Russian Standard for Assessment Centers

Development of the Russian Standard for Assessment Centers was initiated in 2013 by the National Confederation “Human Capital Development” (NC HCD) and supported by the expert community. The Task Force for the development of the Standard included:

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Section 1: Overview of the Russian AC Standard

1.1. Terminology rationale

There are two popular names for the Assessment Center (AC) method in Russia: the translated «центр оценки» and the transliterated «ассессмент центр».

In the global professional community in the field of personnel management, “assessment center” denotes a specific method of assessment of people. The product of this process is a judgment about a person’s qualities and competencies, i.e. assessment can be understood both as a process and its result.

In Russian language the word «оценка» is used to denote both the process (the process of assessment) and the product (assessment as the result of this process). In this sense, Russian term «центр оценки» precisely corresponds to the English “assessment center”.

For this reason, the suggested term for this method in Russia is the translated «Центр оценки», though the direct transliteration «Ассессмент центр» is also acceptable.

1.2. Rationale behind the development of Russian AC Standard

Currently the AC method is widely used in Russia.

There is an international AC Standard as well as a number of national standards (see 1.3.). However, the Russian professional community does not view these as normative documents that are imperative to observe.

Further, none of these standards:

- Fully reflects features specific to Russian AC practices;
- Fully corresponds to Russian theoretical and methodological traditions of scientific research and development.

The need to design a national Standard regulating AC development and implementation practices and reflecting modern Russian circumstances has now become evident.

1.3. Prototypes for this document

Existing documents were taken into account in the preparation of the Russian AC Standard, namely, documents regulating AC development and implementation in Germany, Great Britain, South Africa and the two latest editions of AC guidelines and ethical norms endorsed at the International AC Congress.

1. The British Psychology Society (2005). Design, implementation and evaluation of assessment and development centers. Best practice guidelines.
2. International Task Force on Assessment Center Guidelines (2000). Guidelines and ethical considerations for assessment center operations. Public Personnel Management, 29, 315-331.
3. International Task Force on Assessment Center Guidelines (2009). Guidelines and ethical considerations for assessment center operations. International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 17(3), 243-254.
4. Assessment Center Study Group. (2007). Guidelines for Assessment and Development Centers in South Africa (4th ed.).
5. Arbeitskreis Assessment Center e.V. (2004). Standards der Assessment Center Technik. Hamburg, Deutschland.

1.4. Status of this Standard

1. This Standard is a national-level, not organization-level document;
2. The Standard is scientifically grounded;
3. The Standard is a cultural and ethical norm, i.e. it is suggested that professional community accepts requirements and regulations of the Standard voluntarily;
4. The Standard is not a legal norm;
5. All the parts of the standard describing the AC method are a practical guideline. They outline the minimum set of requirements for ACs. If at least one of the requirements is not met while preparing, delivering and providing results of an assessment program, this assessment program should not be called an AC.

This Standard also contains recommendations based on best AC practices which will help to increase the quality of assessment procedures.

1.5. Purpose and objectives of the Standard

1. Formation of a modern, scientifically grounded image of the AC method;
2. Regulation of AC development and implementation activities;
3. Increasing the quality of teaching disciplines connected with personnel assessment;
4. Facilitating training of AC professionals;
5. Encouraging scientific research into the AC method;
6. Providing informational support for persons making decisions about AC development and implementation;
7. Strengthening the status of ACs in the field of personnel assessment;
8. Providing informational support for expert evaluation of the quality of developed and/or implemented ACs.

1.6. Target groups of the Standard

The Standard is addressed to those who:

1. Participate in ACs (participants);
2. Deliver ACs (observers, facilitators, role players, administrators);
3. Create ACs (developers and designers);
4. Sell ACs as a service;
5. Study ACs (scientists and researchers in the field of personnel assessment);
6. Purchase ACs as a service (internal or external customers – representatives of state, commercial and public organizations);
7. Consult and examine processes of AC development and implementation (consultants, experts);
8. Manage organizations delivering AC-related services;
9. Teach AC methods (trainers);
10. Teach personnel assessment (university instructors);
11. Learn personnel assessment and AC methods (students and AC training participants);
12. Are potential AC users.

The Standard can also be useful to professionals who employ other assessment methods (qualification testing, certification exams, psychometric tests, etc.).

Section 2. The concept of an assessment center

2.1. Definition of AC

An **assessment center (AC)** is a complex method of estimating potential job performance that includes a set of various techniques and is based on participants' behavior assessment by a group of expert observers in the course of simulation exercises.

If developmental objectives are of primary importance, the term AC may be changed to **development center**.

2.2. Specific features of ACs

1. The aim of ACs is to estimate potential job performance.
2. Assessment in ACs is carried out based on competencies/dimensions. Each competency/dimension consists of a group of behavioral indicators.
3. The assessment foundation lies in comparing observed behavior to the established behavioral indicators, not in comparing participants to each other.
4. Overt behavior is assessed in ACs.
5. A set of multiple techniques should be used in ACs. Simulation exercises are the core AC technique. It is also possible to use such other techniques as interviews, qualification and psychometric tests, questionnaires.
6. It is necessary to use interactive simulation exercises (exercises reproducing the most essential behavioral aspects of collaborative work).
7. Scores on each competency/dimension should be based on the observations of at least two expert observers who have taken a special training course.
8. The main result of observers' work in the course of an AC is determining the demonstrated level of a competency/dimension.
9. Each score in the AC should be agreed upon in the course of data integration by means of collaborative discussion of observers.

2.3. AC aim and objectives

The aim of ACs is estimating potential job performance. These jobs may be determined specifically (e.g. a position within an organization) or by type (e.g. a certain management level).

