
The Fast Stream Assessment Centre (FSAC) is a one-day assessment centre that selects graduates with the calibre and potential to join the Fast Stream. Research indicates that assessment centres make more accurate predictions of subsequent achievement at work than any other recruitment method. Fast Stream standards are high and to have reached the Assessment Centre stage is in itself a significant achievement. You now have the opportunity to demonstrate that you have the skills and personal qualities that Fast Streamers need. Our main aim is to measure each candidate’s skills, aptitudes and abilities against set criteria. During the assessment, candidates will complete a variety of written (using our customised PCs) and oral exercises and have a one-to-one interview with an assessor. You’ll be placed in a group of five or six candidates from a wide range of backgrounds.
Each group of candidates will be seen by three specially selected and trained assessors. Most assessors are either serving or recently retired civil servants with significant policy or management responsibilities. There are also qualified occupational psychologists on the panel with experience in assessing candidates for employment. A trainee assessor or visitor might accompany the three assessors. They are there to observe the selection process and will take no part in your assessment. If you are uncomfortable about the trainee or visitor sitting in on your interview or Briefing Exercise, please feel free to say so – this will not affect our assessment of you in any way.
“THERE IS VERY LITTLE THAT COULD ACTUALLY BE PREPARED FOR MANY OF THE EXERCISES AND THE BEST PREPARATION IS THEREFORE A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP! FOR THE INTERVIEW, I THINK IT IS USEFUL TO HAVE THOUGHT THROUGH IN ADVANCE HOW YOUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES RELATE TO THE FAST STREAM COMPETENCIES OUTLINED IN THE GUIDE, AND HOW YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY DEMONSTRATED THESE COMPETENCIES.”

LAURA JAYAWARDANE, IDENTITY AND PASSPORT SERVICE

Fair and open recruitment is fundamental to us and underlies every part of the FSAC process. It is important to note from the outset that we will assess you solely on the basis of your performance in the exercises (including your written e-Tray exercise) and interview. Before the Assessment Centre, the assessors will be given no other information on you except your name. They will not have seen your application forms or your scores from earlier stages in the selection process. Furthermore, the Civil Service is wholeheartedly committed to equal opportunities. Your family or ethnic background, gender, appearance, age, sexual orientation, accent, political views, religion, personal beliefs or previous employment play no part whatsoever in our final decision. We want you to feel perfectly free to express your point of view throughout the assessment procedure.

ALL CANDIDATES ARE ASSESSED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING COMPETENCIES:

- Drive for results – an ability to plan and prioritise, solve problems and deal with setbacks;
- Learning and improving – your ability to learn from your experiences, adapt to different situations and how you seek to improve your performance;
- Decision-making – your ability to analyse, think critically, take decisions and give advice;
- Constructive thinking – your ability to think creatively and to develop innovative solutions;
- Building productive relationships – your ability to build relationships and achieve goals through these relationships;
- Communicating with impact – your ability to communicate, negotiate and influence.

The assessment process is comprehensive, and the interview and exercises are each considered independently, with all three assessors involved at different times. No final decision will be made until your performance in all the exercises and the interview has been fully evaluated. The process is designed to be challenging and it’s rare for a candidate to do well in everything. It’s quite possible that you’ll feel you haven’t performed well in a particular exercise or the interview and yet still be successful. Therefore, it makes sense to concentrate on doing your best at each stage and not to dwell on your previous performances.
WHAT WILL BE ASSESSED?

CANDIDATES FOR THE FOLLOWING FAST STREAM OPTIONS WILL BE ASKED TO ATTEND A FINAL SELECTION BOARD, WHERE THEY WILL NEED TO SHOW EVIDENCE OF THE FURTHER SKILLS AND PARTICULAR STRENGTHS LISTED BELOW:

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

- Ability to learn quickly the rules and conventions of parliamentary practice
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Adaptability and willingness to take on new tasks
- Stamina, both physical and intellectual
- Capacity to think quickly and logically under pressure
- The initiative to make and use personal contacts

DIPLOMATIC SERVICES

- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Strong management potential
- Adaptability and resilience
- The ability to think strategically and see the bigger picture
- A real interest in, and sensitivity towards, different cultures
- A lively interest in political and international affairs

ECONOMIST FAST STREAM

Candidates for the Economist Fast Stream will already have attended an event at which their Economics skills and knowledge have been assessed.
WHAT WILL BE ASSESSED?

