



Digitally enhanced employability

Increasing student confidence and career prospects by delivering a digital assessment centre.



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Challenge

With at least 60% of graduate employers now using online assessment centres (ISE, 2020), it is more important than ever that students develop their confidence and understanding of this process. At SRS, we have designed a digital assessment centre (DAC) simulation to accurately reflect current trends in the graduate recruitment process, giving students an invaluable opportunity to develop their skills in a safe learning environment.

SRS have worked with the University of Lincoln for three years to run an in-person assessment centre that is embedded in the curriculum. This year, the challenges presented by Covid-19 led to 200 business, accounting and finance, and economics students taking part in a large-scale DAC simulation. The aim of the DAC was to increase students' employability skills, confidence, and knowledge, therefore improving graduate outcomes.

Solution

To overcome the challenges of remote working, we focused on providing an outstanding student experience. We created a bespoke student communication plan where SRS sent preliminary 'keep-warm' emails to students. These emails gave top tips for each exercise, along with support and advice to settle any nerves. Students also received a comprehensive briefing video, technical support guide, and digital platform instructions to bring the process to life before the DAC. We chose a user-friendly digital assessment platform, which has been used by employers to ensure the event ran smoothly for students.

University and SRS assessors worked alongside to vet students via video conference. Each assessor received training sessions on the digital assessment platform ahead of the event. Students then completed a time-sensitive e-tray task, interview and pre-prepared presentation with each exercise testing them against core competencies. Materials for the exercises were designed to reflect those used by employers and were signed off by an occupational psychologist.

Dedicated SRS team members were on hand throughout the DAC to offer technical support. We made a number of adjustments to support individual learning needs, and scheduled students in different time zones appropriately. Following completion of the assessment centre, students

all received in-depth, personalised digital feedback reports. The reports identified their strengths and development areas, meaning students could instantly apply their learning at an employer's assessment centre.

Success

The DAC proved to be a huge success:

- 100% of participants said they would recommend the DAC experience to other students.
- 83% of students reported feeling confident about applying for graduate roles following completion of the DAC, compared to 19% before.
- The number of students scoring the top grades (70% or more) increased by 10%, compared to the previous year group completing an in-person assessment centre.
- 53% of students received exercise scores that exceeded expectations, showing they would stand a good chance at an employer's assessment centre.

One student commented: "I really enjoyed the different exercises that we were presented with and the in-depth, personalised feedback that I received was incredibly constructive and invaluable."

We were particularly delighted at engagement from students on professional social media channels. Students shared their experiences of the event on LinkedIn and connected with their assessors. We loved how this showed further initiative to develop their professional network and reflect on the DAC experience.

At SRS, we're committed to helping students secure key graduate roles. With this in mind, we will continue to adapt our DAC simulations to suit the needs of different universities and student cohorts.

