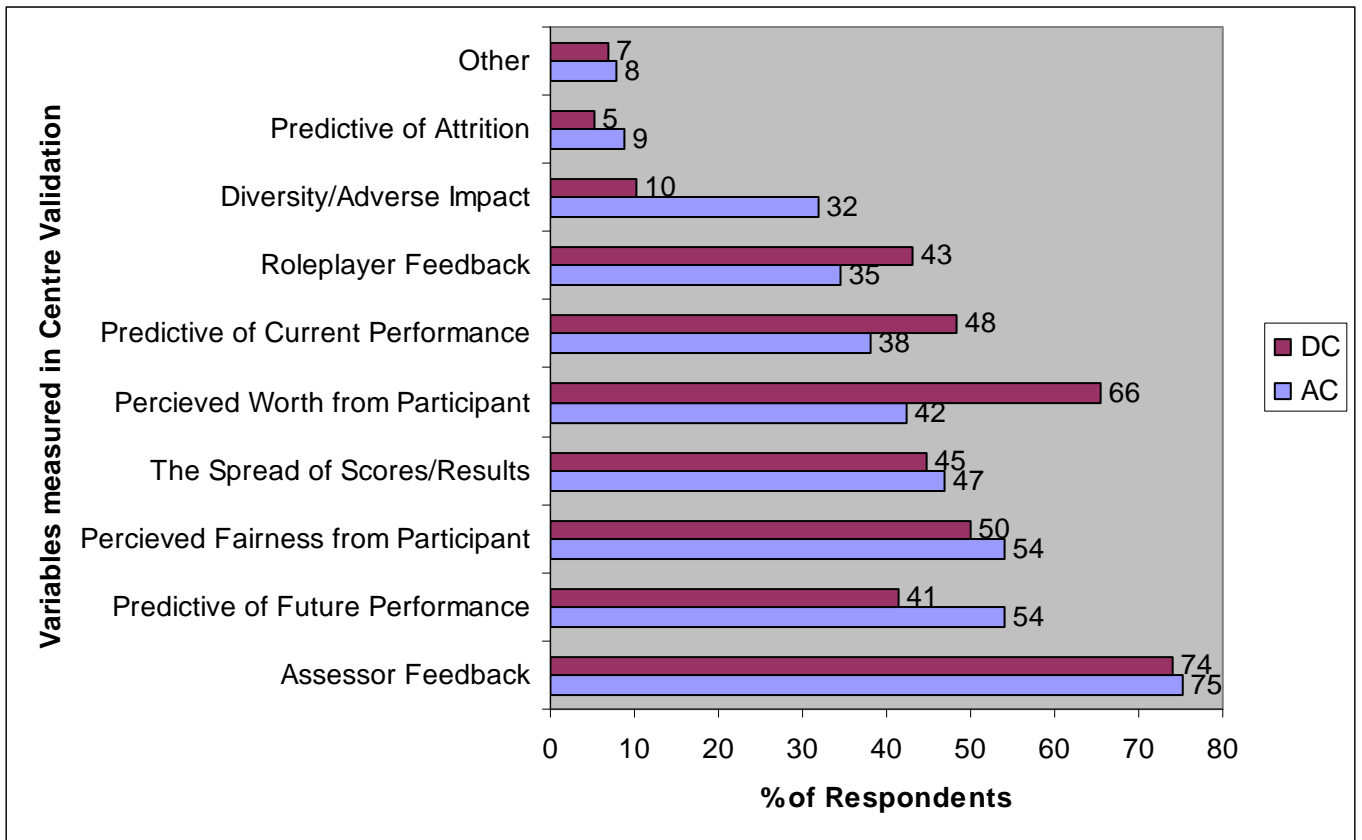
5.2 Variables Measured in Evaluation/Validation

The most popular variable to be measured in Centre validation (N=198) is the feedback from Assessors, which was identified by 74% of AC respondents and 75% of DC respondents (Figure 5.3). This was also the most frequent measure in validation studies conducted across the continents.