Participants' performance within their current responsibilities should not be estimated in ACs. Even in the case of selection for a particular position, what is estimated in ACs is potential performance, not prior results.

Currently ACs are used to meet the following **objectives**:

1. Selection (e.g. hiring, rotation of staff, talent pool, building a managerial team);
2. Determining individual developmental routes (e.g. making personal development plans (PDPs), career guidance);
3. Determining directions for development of groups or systems within the organization (e.g. building a managerial team, developing corporate training programs, developing "job profiles");
4. Training within the course of the AC itself (e.g. development of assessed competencies/dimensions, professional adaptation). It is important to note that in this case AC results cannot be used for selection purposes.

AC objectives are not limited to the ones listed above. Emergence of new objectives is possible. At the same time, all the AC objectives should comply with the organization development strategy and should not impair participants' rights.

2.4. Assessment methods that are not an AC

An assessment is not an AC if:

1. It includes only one assessment technique (whether a simulation exercise or not);
2. It does not contain simulation exercises;
3. It does not contain interactive simulation exercises, i.e. those that reproduce the most essential aspects of collaborative work;
4. It only consists of a test or questionnaire battery;
5. It only includes an interview or an interview series;
6. It is based on the judgments of a single observer (even if various assessment techniques are used);
7. It does not include a data integration procedure, even if there are several assessment techniques and several observers.

Section 3.1. Preparation for the AC

3.1.1. Making the decision to use an AC

Organizations deciding to use ACs should have a clear understanding of the role of ACs in their human resource management systems.

It is recommended that decisions regarding the key aspects of using an AC be clearly recorded in internal documentation within the company. As a rule, it is desirable to include the following key aspects:

1. AC objectives (e.g. selection, personal development planning);
2. Groups of candidates or employees recommended for participation in the AC; rules regarding what information should be provided to participants prior to and after the AC;
3. Requirements for qualifications and experience of observers;
4. Regulations for storage and usage of AC results and materials generated in the course of the AC (including a list of people who have access);
5. Decisions that can be made on the basis of AC results.

Organization management is recommended to openly express support for the implementation of the AC and guarantee that AC results will be used to make the appropriate managerial decisions.

3.1.2. Job analysis

Job analysis is one of the most essential components of preparation for an AC. It is crucial for the subsequent development or selection of competencies / dimensions, simulation exercises and other AC techniques. Job analysis should result in identifying:

1. Key tasks: what people do within the target job and under what circumstances they do it;
2. Behavioral indicators: how the tasks should be performed in order for an individual to be considered successful within a concrete organization or job.

The following information sources can be used for analysis:

- Successful employees' job performance;
- Corporate culture of the organization, its strengths and major weaknesses, organization development strategy;
- Theoretical job frameworks (e.g. existing internal competency models, universal competency models);
- Results of prior analyses of target job prototypes. In this case, evidence should be provided that the prototypes are comparable to the current target job.

Depending on the situation, the following may differ for different ACs:

1. Depth of analysis (depends on AC objectives, complexity of target job, adequacy of available information about the job, similarity of the job to those that were analyzed earlier, availability of existing and suitable AC exercises, etc.);
2. Magnitude of analysis (see below, "Typical situations requiring job analysis");

3. Sources of information and their priorities. For example, in assessment of performers of an existing job the emphasis is on analyzing activities of successful performers. On the other hand, if a new job is being introduced, the emphasis is on analyzing general requirements for the new job, organization strategy, and corporate culture.

Examples of typical situations requiring job analysis:

1. The organization lacks a competency model or dimensions for the job that will be the focus of the AC. In this case, full job analysis should be conducted to identify behavioral indicators, which should then be combined into competencies/dimensions as described in Section 3.1.3.
2. The AC exercises are developed based on an existing model of competencies / dimensions in the organization. In this case it is necessary to identify key behaviors (behavioral indicators) that enable success within the target job that is the focus of the current AC. Analysis can be somewhat simplified (e.g., limiting it to interviewing all the key managers and SMEs). These identified indicators are compared to the existing competency model. In case of large discrepancies, it is recommended to re-design the model for the purpose of the AC.
3. The organization is planning to use a scientifically grounded (see Section 4) AC program developed for the same type of job in another organization. In this case, evidence should be presented that the jobs analyzed earlier are comparable to the target job. Analysis can be substantially simplified (e.g. interviewing selected key managers and SMEs). In case of major discrepancies, the AC program should be re-designed.

3.1.3. Identification of competencies / dimensions

Competencies / dimensions for assessment of a target job are a necessary condition for AC development and implementation.

There are two possible scenarios for the identification of competencies / dimensions:

1. There is no competency/dimension model within the organization. In this case all competencies / dimensions must be developed. With this end, it is necessary to:
    a. Select those behavioral indicators obtained in the course of job analysis that are suitable for assessment in the AC.
    b. Group the selected behavioral indicators based on their essential similarities or differences.
    c. Name the groups. These names will be further used as names for competencies / dimensions. Behavior of AC participants should be assessed against the behavioral indicators, not against competency / dimension names. The reason for this is that competency / dimension names are given on the basis of a specific group of behavioral indicators.
2. There is a competency/dimension model within the organization. In this case, key behavioral indicators should be identified that enable success in the target job. The indicators should then be compared to the existing competency model. If discrepancies are large, the existing model should be adapted to be used in the AC.

3.1.4. Development or selection of simulation exercises

Simulation exercises are the core technique that distinguishes ACs from other methods. It is these exercises that enable assessment of behavior and an accurate prediction of success in a target job.

Main **types** of simulation exercises:

1. Group exercises involving at least 3 participants (discussions, collaborative projects, group presentations, etc.);
2. One-to-one interactive exercises (role play, fact finding, presentation, etc.);
3. Individual exercises (inbasket, case studies, etc.).