TECHNOLOGY IN BUSINESS FAST STREAM

Candidates for this scheme will also be asked to attend a Final Selection Board in London where they will need to demonstrate:

- an understanding of how technology can change government’s interaction with the public;
- an understanding of how technology can be harnessed to achieve large-scale business change;
- potential to work within a technology environment and understand the technologies involved; and
- a drive for results and an ability to build business relationships across traditional boundaries

STATISTICIAN FAST STREAM

Candidates for the Statistician Fast Stream will already have attended an event at which their statistical skills and knowledge have been assessed.

Those invited to final selection boards will find it helpful to find out as much as possible about their chosen option beforehand.
GETTING TO FSAC

The date and start time of your FSAC will have been sent to you by email to your Fast Stream inbox.

Travelling around London can take longer than you think, so it is essential you allow extra time to ensure you arrive promptly. The Assessment Centre timetable is tight and there is no room for delays. It’s a good idea to work out how you’re going to travel here in advance. The map on the inside back cover of this booklet gives directions to help you find your way from each of the main London railway stations.

Please remember to bring your identification documents as specified in the invitation letter (eg. your passport, National Insurance card, birth certificate).

If you have trouble with transport and can’t help being a few minutes late, don’t panic. Call ahead and let us know if you’re going to be delayed. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late, it may mean you can’t take part as the timetable for the day does not allow for significant delays. Similarly, if you are unwell, please contact us. The number is: 020 7276 3800 (messages can be left on the answerphone outside office hours).

A great deal of work goes into planning your programme at FSAC and unexplained “no-shows” have a financial and organisational impact and will affect other candidates. Although we try to offer alternative dates for FSAC, we can’t always guarantee it, particularly towards the end of the recruitment season when places are very limited.

WHAT TO EXPECT ON ARRIVAL

A member of the FSAC team will check your identification on arrival, then show you the way to the candidate common room. There you will be told how the Assessment Centre operates and you can ask any questions you may have. You’ll also get your own personal timetable, so you’ll always know where you’ve got to be and when. You should finish by 5:45 pm.

The venue for FSAC at 67 Tufton Street has been purpose-built as an Assessment Centre. It has a large common room on the ground floor with drinks and vending facilities, TV, newspapers, books, games and PCs with internet access. A sandwich lunch is provided. If you have special dietary needs, please let us know in advance. There are cashpoint machines on Horseferry Road (NatWest) and in Smith Square (Lloyds TSB). The nearest Post Office is on Broadway near St James’s Park tube station.

Please note that we have a no-smoking policy within the building and near the entrance outside, but there’s a park nearby in Horseferry Road. We’re keen to make your day with us run as smoothly as possible, so please feel free to ask about anything that may be bothering you. We’re always glad to help.
“THE ASSESSORS WERE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO PUT US ALL AT EASE - THEY GENUINELY WANT YOU TO DO YOUR BEST. AS NATURAL AS IT IS TO BE NERVOUS, MY ‘TOP TIP’ WOULD BE TO TRY AND RELAX, AND TALK WITH THE OTHER CANDIDATES.”

LUCY PHIPPS, HOME OFFICE

This oral exercise lasts approximately 45 minutes and is designed to test your drive for results as well as your ability to build productive relationships, communicate with impact and learn and improve from your experiences. You will be given 35 minutes to prepare for the exercise by yourself. In your group of 6 (or 5), you will be presented with four fictitious projects and be asked to agree on one of them. At the start of the exercise, you will receive a brief which summarises the overall situation, and gives detailed information on the main issues up for discussion and on the view you are representing. Your assigned brief will be different from other members of the group and your task is to gain the best outcome for yourself as well as for the group as a whole. Each of the assigned roles in your group carries equal weight and you should not appoint a chairperson. Not only will you be expected to present a strong case, you will also need to listen to what the other candidates have to say and carefully negotiate to come to an agreed position. All members of the group are expected to contribute to the discussion on all four of the projects. You are advised to keep to the information in the briefs, remembering that the scenario is fictitious and you should avoid introducing information or assertions that contradict evidence from the papers.