The largest difference between ACs and DCs comes in the option of ‘Perceived worth from Participant’, with 66% of DC respondents suggesting that they measure this variable compared to 42% of AC respondents. This may be due to the very nature of a DC, which is to develop the Participant in their current role and/or to provide them with useful information relating to their strengths and development needs, so they can improve their future performance. In an AC however, the perceived worth from the Participant is not such an important variable, as the process is more about whether or not they can perform the role to an acceptable level.

Interestingly, very few respondents selected measuring Diversity and Adverse Impact as a form of Centre validation. This may be linked to the results provided in Table 2.2, where the competency ‘Diversity Awareness’ was selected least frequently by the majority of respondents. It is surprising how, in many aspects of a Centre, the issues around diversity are not being acknowledged, given the growing emphasis on encouraging diversity in the workplace.

Figure 5.3 Variables Measured in Validating ACs and DCs



5.3 Perceived Benefits and Concerns Regarding AC Methodology

We can see from Table 5.1 that the most frequently cited perceived benefits of using AC methodology across the total sample (N=444) were ‘Accuracy of Assessment’ and ‘Identifying Potential’. The least frequently cited perceived benefits were ‘Breaks down Barriers within the Organisation’ and ‘Provides Safe Learning Environment’ (both 13% of respondents).

Table 5.1 Perceived Benefits of AC Methodology

Perceived Benefits	(%)
Accuracy of Assessment	74
Identifies Potential	74
Fairness	70
Highlights Development Activities	48
Demonstrates Organisational Commitment to Developing Staff	46
Provides Data	42
Prepares for Promotion	40
Able to Tailor	38
Builds Confidence	30
Enhances Commitment/Motivation	24
Aids Internal Networking	18
Retains Managers through Change	15
Provides Safe Learning Environment	13
Breaks down Barriers within the Organisation	13
Other	3

When this data is broken down per continent (Table 5.2), it is evident that for all regions apart from Africa, the most frequently selected benefit of AC methodology is 'Accuracy of Assessment'. African respondents were the only region that selected 'Highlights Development Activities' most frequently, along with 'Identifies Potential'. This could be due to an emphasis on positive action to encourage and provide greater opportunities to the indigenous population in some of the African countries, which is seen as of higher importance than the 'Accuracy of the Assessment'.

Table 5.2 Perceived Benefits of AC Methodology across Continents

	Benefit most frequently stated	(%)	Benefit least frequently stated	(%)
Africa	Identifies Potential / Highlights Development Activities	76	Retains Managers Through Change	16
Asia	Accuracy of Assessment	73	Breaks down barriers within the organisation	5
Europe	Accuracy of Assessment / Fairness	78	Provides Safe Learning Environment	11
Oceania	Accuracy of Assessment / Identifies Potential	75	Breaks down barriers within the organisation	4
Americas	Accuracy of Assessment	73	Breaks down barriers within the organisation	12

In terms of the concerns expressed by our sample in using AC methodology (Table 5.3), the most commonly cited response was that they are 'Time Consuming for Assessors' (40% of respondents). 'Financial Costs' were a highly expressed concern also (37% of respondents). However, the practicalities of the AC or DC, such as design complexities or the difficulties of assessing behaviour were the least selected items (both selected by 12% of the respondents). This finding highlights that commonly found issues associated with AC methodology may be that they are perceived to be financially costly for the organisation and time consuming for the Assessors. Issues around Centre design or assessing are not as prevalent.

Table 5.3 Concerns Regarding the use of AC Methodology

Concerns	(%)
Time Consuming for Assessors	40
Financial Costs	37
No Concern	29
Inadequate Assessor Training	26
Participant Anxiety	23
Time Consuming	23
Raises Expectations	19
Internal Politics	14
Difficulty Assessing Behaviour	12
Complex to Design	12
Other	5

When these concerns are considered per continent, as shown in Table 5.4, it is evident that Africa and the Americas are primarily concerned with the financial implications of running ACs or DCs, whereas Europe, Asia and Oceania's concerns are focused on the time demands that such events place on the Assessors.