Both customized and off-the-shelf simulation exercises can be used in ACs.

In development and/or selection of simulation exercises one should follow the following rules:

- Development and/or selection of simulation exercises is carried out based on a specific competency/dimension model;
- AC exercises should model the key tasks of target job: what people do and under what circumstances they do it within the target job. If the AC is developed for a new job, simulation exercises are developed based on the analysis of its prototypes (or similar jobs);
- Exercises should not contradict the corporate culture of the organization;
- Simulation exercises should possess high fidelity and face validity, i.e. create a genuine feeling of performing the target job ;
- Before new simulation exercises are used, they should be tested in a pilot study. It is necessary to make sure that:
  a. all the behavioral indicators developed for an AC program manifest themselves in overt behavioral responses;
  b. the time allocated to the exercise is enough for the participants to be able to demonstrate the needed behavioral responses;
  c. participants are provided with equal opportunities to demonstrate target behavioral responses.
- Prior to development of separate exercises it is necessary to outline the AC blueprint and submit it to customer`s approval.

Materials for simulation exercises can be presented in paper documentation, audio or video recordings, electronic documentation and delivered via computers or other media.

3.1.5. Using psychometric tests in ACs

It is acceptable in the course of an AC to use techniques that do not involve direct behavior observation (psychometric tests). To do so, it is necessary to conduct a comparative analysis (mapping) of the test scales against the established competencies/dimensions. Mapping results should be reflected in the "Test scales by Competencies/dimensions" matrix.

It is only acceptable to employ those psychometric tools that were developed for use in a business environment (for recruiting, succession planning, career guidance, etc.). This information should be a part of the test Manual or Technical report available from the test publisher.

Results of psychometric assessment can only be used in an AC as supplementary information. If test results are used in an AC, the integration session must be attended by a professional trained to work with the specific psychometric tools in use (see 3.2.3.).

3.1.6. Development of the AC program

The AC program is the final document created in the preparation for an AC. It sets standards for carrying out concrete AC events. The program should include:

1. Descriptions of competencies/dimensions and corresponding rating scales;
2. "Competencies/dimensions by Techniques" matrix;
3. Descriptions of assessment techniques, including simulation exercises;
4. AC working plan.

Development of the AC program should be based on the corporate culture and working norms of the organization. If implementing an AC program in another culture, one should also consider national and ethnic features.

1. **Description of competencies/dimensions** includes the following set of materials:
   - List of competencies/dimensions
   - List of behavioral indicators comprising each competency/dimension
   - AC behavior rating scales (see Glossary);

2. **"Competencies/dimensions by Techniques" matrix** shows the correspondence between competencies/dimensions and techniques used in a concrete AC program.

Competencies/dimensions are primary; techniques are selected later so as to fit them.
The matrix should be organized so that each competency/dimension is assessed in at least two techniques, one of which should be a simulation exercise.
Each simulation exercise should assess no more than 5 competencies/dimensions, although the optimum number is 3.

3. **Description of simulation exercises**

Description of each simulation exercise should consist of a set of materials for both participants and AC delivery professionals.

Materials for participants:

- Instructions;
- Exercise content;
- Response forms (in case written responses are collected from participants)

Materials for AC delivery professionals:

- Instructions including logistical regulations and time frames for exercises;
- Observation sheet (form for recording of overt behavioral responses);

- Evaluation forms for observers;
- Instructions for role players (if using role plays);
- Supplementary materials (e.g. rules for scoring, possible responses to case study, questions for post-exercise interviews, additional behavioral indicators not included in evaluation forms).
- If AC program includes an interview, its description and technique should be given in this section of the program.

The set of materials can be presented in paper or electronic format, including audio/video recordings.

4. The **AC working plan** contains a timetable and an observation plan.

The **timetable** is the sequence and precise start/end time for exercises and other techniques. If possible, it is recommended to mix individual and interactive exercises/techniques.

The timetable should account for the time necessary to change rooms in the course of the AC. Time should also be allocated to the observers for classifying and evaluating participants' behavior at the end of each exercise.

The **observation plan** is a table that shows which observers assess each of the participants in each of the exercises. The room in which each of the exercises is carried out should be indicated in the plan, as well as which of the participants and observers are working in each room at each moment.
The observation plan should be made in such a way that a participant's behavior in the course of the AC on the whole is assessed by at least two observers. Observation in the course of a concrete exercise can be carried out by a single observer.

3.1.7. Training of AC professionals

Training content

This section describes the minimum set of requirements for the training of major AC team roles. If an AC program is implemented in other cultural / multicultural contexts, AC team members should be specially selected and trained

In practice, one person may combine in him/herself several roles, e.g. facilitator and administrator, designer and developer.

What follows next is a set of the basic roles of AC professionals.

Observer

Observers observe, record, classify and evaluate (ORCE) behavior of AC participants.

Observers should go through a specially organized training period after which they must:

- Have a general understanding of the AC method, its strengths and limitations;
- Have basic knowledge about the customer organization and target job;
- Be familiar with the internal documentation related to the AC (see 3.1.1);
- Know the objectives that the customer pursues by implementing the AC;

- Be familiar with the AC program:
    - Assessed competencies/dimensions, behavioral indicators;
    - Rating scales and rules for using them;
    - Content of all simulation exercises and other techniques;
    - "Competencies/dimensions by Techniques" matrix
- Be able to observe, record, classify and evaluate participants' behavior within concrete exercises (see 3.2.2.);
- Be familiar with the typical mistakes in the ORCE process (including the difference between recording overt behavioral responses of a participant and recording one's own inferences);
- Have interviewing skills (if an interview is included in the AC program);
- Have data integration skills (see 3.2.3.);
- Be familiar with the feedback process and understand its significance in the AC (facilitating acceptance of the feedback by the participant and motivation for change in behavior; see 3.3.1);
- Know the principles of individual report writing at the end of the AC.

