Assessment centers are being implemented as internal or external staff selection mechanisms in over 3000 business organizations. The popularity of assessment centers has increased steadily every year. This paper reviews the rationale behind the assessment center and describes the development of a simulated assessment center, which was implemented in a college classroom. Examples of the assessment activities are provided.

**INTRODUCTION**

Simulation exercises used in college classrooms not only expose the students to situations which might arise in the "real" world, but they can also affect the students' performance or behavior. In the classroom setting, for example, when presenting the idea and process of assessment centers to a retailing human resource management class at Michigan State University, simulations proved to be very effective in transmitting ideas, concepts, and skills to students.

Assessment centers are used by business/industry primarily as a screening device to identify individuals with managerial potential. By implementing an assessment center simulation, students have a chance to experience the intensive evaluation which is characteristic of assessment centers. The assessment center simulation can help students to maximize their performance in an actual work-related assessment center.

**ASSESSMENT CENTER AS A CLASSROOM SIMULATION**

The basic variation of the assessment center that we simulated consisted of 6 assessment-like activities. The students, or assesses, were randomly placed into six groups, 12 assesses per group. The groups simultaneously rotated every 20 minutes to a new exercise. In preparation, the students were informed of the nature and characteristics unique to the assessment center and the general types of simulations to expect. However, it is important to not let the assesses know what types of behaviors and results the assessors are looking for during the exercises, as it would sensitize the students to act in the desired manner.

Selected assessors consisted of professors and graduate students. Prior to the administration of the assessment center simulation, each was presented with an outline of the specific simulation they were to evaluate, the behaviors to look for, and a standardized evaluation measure.

Each simulated exercise was limited to 12 minutes. During the final two minutes, the participants were encouraged to rationalize their decisions and discuss how the exercise could be used as a performance measure in an actual work environment. Students then rotated to the next exercise, while the assessors evaluated each assee.