Table 5.4 Concerns of Using AC Methodology across Continents

	Concern most frequently stated	(%)	Concern least frequently stated	(%)
Africa	Financial Costs	44	Complex to Design	6
Asia	Time Consuming for Assessor	47	Difficulty Assessing Behaviour / Internal Politics / Raises Expectations	14
Europe	Time Consuming for Assessor	38	Complex to Design	5
Oceania	Time Consuming for Assessor / No Concern	42	Complex to Design / Difficulty Assessing Behaviour	4
Americas	Financial Costs	50	Difficulty Assessing Behaviour	4

6. Current and Future Trends

6.1 Use of Technical Equipment

The data showed that 60% of Centres use some form of technical equipment (Figure 6.1) and this breaks down fairly equally between Assessment Centres (ACs) (58%) and Development Centres (DCs) (64%) as shown in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.1 Percentage of Technical Equipment Usage

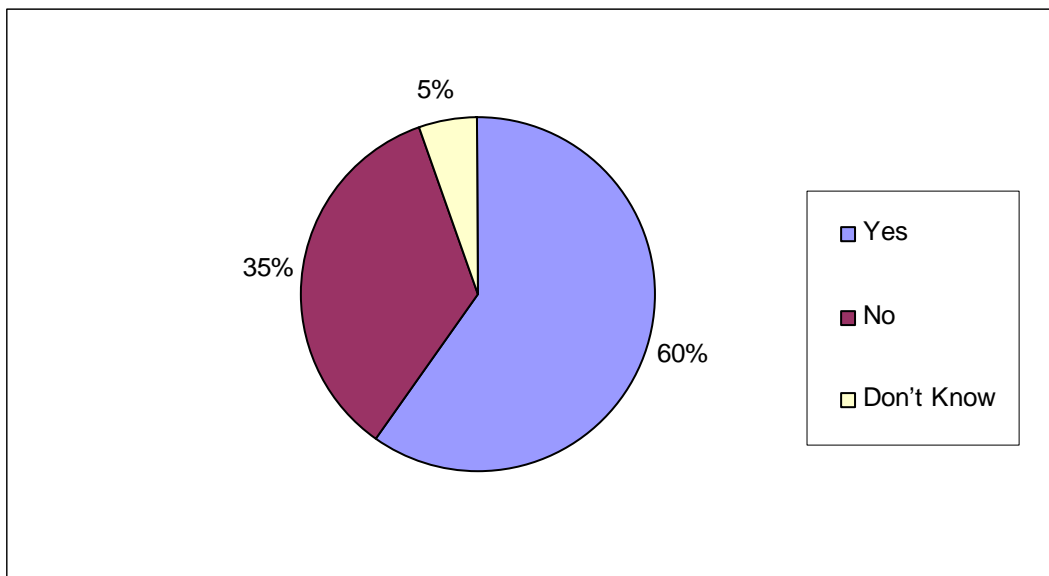


Figure 6.2 Use of Technical Equipment for ACs and DCs

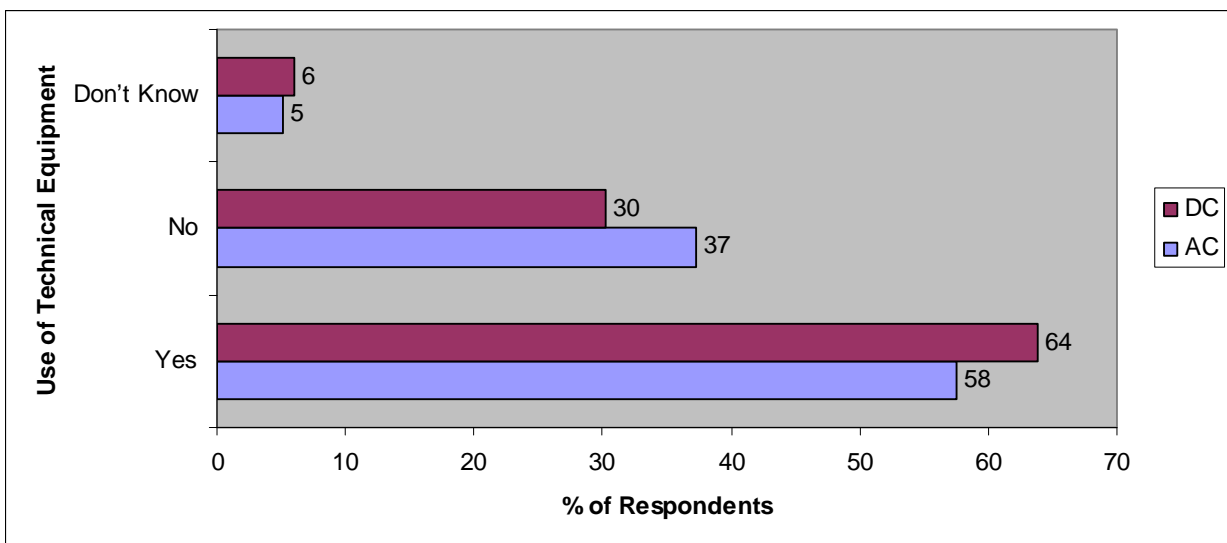


Figure 6.3 examines the use of technical equipment across continents and reveals some interesting