Facilitator

A *Facilitator* is responsible for the content of the AC and organization of the integration session.

Typical functions of the facilitator are: encouraging a constructive attitude among participants in the AC program, briefing participants, moderating group interaction, supervising participants' activities, organizing the work of observers in the course of the AC on the whole and the integration session in particular.

Only people who have been trained as observers and have experience in this field can claim to assume the role of the facilitator.

Facilitators should go through a specially organized training period, after which they must:

- Have basic understanding of the customer organization and target job;
- Be familiar with the internal documentation related to the AC;
- Know the objectives that the customer organization pursues by implementing the AC;
- Be familiar with the AC program:
    - Assessed competencies/dimensions, behavioral indicators;
    - Rating scales and rules for using them;
    - Content of all simulation exercises and other techniques;
    - "Competencies/dimensions by Techniques" matrix
- Have skill in organizing others;
- Know all the requirements for final outcomes of the AC program;
- Have skill in organizing an integration session (see 3.2.3.)

Administrator

The *Administrator* is responsible for the logistical aspect of AC process. His/her responsibilities include preparation of rooms; watching the timetable; organization of refreshments; preparation, distribution and collection of AC materials, etc.

The administrator role does not require any special skills apart from general organizational skills. Administrators must:

- Be familiar with the internal documentation related to the AC (see 3.1.1.);

- Be familiar with the list of AC exercises and their description;
- Be familiar with the working plan of the AC;
- Be familiar with requirements for the rooms and space;
- Be familiar with the regulations for storage of AC materials.

Role-player

Role-players act as participants' partners in interactive simulation exercises. This function can be performed either by a trained actor or an observer that has taken a special training course.

Role-players should go through a specially organized training period, after which they must:

- Have general understanding of the AC method, its strengths and limitations;
- Be familiar with the working plan of the AC;
- Be familiar with role-play exercise scenario and instructions for its participants;
- Thoroughly know the role;
- Be familiar with the competencies/dimensions assessed in the exercise;
- Be able to play the role in strict accordance to the exercise scenario, providing equal opportunities for all participants;
- Be able to demonstrate behavior challenging participants to show the required behavioral responses.

AC program designer

A *Designer* creates the AC program. Designers should go through a specially organized training period after which they must:

- Be familiar with AC methodology and practice;
- Know the essence of target job: key tasks, instances of effective and non-effective performance;
- Know the objectives that the customer organization pursues by implementing the AC;
- Know the main types of simulation exercises and other techniques used in ACs;
- Be familiar with the main types of AC validity;
- Be able to outline the AC blueprint;
- Be able to select exercises that have sufficient construct validity in relation to the specified competencies/dimensions;
- Be able to select a set of AC exercises that have sufficient content validity in relation to the target job;
- Be able to determine an exercise sequence and make up an AC timetable that meets specified AC objectives;
- Be able to formulate a task for the developer if it is necessary to develop a new simulation exercise or adapt an existing one.

If a new AC program and exercises are being developed, designers must also have skills in job analysis (see 3.1.2).

Exercise developer

A *Developer* creates simulation exercises for ACs. It is recommended to recruit a developer with background training in social psychology or management. Developers should take a special training course after which they must:

- Have general understanding of the AC method, its strengths and limitations;
- Know the objectives that the customer organization pursues by implementing the AC;
- Know the general features of the AC blueprint;
- Know the essence of the target job: key tasks, instances of effective and non-effective performance;
- Be familiar with the major types of simulation exercises used in ACs;
- Be familiar with behavioral indicators that should be assessed in the exercise;
- Be familiar with the major types of validity of simulation exercises in ACs;
- Be able to develop exercises with high face validity and construct validity in relation to specific competencies/dimensions.

Forms, duration and expiration of training

This section addresses the minimum set of requirements for the forms, duration and expiration period of training for observers. Forms of training for other key AC professionals are different in different organizations, so they are not yet subject to standardization.

Training of observers who do not have prior experience in ACs

The training program should include two parts:

1. An informational part, in which the main objective is to provide general understanding of the AC method;
2. Observation, recording, classifying, evaluation (ORCE) training:
    a. Training of basic ORCE skills. Duration of this training should not be less than 1 day. Main attention should be paid to observation and recording skills;
    b. Training of ORCE skills within specific exercises of the AC program. Duration of this training depends on the number of exercises on the program as well as their complexity.

To fully prepare an observer it is desirable to ensure their participation in AC procedures under the supervision of a coach (experienced observer).

Coaching can include several stages:

1. Observation of participants' behavior, discussing their scores with the coach, and watching the work of observers and the facilitator in the course of the integration session;
2. Working as a shadow observer: independent ORCE with subsequent discussion of the rationale behind the scores with the coach. Participation in the integration session without the right of discussing other observers' scores;
3. Working as a fully-fledged observer supported by feedback from the coach.

Time between the end of training and beginning to work as a professional observer should not exceed three months; otherwise an additional training course is necessary.

Training of observers who have prior experience in ACs

Training these observers consists of preparation to the delivery of concrete AC programs (see the role of observer).

Observers who have not had ORCE experience in ACs for more than 1 year should take an additional training session.

To evaluate how well an observer is ready to take part in a concrete AC program after training, it is recommended to assess concordance of his / her scores with those of experienced observers in each of the AC simulation exercises.