While the number of Fast Stream places in any one year is limited, you should not feel that you are in direct competition with other members of your group. You should, therefore, seek to establish friendly relationships with your group, rather than try to score points off them. At the end of the exercise, you will be asked to complete a short Self-Assessment Form. This is an integral part of the assessment of your performance in this exercise and is designed to test your ability in the Fast Stream competency of Learning and Improving. A summary of the type of scenario you can expect in this exercise is below:

The town of Benchester, located on the River Snelling, has become increasingly susceptible to severe flooding. The Ministry of Planning and Public Works is keen to prevent this flooding in the future and has designated Benchester as a priority area for a major flood prevention scheme. The Department has allocated £750,000 for the scheme and, after careful research, has short-listed four possible projects. The Department’s Flood Prevention Committee, which is made up of representatives from six divisions within the Ministry, has been given the task of making a recommendation to the Minister of Planning and Public Works as to which project should be allocated the funds.
THE FOUR PROJECTS ARE:

PROJECT A: CONSTRUCTION OF DAM

This project would involve the construction of a small, 120 metre-long dam six miles upstream of the River Snelling at Horton Bridge. It would have the spin off of being able to provide 200 Kw of electricity, sufficient to supply all the power needs of the small community of 200 people at Horton Bridge and 15% of Benchester. The project would be led by a British construction company, Walden International, which would employ 75 construction workers. It would take 2½ years to build and cost £750,000. The lake created by the dam would flood three cottages and relocation packages would need to be provided to the residents. It would also partly flood a woodland area popular with walkers and home to rich wildlife. Environmental lobby groups are divided about the project – some see it as unnecessarily destructive of an area of unspoilt terrain, while others support the proposed lake as an important new habitat for freshwater fish. The Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources is strongly in favour of the project. The local population in Horton Bridge is generally positive about the scheme, although there are some concerns about unsightly electricity power lines spoiling the rural countryside.

PROJECT B: INSTALLATION OF EARLY-WARNING FLOOD PREVENTION SYSTEM

This project would install a sophisticated early-warning flood prevention system developed by an American firm, Fibrotech with research input from a British university. The system involves laying a complex network of fibre-optic cables along a twelve mile stretch of the River Snelling. Sensors would send information such as flow rates, ground saturation and water levels to a command centre which would be based in Benchester. This would cost £700,000, provide five permanent jobs and take 1 year to install. The Ministry of Trade supports the project, but has warned that this cutting edge technology has been prone to malfunction in several locations in the US. The Ministry of International Affairs has expressed concern that a non-British company is leading the project, while the Ministry of Education is more supportive of the project, given that it involves the research backing of a British university. According to a poll in the Benchester Gazette, this project was by far the most popular among the under 25s but this feeling was not shared among the over 40s age group.
PROJECT C: CONSTRUCTION OF FLOOD DEFENCE WALL

This project involves construction of a 3.5 metre high and 1 metre thick concrete flood defence wall along a 450 metre stretch of the River Snelling in the northern part of Benchester. For additional strength, the wall would include granite facework on all the exposed areas. The flood defence wall would be built by a British company, Dalesmead Construction, would cost £600,000 and employ 15 people during the construction phase. Given the nature of the project, construction could only take place during the summer and would take 18 months to complete. The Ministry of Construction is strongly in favour of this project, believing that it is a tried and tested method of flood defence. The Ministry of Culture is concerned that this creates a ‘culture of concrete’ throughout the country. Environmentalists have also criticised the project as it will destroy the natural river bank and remove a number of trees. The residents of Benchester living near the proposed route of the flood defence wall are strongly against the project. The Town Council plans to invite local schools to design a mural on the wall, an idea which has gone down particularly well with parents, the local Arts Club and the regional tourist office.