differences. Africa (72%) appears to make the greatest use of technical equipment, whereas the lowest use came from the Americas (44%). Whilst this might be partially explained by the fact that Africa is a relatively new adopter of AC methodology and is therefore considering the use of the latest technology, the relatively low response from the Americas will almost certainly be influenced by their small sample size.

Figure 6.3 Technical Equipment Use across Continent

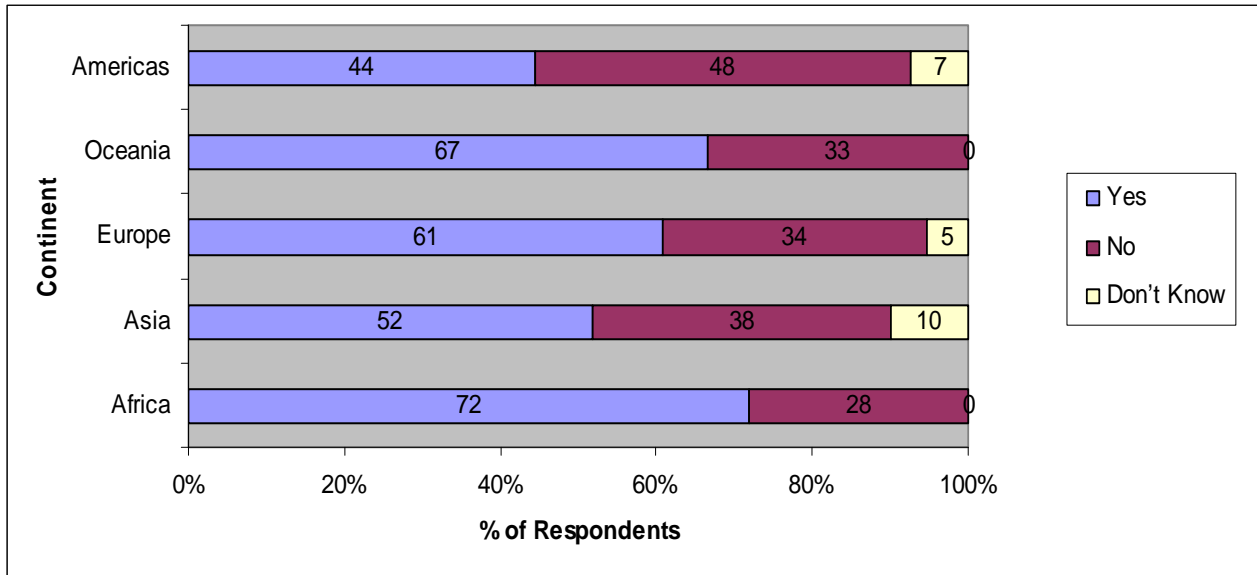
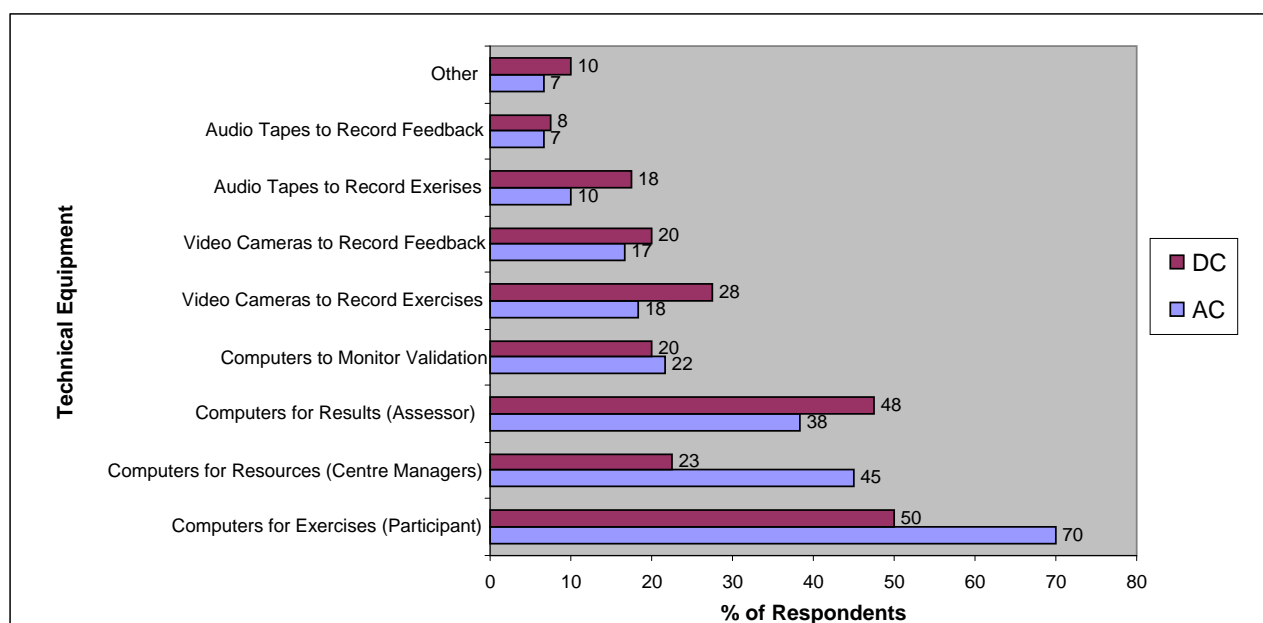