3.1.8. Briefing

In preparation for the AC, its potential participants should be informed about it. This provides proper motivation and enables participants to make an informed decision about taking part in the AC. It is recommended to provide the following information in written form prior to AC delivery:

1. Description of the AC method and its strengths;
2. AC program objectives;
3. Criteria of pre-selection for participation in the AC;
4. Description of anticipated AC results;
5. The status of AC results and regulations for their use;
6. Information about observers and facilitators, their qualifications and AC experience;
7. Information on who and when will provide participants with their AC results;
8. Decisions that may be made based on AC results;
9. Anticipated forms of training (if the AC program will be used for personnel development);
10. Contact details.

Section 3.2. AC delivery

3.2.1. Organization of AC delivery

AC delivery should be organized in accordance with the AC program. Correct organization of the procedure is a necessary condition for the successful implementation of the program. Lack of attention at this stage can have a negative impact on AC results and participants' attitude toward assessment. Besides, lack of organization can violate the principle of equal conditions for every participant.

Rooms for the AC should be prepared as specified in the program (equipped with necessary facilities and have enough space for both participants and observers (see 3.1.5.).

Rooms should also be well illuminated and ventilated, isolated from disturbances (noise, presence of other people). Rooms in close proximity to participants' workplace should not be used, as it might distract them from work during the AC.

AC professionals should be trained to deliver the AC in advance according to their role in the AC program (see 3.1.6).

The work of participants and AC professionals should be organized in strict accordance to the working plan (timetable and observation plan – see 3.1.5). A number of requirements for the **organization of the AC procedure** should also be met:

- In the beginning of the AC, participants should be informed about the timetable and rules of interaction. This informational introduction should also include all the items of section 3.1.7, in case participants had not been briefed prior to the start of the AC;
- The facilitator and administrator should see to it that participants do not make use of any supplementary materials and means other than those permitted by the AC program;
- AC professionals should strictly control and stick to the general AC timetable and time limits within each of the exercises;
- All AC professionals and participants should limit their contacts with the external environment (in particular, mobile calls).

Confidentiality of AC procedure should be maintained. The following regulations should be followed:

- Materials for each exercise should not be accessible to participants before the start of the exercise;
- Participants' work with AC materials should be controlled to ensure that they are not copied or passed on to third parties;
- All materials related to the exercises should not be left with the participants after the exercises are over.

It is also recommended to acquire written consent from the participants at the beginning of the AC allowing AC team members to process their personal data.

3.2.2. Rules of observation, recording, classifying, and evaluation (ORCE)

Facilitators and observers take part in assessment procedures. Independently from each other, observers should provide precise assessment of participants' behavior in accordance with the specified competencies/dimensions. With this end, they should be guided by the following sequence of actions

within each simulation exercise: observation (O), recording (R), classifying (C), and evaluation (E) of behavior (ORCE).

1. **Observation** is tracking overt behavioral responses of participants in the course of the exercises. Observation should be done by standard rules established beforehand and reflected in the AC program (description of competencies/dimensions, "Competencies/dimensions by Techniques" matrix). In each simulation exercise, an observer should not watch more than three participants. To make observation more precise, video recording can be used with the consent of participants.
2. **Recording** is precise registration of overt behavioral responses in an observation sheet. Observers should register overt behavioral responses but not their own inferences. It is not acceptable at this stage to use names of competencies/dimensions, labels or value judgments instead of concrete descriptions of overt behavioral responses. Abbreviations in recordings are allowed, but it is recommended to decipher them prior to classifying.
3. **Classifying** is relating the recorded overt behavioral responses to behavioral indicators and further on to competencies/dimensions. In the course of classification observers should only work with the observation sheet and refrain from making any additional judgments about participants' behavior.
4. **Evaluation** is determining the demonstrated level of a competency / dimension. First observers should assess participants' behavior against behavioral indicators, and then on that basis give a score for each competency / dimension.

Observation and recording are done during the exercise; classifying and evaluation should be done before the integration session.
The AC facilitator should ensure that observers' ORCE processes are independent. In particular, the facilitator should cut short any discussions around participants' behavior prior to the integration session.
All AC professionals should ensure that ORCE materials are confidential both from participants and third parties.

3.2.3. Data integration and decision-making

Data integration is the process of aggregation of individual expert scores based on collaborative discussion and consensus. Integration is the culmination stage of AC delivery and one of the most important specific features of the AC method (see 2.2.).

Organization of integration procedures

- It is recommended to have an integration session as early after the end of the AC as possible;
- To get high quality scores, the integration session should be allowed enough time. The first priority of observers and facilitator should be quality and accuracy of scores, not speed;
- The integration session should be organized by the specialist who performs the role of facilitator. No one but people who took part in AC delivery should have opportunity to influence decisions regarding participants' competency/dimension scores;
- The integration session should be carried out in a room that enables the process to be confidential.

Rules of data integration

- For each participant, the final score for each competency/dimension should be based on discussion and consensus among observers.
- The final score for each competency/dimension is determined based on scores for this competency/dimension in multiple exercises. These scores should be given by at least two different observers. It is not acceptable to base the final competency/dimension score on the observation materials of one observer only.
- The scores that individual observers provide for collaborative discussion should be justified in a material form. Acceptable justifications are observation sheets, audio- and video-recordings, and completed evaluation forms. The facilitator should only accept justifications that comply with ORCE standards.
- In the course of discussion each observer must justify their scores with reference to concrete behavioral responses.
- Only the information obtained by using AC techniques should be used and discussed in the course of data integration. It is not acceptable to appeal to prior experiences with or observations of particular AC participants.
- In the course of data integration, priority should be given to scores obtained in AC simulation exercises. Information obtained by other techniques (e.g. psychometric tests, interview) is considered supplementary and less important.
- It is acceptable to use statistical methods to compute preliminary aggregate scores for competencies/dimensions. But they cannot be the defining basis of the final decision. The basis of data integration is collaborative discussion, argumentation and consensus regarding individual scores.