PROJECT D: CREATION OF NEW FLOOD RELIEF CHANNEL

This project involves dredging a new overflow channel parallel to the River Snelling in Benchester. The new channel would need to be directed through Benchester’s main town park. A team of specialist river landscapers would be invited to create a natural river bank along the new channel, with new trees and two pedestrian bridges in keeping with the park’s original design. The project would be led by a local consultancy company, Riverflow Solutions Ltd, drawing on the expertise of a national dredging company. The project, costing £725,000, would take 2 years to complete and create 18 temporary jobs in the project team. The Ministry of Trade has expressed reservations about the financial viability of Riverflow Solutions, which has recently lost a major contract and has been making plans to lay off staff. Environmentalists are enthusiastic about the project because it includes a tree-planting scheme. The Ministry of Construction has also endorsed the project, although it has noted that there is a 40% chance that the new channel might silt up within three years and require dredging. The free newspaper ‘The Benchester Chronicle’ has been running a campaign in support of this project, claiming the Mayor of Benchester as its major backer.
“FSAC MAKES FOR A VERY TIRING DAY; HOWEVER, THERE IS A LOT TO KEEP YOU BUSY. THE TESTS ARE INTERESTING, SO TRY NOT TO LET THEM STRESS YOU OUT TOO MUCH, JUST TRY TO BE NATURAL AND ENJOY THEM. MY BEST ADVICE TO NEW APPLICANTS WOULD BE THAT IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE DONE BADLY IN ONE TEST, TRY NOT TO LET IT WORRY YOU FOR THE REST OF THE DAY. PUT IT BEHIND YOU AND RELAX.”

FELICITY OSWALD, HOME OFFICE

This written exercise (for which you will use our customised PCs) is in two parts which last 15 minutes and 85 minutes respectively. Part one is designed to test your capacity for constructive thinking by asking you to come up with innovative ideas to address a particular challenge or problem. Part two is designed to test your ability to make decisions and communicate with impact. In part two, you will be presented with a file of papers which provide information from different sources on three fictitious projects, each of which is being considered by the government as a solution to a specific problem. Your task is to analyse the papers and, on the computer provided, prepare a note which builds a balanced and convincing case for one of the three projects. To do this, you will need to compare and contrast the options, using the stated criteria, and explain convincingly the reasons for your recommendation.

There is no right answer – a good case can be made for each option. The important thing is how you support your decision, using the facts provided, and how you express this in writing. You should pay particular attention to the time when completing this exercise. You will find you have little or no time for rough drafts and you should work quickly and methodically through the papers. A summary of the type of scenario you can expect in this exercise is below:

The UK is searching for alternative sources of energy from within the country. Your Minister has asked for advice on the best allocation of £100 million start-up funding for one of three projects concerning the exploitation of new sources of energy in the UK.
THE THREE OPTIONS ARE:

OPTION 1: SEABED MINERAL EXTRACTION

The £100 million would be invested in a joint venture with the British energy company, LHP (Light, Heat and Power), to extract minerals such as coal, titanium and manganese from the sea bed. New technology would extract and crush coal on the sea bed and suck it via a flexible pipe to the surface, where it would be burnt at an environmentally friendly power station. LHP has identified a site for the first power station near Hemmingfleet on the East Anglian coast. If successful, this method could result in cheap electricity for the domestic market. The technology could be a major export earner and £25 billion of the UK’s future electricity requirement could be provided from this source in 25 years’ time at 20 power stations spread around the coastline of the UK. There would be a total capital cost of £25 billion. The power stations would be environmentally clean and 90% of the carbon dioxide emissions from burning the coal would be captured and fed back into the sea bed. The pilot scheme would last 5 years. However, there are risks. The financial position of LHP is not secure and the Government could be left to pick up the bill. If the scheme doesn’t work a stretch of East Anglian coast would have been damaged unnecessarily. There are significant presentational issues about using coal and strong local opposition to this project.

OPTION 2: FUSION

This option involves investing £100m as the UK share in a £500m international academic consortium involving seven countries including China and India. It is investigating a promising line of research into nuclear fusion, which would produce electricity by separating deuterium from sea water. The research in this country would be carried out at an existing research facility in South Lancashire, led by a distinguished scientist. There are virtually limitless supplies of deuterium in sea water and if fusion can be made to work there is the prospect of producing electricity in vast quantities. Furthermore, unlike 20th century fission reactors, which produce long lived, environmentally harmful waste products, the fusion process is largely pollution-free. It is the least environmentally damaging option as no carbon dioxide emissions are involved. Fusion requires large initial amounts of energy to produce electricity and the reactor buildings are huge. Five would ultimately be needed at a capital cost of perhaps £40 billion. These could produce 15-20% of electricity supply in 25 years’ time. In the much longer term, as the cost of building the power station is written off, perhaps 75% of electricity could come from fusion. The pilot programme would take 10 years. The risks are potentially huge. If the research came to nothing, there would be the financial cost of disbanding and paying off the research team – and loss of national prestige. Public opinion may not accept that fusion does not have the same problems as fission and persuading them otherwise might prove too difficult.
“FOR ME, THE MOST DAUNTING PART OF FSAC WAS THE WRITTEN POLICY EXERCISE, BUT YOU’LL FIND IT’S REALLY NOT AS BAD AS IT SOUNDS. MY WORDS OF ADVICE, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER: BE YOURSELF, RELAX, AND READ THE INSTRUCTIONS. YOU’VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE, BUT IT REALLY MAKES A DIFFERENCE.”