Table 6.1 identifies the different ways in which technical equipment is used across the continents. Using computers for the Participants to complete their exercises is the most popular use of technology in all five continents, which may indicate that organisations across the world are beginning to move away from paper-based exercises. The least popular option across all continents appears to be the use of audio tapes to record feedback. Interestingly, there were significantly more respondents from Oceania claiming to use video cameras to record feedback than any other continent, with 40% of these respondents selecting this option, with the second highest region being the Americas with 29%.

Table 6.1 Different Uses of Technical Equipment across Continent

	Africa (%)	Asia (%)	Europe (%)	Oceania (%)	Americas (%)
Audio Tapes to Record Exercises	17	33	2	20	14
Audio Tapes to Record Feedback	8	13	2	10	14
Video Cameras to Record Exercises	17	29	24	20	14
Video Cameras to Record Feedback	17	13	16	40	29
Computers for Exercise (Participant)	92	67	55	50	43
Computers for Results (Assessor)	33	46	43	30	43
Computers for Resources Centre Managers	50	17	45	10	29
Computers to Monitor Validation	17	13	31	0	14
Other	8	0	12	0	14

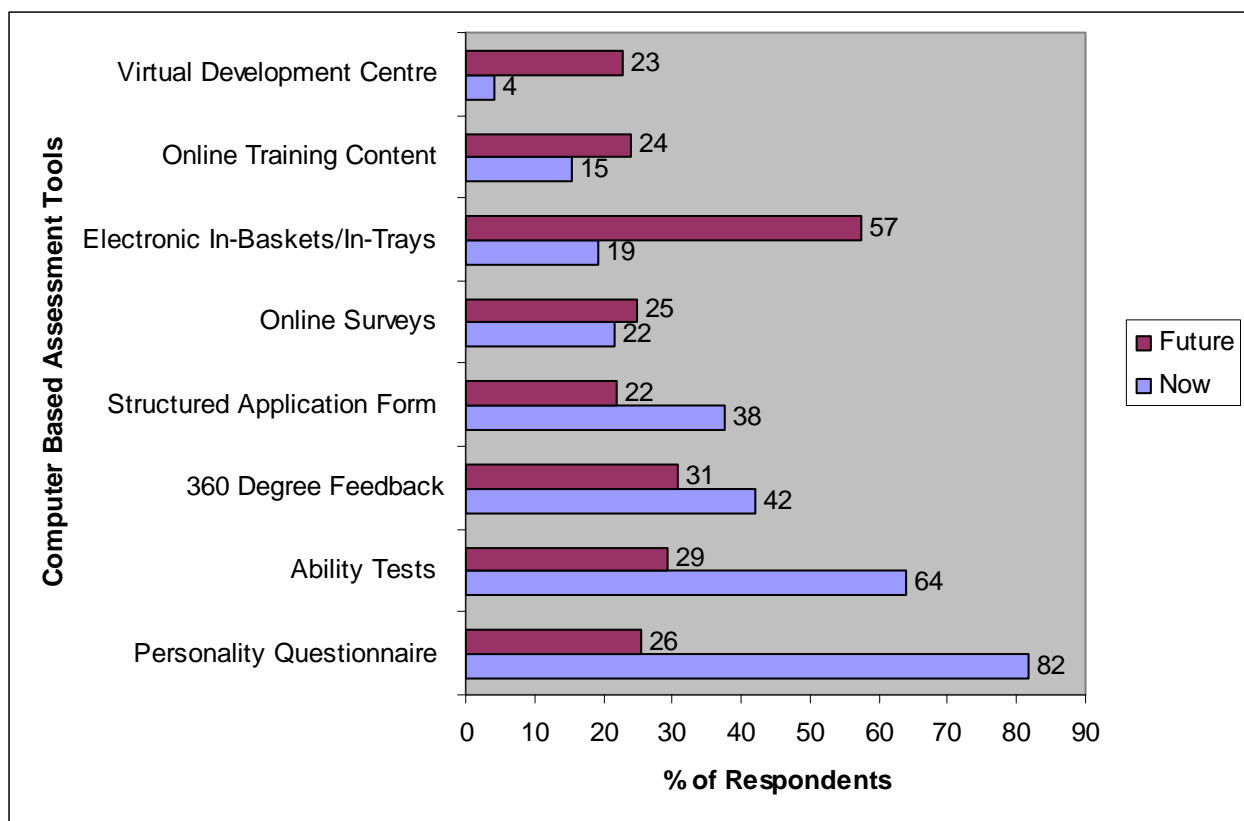
Figure 6.4 compares the uses of technical equipment between ACs and DCs. As identified in the previous table (6.1) using computers in exercises for Participants is the most popular use for technology in Centres overall; however, it is more popular in ACs (70% of respondents) than DCs (50% of respondents). A notable difference between the AC and DC respondents comes from the 'Computers for Resource (Centre Managers)' option. 45% of AC respondents selected this option as used within their Centres, compared to only 23% of the DC respondents.

Figure 6.4 Different Uses of Technical Equipment for ACs and DCs

6.2 Current vs Future Usage of Computer Based Assessment Tools

Figure 6.5 shows personality questionnaires (82%) are the most popular computer based assessment tools used on Centres at present, closely followed by Ability Tests (64%). Although it is interesting to note that the expected use of these types of tests in the future is significantly lower (26% for personality questionnaires; 29% ability tests). Virtual Development Centres were selected least although 4% of Participants indicated using them at present, with nearly a quarter of the sample (23%) stating that they would consider using such a computer-based assessment tool in the future. The most interesting finding to note is the interest in Electronic In-Baskets for future use at Centres, with 57% of the sample stating that they would consider adopting such an approach in the future.