3.2.4. AC materials and rules of storage

The Standard distinguishes between two types of AC products: materials and results (see 3.3.4). AC materials are all intermediate products used to obtain results.

1. Materials subject to accounting and storage before the final stage of an AC:
    - Participants'response forms filled out in the course of written exercises;
    - Video-recordings of participants' behavior in exercises (if any);
    - Observers' records made in the course of observing participants (observation sheets);
    - Materials relating overt behavioral responses to competencies/dimensions;
    - Competency/dimension evaluation forms filled out for separate exercises.
    - Integration session minutes (if any).
2. AC materials subject to destruction:
    - All draft papers of participants;
    - All used copies of instructions, exercise texts, and testing forms.
3. All materials obtained in the course of an AC are confidential. Rules for storage, usage and providing access to third parties both during and after the AC should be reflected in the internal documentation of the organization (see 3.1.1.). Access to AC materials can only be given to authorized individuals.

Section 3.3. Final stage

3.3.1. Presenting AC results to participants

All participants should be informed about AC results in accordance with the announced AC objectives.

Presenting results to participants is only possible after the main stage of the AC (after data integration).

Individual written reports

- The necessity to prepare individual written reports and requirements for their content are determined by the customer. There are currently no standard requirements for report content.
- If individual written reports are to be provided, they should be prepared by an observer who took part in the AC, observed the participant's behavior in simulation exercises and possesses skills of report writing.

For rules regarding storage and granting access to information in the individual written reports, see 3.2.4.

Feedback to AC participants

The feedback process is an important recommended part of the AC. It enables achievement of one of the aims of assessment – formation of a constructive attitude to assessment results and motivating participants to use the information for their further development. This is why usage of feedback considerably increases the efficiency of managerial decisions related to AC results.

1. Feedback should be given orally (face-to-face, via telephone or a video call). Individual written reports can be an addition to oral feedback;
2. Feedback should necessarily be based on the interaction between observer and participant with discussion of overt behavioral responses and drawn conclusions and inferences;
3. Feedback should be given as soon after the AC as possible;
4. Feedback should include:
    a. Explanation of the AC method;
    b. Explanation of the competencies/dimensions used;
    c. Evaluation judgments on each competency/dimension accompanied by description and discussion of participant's overt behavioral responses in the course of the AC.
5. Upon a participant's request and prior agreement with the customer, recommendations relating to the development of the participant in his / her target job can be given;
6. Feedback can only be given by an observer who observed the participant's behavior in simulation exercises, or the AC facilitator;
7. An observer who provides feedback should possess the necessary skills.

3.3.2. Feedback to the customer

Feedback to the customer about AC participants can only be given after the main stage of the AC is over (after data integration).

Any personal information not related to the announced AC objectives and assessed competencies/dimensions should not be rendered to the customer.

The customer should be informed about possibilities and limitations of using AC results in managerial personnel-related decisions.

3.3.3. Status of AC results

- AC results can only be used in decisions connected to the development of organization and personnel (see 2.3.);
- AC results cannot be used as the only basis for a decision about professional mismatch of an AC participant.
- In this sense, an AC is not a method of attestation or certification of an employee.

3.3.4. AC results and regulations regarding use

AC results may include:

- Final individual competency/dimension scores,
- Written justifications of competency/dimension scores,
- Conclusions and recommendations (individual and group).

The content and form of AC results should be agreed upon with the customer at the preparation stage.

AC results can be presented in the form of individual written reports, overall assessment ratings, group reports, etc.

Individuals authorized to access AC results should be listed in the internal documentation of the organization.

Organization members having access to AC results must ensure correct usage of AC results in accordance with their status (see 3.3.3.). Using AC results to pursue aims different than those established beforehand is not allowed.

It is not permissible to use AC results in ways that bring discredit on participants within or outside of the organization or that violate their rights (see 5.). It is also not acceptable to hand individual results over to third parties that are not authorized by internal documentation.

It is recommended not to use AC results more than 2 years after the AC. After this period AC results can be used in a form where all personal data are removed and only for research purposes.

Section 4. Information technology in ACs

Technologies like computers, mobile devices and the Internet are acquiring growing importance both in contemporary organizations and ACs as a method of modeling the activities within these organizations.

Usage of such technologies increases AC face validity and makes the work of AC professionals more effective. If an AC delivery organization is geographically dispersed, the Internet can cut travelling expenses, enabling remote delivery of ACs.

IT in ACs can be used in automation purposes at each of the stages during an AC. Possible fields of IT application in ACs are:

1. Collecting and structuring data in the course of job analysis (identification of competencies / dimensions and development of job profiles");
2. Working out a timetable and an observation plan for the AC program;
3. Organizing AC delivery procedures:
    a. Planning AC events;
    b. Controlling the time of participants' work.
4. Delivering simulation exercises and other AC techniques via computers (e.g. e-tray, psychometric tests, online role-play exercises);
5. Automating ORCE and data integration processes. Observers can use computers or mobile devices to record, classify and evaluate behavior. Facilitators can automatically collect observers' post-exercise scores thus speeding up data integration;
6. Storing AC results and materials, including video recordings of participants' behavior;
7. Automating elements of report writing.

If exercises or other techniques are administered via computer, it is necessary to make sure that:

- Target job analysis has shown that computers are used to address the key professional tasks;
- Technologies that are used do not give advantage to participants with more computer knowledge and experience (unless such behavioral indicators are included in the model of competencies / dimensions);
- Technologies that are used in the course of AC do not contradict requirements for the organization of AC delivery (see 3.2.1.);
- Using IT does not compromise validity of the AC program compared to the "paper and pencil" version.