RICHARD VIANELLO, DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS

OPTION 3: BURNING LOCAL MATERIAL

The £100m would provide 50% of the finance for a pilot project run by a major domestic waste company, Green Burn Energy, to produce electricity from renewable natural material or “biomass”. In this case domestic rubbish and specially cultivated, organic twig-like material called ‘withies’ would be burnt. The pilot would take place in Bramblemains, a town in central Scotland of some 100,000 people.

The aim would be to produce enough electricity from a small power station fuelled from both renewable sources to meet the town’s needs. Withies would be grown on a large area of nearby agricultural land. A conglomerate, including investors from Hungary and the Czech Republic, Central European Heat Associates (CEHASA), is willing to put up the other £100m. There is widespread international interest in the project because of its use of renewable materials, which can be grown near the power stations, and also its broad recycling appeal. If successful, the scheme would be rolled out at 60 sites throughout the UK. The capital cost is £7.5 billion and the pilot would take 5 years to complete. Apart from energy supply issues, this option has farming, education and rural employment attractions. About 17-22% of UK electricity demand could potentially be met from biomass in 25 years’ time. However, there are some risks. There is a finite limit to the amount of land which could be cultivated economically, so the sixty sites are the maximum that could produce electricity this way. There is popular dislike of CEHASA in view of a past accident in Eastern Europe. If it is too difficult to get continuity of supply of waste, the experiment may not work and the £100 million would be a waste of taxpayers’ money.
“THE ASSESSORS WERE VERY PROFESSIONAL AND HELPED TO PUT ME AT EASE. I WAS OBVIOUSLY NERVOUS FOR THE POLICY BRIEFING EXERCISE BUT WHEN I GOT FEEDBACK FOR THE DAY I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED TO SEE THE ASSESSOR HAD SCORED ME VERY HIGHLY AND HAD NOT BEEN INFLUENCED BY MY DISPOSITION AT THE TIME.”

LUCY YU, DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

This exercise lasts up to 30 minutes and is designed to test your ability to plan and achieve results, think constructively and communicate with impact. In this exercise you will be asked to select a project from a list of three options within a fictitious overall scenario. You will have 30 minutes to prepare a 10 minute briefing to an assessor, who will then ask you questions for up to 20 minutes. The exercise is not a test of your prior knowledge of the scenarios, nor of your project management skills. Our assessment of you does not depend on which project you select. It’s best to choose the one you feel most comfortable developing and presenting. Your assessor will play the part of a senior manager. Your task is to convince the assessor that the project you have developed contains some fresh ideas and will achieve its objectives. Although you should be persuasive, you should not ignore any difficulties there may be with implementation. When it comes to building on the original idea you can be as wide ranging and radical as you like, as long as your proposals are relevant. Immediately after the exercise, you will be asked to complete a short Self-Assessment Form. As with the Self-Assessment Form after the Group Exercise, this is an integral part of the assessment of your performance at FSAC and is designed to test your ability in the Fast Stream competency of Learning and Improving. A summary of the type of scenario you can expect in this exercise is below:

One of the recommendations of the International Centre for Climate Change Control is that countries should radically reduce pollution levels. The UK Government wishes to respond to this by undertaking projects to tackle pollution in all its forms – not just about air pollution, but also land pollution, water pollution, noise pollution and light pollution. Your team has been asked to examine three proposals, each of which is considered equally valid by the Government.
THE THREE PROJECTS ARE:

LITTER WATCH

The government wishes to significantly reduce the amount of contaminated land caused by the careless disposal of litter, particularly in urban areas and along main roads and railways. The proposal involves a network of volunteer ‘Litter Wardens’ across the country who would be tasked with encouraging the responsible disposal of litter within local communities and reporting on cases of littering to the local authorities. Litter Wardens would be provided with a variety of incentives to create special ‘litter-free districts’ throughout the country.

CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME

This project involves an air quality monitoring and awareness building programme for schools. Schools would be provided with air quality monitoring equipment and supplying that information to a central database. Depending on the air pollution levels in those schools, special schemes would be introduced to reduce air pollution in the immediate vicinity, targeted at reducing traffic, implementing restrictions on the burning of materials and eliminating indoor biological and chemical pollutants.

OPERATION LIGHTS OUT

The government has introduced a target of reducing light pollution by half over the next 15 years. This project aims to encourage people to turn off unnecessary lights at night and make use of certain types of light bulbs and timer light switches through a targeted advertising campaign. The Astronomy Club of Great Britain is supporting the project and is planning to run some high-profile public information seminars alongside the campaign under the title ‘Tender is the Night!’

"WE’RE NOT OUT TO TRIP YOU UP. OUR AIM IN ASSESSING IS TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN EVERY CANDIDATE."

MARGARET PRYTHEGCH, CHIEF ASSESSOR
INTERVIEW

The one-to-one interview will last around 40 minutes. Your assessor will be evaluating your performance against two of the Fast Stream competencies: your ability to learn and develop and your ability to build productive relationships. Before the interview, you may wish to think of examples that you may want to use during the interview. You can draw from your experience of school, university, work and your personal life. The assessor will have no background information on you, so you should not expect them to be familiar with the details you included on your application form.

During the interview, the assessor will explore each of the competencies in turn. Typically, you’ll talk about your experiences of dealing with relationships with others and your capacity and motivation to learn, taken from both your work and home life. Remember that you can decide what you are willing to discuss in your interview, and you can ask for information to be treated as confidential. You will not be penalised for not wanting to talk about issues that are sensitive to you. Any information that you ask to be kept confidential will only be shared with the other assessors if it has a direct bearing on the selection decision.

E-TRAY WRITTEN EXERCISE

You will have already completed this exercise when you attended the invigilated e-Tray test some weeks before attending FSAC. Your successful performance in the first part of the e-Tray exercise (‘In box Task’) qualified you to be invited to FSAC. The second part (‘Written Task’) is assessed at FSAC and will count towards your overall score.
HOW CAN I PREPARE?

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

There’s a limit to what you can do to prepare for FSAC but here are a few pointers:

• Take the time to go through this booklet. It sets the scene and gives examples of the exercises you’ll come across during your day with us. It also gives important information on matters such as expenses.

• Find out as much as you can about what civil servants, and particularly Fast Streamers, do. You will find a list of useful website addresses on the back cover of this booklet. This should help you understand the kind of challenges you can expect in the Civil Service; and it may also help you clarify why you want to join the Fast Stream.

• Get a good night’s sleep! It is an early start and a challenging day.

WHILE AT FSAC

• Be yourself. There is no such thing as a ‘typical Fast Streamer’. The Civil Service is genuinely committed to increasing the diversity of the Fast Stream intake.

• The assessors are not trying to trip you up but want you to do well and show what you are capable of. Remember that assessors can only give credit for what you say and do.

• You are not in direct competition with others in your group. You are all being assessed against an independent standard. All of you or none of you may be successful.

• Go into each exercise with a positive frame of mind. It is hard to do well in every exercise. In any case, you may not be the best judge of your own performance and the process is designed so that, if you do badly at one exercise, you can still redeem yourself in those competencies by a better performance in another exercise.

• Read the instructions carefully and follow them to the letter. If you are not sure of anything, ask before the exercise begins. You need not feel embarrassed about doing so.

• All the exercises require you to work at speed. This is to reflect the demands of Fast Stream jobs. Make sure you keep an eye on the clock and use your time as effectively as possible.
After FSAC, you will receive a report on your performance, regardless of whether you are successful or not. This will contain valuable feedback on how you did in each exercise as well as a helpful list of the strengths and areas for development as observed by the assessors at FSAC. This report will be made available for you to download from the Fast Stream website as soon as possible.