Figure 6.5 Current vs Future Usage of Computer Based Assessment Tools



6.3 Perceived Changes

Some sections within the survey enabled the respondents to provide qualitative “free text” answers, which are not possible to analyse statistically. To analyse the information provided, cluster analysis was carried out to identify the recurring themes from the responses.

The qualitative information identified the opinions of the respondents surrounding the changes to the use of AC methodology. The responses are split into three categories; perceived changes within the next 5 years, perceived changes between 5 and 10 years from now, and lastly perceived changes in more than 10 years from now.

6.3.1 Changes in the Next 5 years

The responses from this section can be grouped into four themes for change; Technology, Materials, Assessors and Competencies.

- **Technology:** This was referred to most frequently with many respondents identifying the likelihood of technological advances having a major impact on the methodology of ACs. Some of the specific ideas mentioned within this section were online administration, automated scoring, virtual ACs and video usage.
- **Materials:** This was the second most popular category to be mentioned, with specific reference to having a greater choice of sources for AC and DC exercises, as well as greater usage and the cost of exercises becoming cheaper over time.
- **Assessors:** This was the third most popular category to be mentioned and it generally applied to how Centres would be run and the practices that they would entail. Some suggested improvements to existing approaches included improving Participant evaluation stages, possibly through moving to a more statistical approach. Other ideas to emerge revolved around those who would be assessing, and making more use of external specialist Assessors.
- **Competencies:** These were frequently mentioned and they fell into two categories. The first being a more general competency set for certain positions, for example a set of graduate competencies which were generally agreed between organisations. The second category identified a shift towards important categories of competencies that could be measured, such as community awareness, cultural awareness and global awareness.

6.3.2 Changes in 5-10 years

Respondents found predicting future trends increasingly difficult the further into the future they were asked to predict. Significantly fewer respondents were able to offer opinions on the possible changes of AC methodology; however, two themes that did emerge were 'Technological changes' and 'Exercise focus'.

- **Technological changes** for this period had many similar ideas to those referred to in the previous section (6.3.1) with on-line assessment and scoring or greater use of technology at Centres appearing to be popular. However, some more radical ideas did emerge for this section such as virtual group discussions through the creation of virtual ACs with different Participants sited at different locations, observed by Assessors sited at yet another location, all connected through the use of technology.
- **Exercise focus** was the only other major trend identified within this timescale, with Participants suggesting ideas such as a greater link between assessment and a personal development plan, as well as a move away from the competency framework approach.

6.3.3 Changes in 10+ Years

This section was even more challenging for the Participants to complete. However, it still provided many responses, again from which two themes occurred: 'Technological changes' and 'Usage changes'.

- Technological changes had many similar ideas to those occurring in the previous two sections. However, some new ideas in this section emerged, such as online mapping of career progression relating to DC activity and real-time online assessment and feedback.
- Usage changes were mentioned in many responses which related to how AC methodology would be used in the future and the amount it would be used. Some respondents suggested that by this time the methodology would be replaced by other types of assessment, whilst others suggested it may become more integrated with strategic HR initiatives.

Appendix A

Breakdown of Continents into Contributing Countries

Continent	Inclusive Countries	No. of Respondents
Africa	Botswana	3
	Egypt	3
	Kenya	8
	Lesotho	1
	Morocco	1
	South Africa	43
	Zambia	1
Asia	China	36
	Hong Kong	12
	India	11
	Indonesia	1
	Japan	2
	Malaysia	2
	Pakistan	1
	Philippines	1
	Saudi Arabia	2
	Singapore	3
	South Korea	1
	Sri Lanka	1
	Syria	1
	Thailand	1
UAE	25	
Europe	Austria	1
	Belgium	1
	Cyprus	8
	Denmark	1
	France	3
	Ireland	4
	Italy	1
	Luxembourg	1
	Romania	8
	Russian Federation	3
	Sweden	9
	Switzerland	9
	Turkey	6
UK	161	
Oceania	Australia	16
	New Zealand	18
Americas	Argentina	1
	Barbados	1
	Brazil	22
	Canada	1
	USA	8