If a virtual AC is being delivered, where all the participants and observers are geographically dispersed and interact online, it is necessary to make sure that the following additional requirements are met:

- A significant part of the key tasks of the target job can be simulated using this delivery format;
- Each participant is provided with the necessary and comparable conditions of working online (stable internet connection and audio / video stream, properly functioning computers, software installed and tested beforehand);

- Participants are not able to use help of the third parties;
- Working environment makes it possible to ensure that the AC delivery process is confidential;
- Technologies that are used provide sufficient flexibility of AC delivery, accounting for time zone difference and possible interruption of internet connection.

Section 5. Validity of ACs

Validity of ACs refers to the relevance and suitability of using an AC program in certain circumstances.

It is evident that in order for validity estimation to be reasonable, all the requirements of this Standard should be met, but the requirements for the main stage and the preparation stage of the AC are particularly important.

There are three major types of AC validity:

- **Content validity** is the extent to which AC simulation exercises, behavioral indicators and competencies/dimensions correspond to the key set of tasks and actions of the target job. Evidence for this type of validity is a necessary minimal requirement for an AC program;
- **Construct validity** is the extent to which an AC is shown to estimate the selected scientifically grounded competencies/dimensions. Construct validity enables one to show that an observer's score will accurately reflect how well a participant's behavior will correspond with the competencies/dimensions determined in the course of job analysis. There are three types of construct validity in ACs:
    - The extent to which the competencies/dimensions assessed in the AC correspond to scientifically grounded theoretical job frameworks;
    - Correlation between AC competency/dimension scores and scores obtained with other scientifically grounded techniques. These include techniques that can be used to assess competencies/dimensions;
    - Degree of correspondence between the competencies/dimensions and simulation exercises chosen to be employed in the AC. Evidence for this type of validity is a necessary minimal requirement for an AC program;
- **Criterion validity** is the degree of statistical correspondence between results of a concrete AC program and indicators of job performance that are used as a reference point in the customer organization. Performance indicators should be established at the preparation stage of the AC. Estimation of criterion validity can only be possible some time after the end of the AC. In estimation of criterion validity it is acceptable to use performance indicators established within the organization: key performance indicators (KPI), expert evaluations of HR committees, and other justified measures not dependent on the results of the AC. Demonstrating criterion validity of an AC program is a most important type of evidence that this program can actually predict potential job performance in the target job.

The validity of the AC method has been demonstrated in numerous research studies. However, every AC program implemented under new conditions should be validated. Validation of an AC program should be carried out in the following situations (see Table 1).

Situation	Content validity	Construct validity
• AC program is applied for the first time; • An existing program is translated in another language; • The program is employed to achieve other goals than those for which it was originally designed (e.g., development, succession planning); • The program is applied under different conditions (organizational, cultural, etc.); • Essential modifications were introduced to the program (changes in the set of competencies/dimensions, exercise content, etc.)	+	+
• The program is applied to another target group	+	

Validity estimation procedures

This standard describes the minimum requirements for AC validity: estimation of content and construct validity. The full estimation of all types of validity requires complying with accepted professional validation standards and should be performed by trained professionals.

To establish content validity, it is necessary that a group of SMEs gives a written confirmation that AC simulation exercises, behavioral indicators and competencies/dimensions reflect the most essential tasks of the target job.

To establish construct validity, two subsequent procedures that examine AC program quality are required.

1. A group of AC experts independently estimate how adequate specific exercises on the AC program are to measure the competencies.
2. A group of AC experts independently establish the correspondence between competencies/dimensions and behavioral indicators developed for each exercise on the AC program.

Experts' work should result in a document containing:

1. An agreed-upon "Competencies/dimensions by Techniques" matrix
2. An agreed-upon matrix of correspondence between within-exercise behavioral indicators and competencies/dimensions.

An additional recommended construct validity estimation procedure at the stage of AC program development is examining concordance of observers' scores. To do so a group of observers should independently assess participants' behavior in the course of AC exercises. Statistical methods should be used to examine concordance of scores for each competency in each exercise on the AC program.

General validation principles and standards are published in Standard requirements for psychological measurement tools (Russian Psychological Society (RPS), 2012), Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures, Fourth Edition (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Inc., 2003), Ethical code of Russian Psychological Society (RPS, 2012).

Customers (persons making decisions about implementing ACs) and participants have the right to have access to AC validation information.

Section 6. Rights and responsibilities of participants

6.1. Rights of participants

- Potential AC participants have the right to obtain information about the AC in advance (see 3.1.7).
- Potential AC participants have the right to withdraw from participation prior to the start of the AC;
- All participants have the right to have equal conditions in the course of the AC;
- All AC participants have the right to know the decisions made in relation to them based on AC results;
- All AC participants have the right to appeal against their results;
- All AC participants have the right to receive feedback after the AC if it is reflected in the internal documentation of the organization;
- If participant-related AC materials and results are to be used to address tasks other than those announced in advance, participants should be informed of this and their permission should be sought. In this sense, participants have the right to preserve confidentiality of information about themselves.

6.2. Responsibilities of participants

- In the course of the AC, participants must follow rules of conduct established by the facilitator during briefing;
- The AC program and all accompanying materials are intellectual property. Participants do not have the right to copy, publish or pass these materials to third parties.

Glossary

AC behavior rating scales – rules for drawing correspondence between overt behavioral responses and behavioral indicators. Ordinal scales are used in ACs for behavior assessment.

AC program – a document that sets standards for carrying out concrete AC events. It includes:

- Description of competencies/dimensions and their rating scales;
- "Competencies/dimensions by Techniques" matrix;
- Description of assessment techniques including simulation exercises;
- Working plan of the AC.