ASSIGNMENT OF SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES

If you applied for Central Departments, this is the end of the selection process. But there are still a few formalities. For example, we’ll ask you to complete health declaration and character enquiry forms, and we’ll want to take a look at your degree certificate. We’ll also obtain references covering the previous three years, and there are some credit and security checks. We’ll do all this as quickly as we can. The checks, however, are thorough and can take three to four months to complete from the time we receive the completed forms from you. So it is helpful if you respond promptly when we contact you. No offer of employment can be made until the checks are completed satisfactorily, so don’t resign from any employment until you are told it is safe to do so. You will be asked to download and complete your Departmental Assignment Form via your scheme progress page, which you can use to tell us about the areas of work that most interest you. Information about Central Department assignments is also available on your scheme progress page. You may like to look at the departmental websites listed on the back page. You can’t choose your department but we’ll assign you as appropriately as we can, after we’ve considered your Departmental Assignment Form and a number of other criteria, which we’ll explain to you. When completing your Departmental Assignment Form, you should think in terms of themes and not of particular departments. Some of the more obvious themes in the Civil Service are:

• Central Government, cross-cutting policies and public sector reform;
• Constitutional, judicial and legal;
• Economic and financial;
• Welfare and social policy;
• Regional policies;
• European and overseas interests;
• Home Affairs;
• Environmental issues.
Please remember that if you’re accepted into the Fast Stream, it’s because you’re judged to have a set of transferable skills which are equally valuable in any part of the Civil Service. So whichever department you’re assigned to, your work will offer the same level of responsibility and intellectual appeal, enabling you to develop yourself and fulfil your potential. In short, you’ll have ample opportunity to show what you can do, wherever you’re assigned. Most civil servants come across very similar challenges no matter where they happen to be working; only the context differs. The timing of your assignment and the department you are assigned to both depend on the availability of vacancies at the time the Assignments Team receive your papers from the Assessment Centre. Every department forecasts its requirements over a twelve-month period and we aim to recruit enough people to meet these needs. The departments then take on Fast Streamers as vacancies arise. So you might find that you have to wait a while before we can assign you; it is not unusual to have to wait until the beginning of the next calendar year.

We assign candidates in merit order, that is, by FSAC score, so when you receive your assignment depends on your place in the assignment “queue”. If you are still unassigned by the start of the next year, you will be given priority over the following year’s successful candidates. When we do identify a suitable vacancy for you, we will ask the Grade Manager (the person in the department’s HR team responsible for managing Fast Streamers) to respond to us within two weeks. However, because the Grade Manager may have to consult with a number of vacancy managers, this process can take longer. It is difficult to say what this may mean in practice for you but be assured that we work actively with departments to assign new Fast Streamers as soon as possible.

YOUR SALARY

The starting salary is up to £27,000. Starting salaries will depend on where you’re working and the overall package can vary from department to department. This reflects the responsibility departments have for deciding their own pay levels. As with all civil servants, annual increases depend on performance.
To claim back the cost of your travel to FSAC from the place where you live, work or study, after you have attended your FSAC, please complete and then print a claim form from the Fast Stream website. This is available from the My Expenses menu of the password protected area of the site. This section of the site also contains guidelines for claims. We’ll reimburse your overnight expenses for any unavoidable stay. All claims must be sent within 30 days of your visit to FSAC. Remember to attach all tickets or receipts in support of your claim. We only reimburse expenses totalling £6 or more, but you must pay the first £5 yourself. If you’re unemployed, ask your Jobcentre or Employment Office about the Travel to Interview Scheme. All claims must be accompanied by the relevant receipts.

CANDIDATES TRAVELLING FROM WITHIN THE UK BY RAIL OR ROADS

You should use standard class and where possible take advantage of any discount fares. Taxi fares will not be refunded but see ‘Candidates with additional needs’ (later in this section).

PRIVATE CAR OR MOTORCYCLE

Private cars will be refunded at the rate of 26p per mile. Mileage cannot be claimed if you’re a passenger in another candidate’s car. However, the car driver can claim a passenger supplement of 2p per mile for the first (candidate) passenger and 1p per mile for any additional (candidate) passengers. Parking charges will not be reimbursed. There are no parking spaces for candidates at FSAC (but see ‘Additional Needs’ later in this section). The Fast Stream Assessment Centre in London is within the London Congestion Charging Zone any charges or fines incurred will not be reimbursed.

Motorcycles will be refunded at a rate of 24p per mile.

AIR

Air fares will be refunded only if they’re cheaper than the cost of travelling by a surface route, including overnight expenses where necessary. However, if you live in Shetland or Orkney, the Inner or Outer Hebrides, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Isles of Scilly or the Channel Isles, you can claim the tourist air fare. Remember to enclose the air tickets with your claim.
OVERNIGHT EXPENSES

If an overnight stay is unavoidable, we’ll reimburse you the actual cost of your accommodation subject to the following:

• Staying overnight in Inner London, including evening meal and breakfast – up to £120 per night.
• Sleeping berth on a train or ship – the cost of a berth plus £10 per night.
• If you stay with friends or relatives you can claim a flat-rate allowance of £25 a day to cover accommodation, meals and travel between your temporary accommodation and FSAC.

CANDIDATES TRAVELLING FROM OUTSIDE THE UK

You can only claim travelling expenses between your point of arrival in the UK and 67 Tufton Street. In some cases, candidates coming directly from Eire may be reimbursed in full if the journey is cheaper than travelling from the nearest point of entry in the UK. We won’t reimburse expenses for nights spent in the UK if the dates of your stay don’t correspond with the dates of your visit to FSAC, or because flight or sailing times are inconvenient or your departure is delayed.

CANDIDATES WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Where appropriate, additional costs (e.g. taxi fares) incurred by candidates with disabilities will be refunded. Candidates who have no other method of travelling to FSAC unaccompanied can request a parking space by contacting Tracey Blower on 020 7276 1627 or email tracey.blower@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk
Alternatively, you can contact Zoe Green on 020 7276 1656 or email zoe.green@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk Please note that 67 Tufton Street is located within London’s Congestion Charging Zone.

Transport for London offers a Dial-a-Ride service for people with a disability who cannot use buses, tubes or trains, using specially adapted wheelchair-accessible vehicles, contact: 020 7222 1234, visits www.tfl.gov.uk/dialaride for more information.
**LONDON TRAVEL INFORMATION**

Tel: 020 7222 1234

Text phone: 020 7918 3015

www.thetube.com

www.tfl.gov.uk/dialaride

All London mainline stations are within Travel Zone 1 – ask at the ticket office for the best travel card to buy. If you are unable to come or are delayed on the day, please let us know on:

020 7276 3800 (messages can be left on the answerphone outside office hours).

**EUSTON, KING’S CROSS AND ST PANCRAS**

Take the underground to Victoria on the Victoria Line and change for St James’s Park on the Circle and District Lines (use Broadway exit).

**LIVERPOOL STREET**

Take the underground to Westminster on the Circle and District Lines.

**PADDINGTON**

Take the underground to St James’s Park on the Circle and District Lines (use Broadway exit).

**VICTORIA**

Take the underground to St James’s Park on the Circle and District Lines (one stop) (use Broadway exit) or catch bus 507 to Horseferry Road.

**WATERLOO**

Take the underground to Westminster on the Jubilee Line (one stop). Or take bus 507 to Horseferry Road. The walk to FSAC from both Westminster underground station and St James’s Park underground station takes about 15 minutes.
USEFUL WEBSITE ADDRESSES FOR BACKGROUND RESEARCH:

Cabinet Office  
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform  
www.berr.gov.uk

Department for Children, Schools and Families  
www.dcsf.gov.uk

Department for Communities and Local Government  
www.communities.gov.uk

Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
www.culture.gov.uk

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
www.defra.gov.uk

Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills  
www.dius.gov.uk

Department for International Development  
www.dfid.gov.uk

Department for Transport  
www.dft.gov.uk

Department for Work and Pensions  
www.dwp.gov.uk

Department of Health  
www.dh.gov.uk

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (for the Diplomatic Service)  
www.fco.gov.uk

HM Revenue and Customs  
www.hmrc.gov.uk

HM Treasury  
www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

Home Office  
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Houses of Parliament  
www.parliament.uk

Ministry of Defence  
www.mod.uk

Ministry of Justice  
www.justice.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Office  
www.nio.gov.uk

Office of Government Commerce  
www.ogc.gov.uk

Scottish Government  
www.scotland.gov.uk

Welsh Assembly Government  
www.wales.gov.uk

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