Assessment center (AC) – a complex method of estimating potential job performance that includes a set of various techniques and is based on participants' behavior assessment by a group of expert observers in the course of simulation exercises (for greater detail see 2.2.).

Behavioral indicator – typical (stable and regularly occurring) pattern of successful or unsuccessful behavior. A group of behavioral indicators comprises the content of a competency/dimension.

Two types of behavioral indicators are differentiated in the Standard (see Fig.1):

1. identified in the course of job analysis;
2. developed for specific AC simulation exercises. These are developed on the basis of behavioral indicators of the first type and used in evaluation forms.

Competency/dimension – a group of behavioral indicators associated with job success. Grouping of behavioral indicators is done based on their essential similarity / difference. In AC practice, the concepts of competency and dimension are not differentiated.

Data integration (integration session) – process of working out an integrated expert score based on collaborative discussion and consensus regarding individual expert scores.

Exercise – see Simulation exercise.

Feedback – presenting final assessment results to customers and participants with the aim of ensuring acceptance of AC results.

Job analysis – collection of information about key tasks and behavioral indicators of the target job. Obtained information serves as a basis to determine the set of competencies/dimensions needed to perform the job successfully. It is also used to select or develop assessment techniques.

Key roles and responsibilities in AC:

- *Administrator* organizes the logistical aspects of AC procedures;
- *Facilitator* is responsible for AC delivery and organization of data integration procedures;
- *Designer* creates the AC program;
- *Observer* observers, records, classifies and evaluates AC participants' behavior;
- *Developer* creates AC simulation exercises;
- *Role player* acts as a participant's partner in interactive simulation exercises. Either specially trained actors or observers who took a special training course can be role players;
- *Participant* – individual whose behavior is assessed in the course of an AC.

ORCE – sequence of actions of an observer in the course of simulation exercises, the process of observation (O), recording (R), classifying (C), and evaluation (E) of behavior. ORCE is related to independent expert assessment.

Overt behavior – AC participant's verbal or nonverbal behavior accessible to observers' perception without distortion or information loss.

Overt behavioral response – a behavioral pattern of accomplishing a professional task accessible to direct observation and objective recording. Two types of overt behavioral responses are distinguished in the Standard (see Fig. 1):

1. Occurring in real-life target job
2. Demonstrated in the course of an AC.

Performance indicator – estimate of job performance independent of AC results and used as a reference point in the customer organization.

Simulation exercise – a business case method that enables reproduction (simulation) of most essential aspects of target job.

Validity of AC – relevance and suitability of using an AC program in certain circumstances.

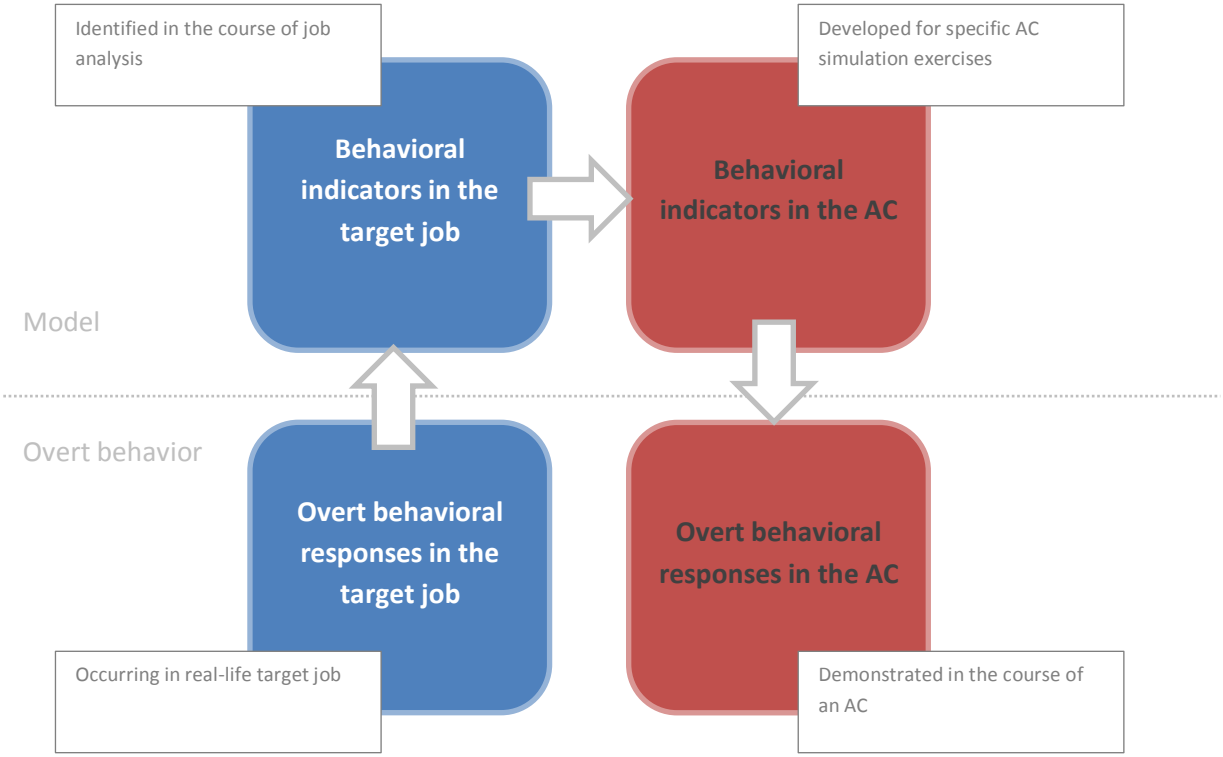

Figure 1. Behavioral indicators and overt behavioral responses.