



The Fellowship Clinical Examination

1. Introduction

The ACEM Fellowship Clinical Examination follows an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) format in which candidates move through a series of clinical examination stations in a timed fashion. This examination is most often referred to as 'the OSCE'.

The information in this document about the structure and content of the OSCE has been prepared to support you in preparing to sit the examination.

Information on strategies to assist you to prepare for the OSCE may be found in the companion document: ***Preparing for the Fellowship Clinical Examination (OSCE)***.

This and many other Fellowship Examinations resources are located on the [Fellowship Examination \(FE\) Resources](#) site.

2. General information

The OSCE assesses the application of your knowledge, skills and abilities as detailed in the FACEM Curriculum, to clinical scenarios that you may see as part of your work in an emergency department (ED) or to presentations which may seem less common. You should be aware that in the OSCE you may be assessed on any competency reasonably expected of a FACEM.

You are expected to familiarise yourself with the materials provided by the College in relation to all examinations, including the OSCE. In particular the ***OSCE Domain Criteria*** document (available on the FE Resources) is essential reading for anyone attempting the OSCE, since it lists a sample of the domain criteria examinable from each of the eight ACEM Curriculum domains.

3. Examination procedures

Application opening, closing and eligibility (OSCE only) dates are available on the [ACEM Examinations page](#). All online examination application links are also made available via this page at the designated time, and you must apply via online submission during the application period. After applications have closed, you will receive confirmation of your place in the OSCE once your eligibility to sit has been confirmed by the College. Candidates will have an opportunity to submit any relevant conflicts of interest with examiners or FACEM role players.

Closer to the scheduled examination, you will receive an email detailing the schedule and times for your examination and the OSCE Candidate Handbook which gives all necessary information about what to expect at the examination (note, the Candidate Handbook is also linked on the application landing page). You should be aware that quarantine arrangements may be in place before the start or at the conclusion of your examination session, which may add to your time at the examination venue.

In the OSCE, you will be expected to perform tasks including physical examinations and performance of procedures, as you would when at work in the ED. You should dress appropriately for your own comfort and also to meet usual workplace standards. Wearing scrubs is allowed however please ensure these do not show your name or your hospital's name.

You will be asked to ensure you are familiar with and adhere to the requirements of the [Examinations Code of Conduct](#).

4. The examination format

To complete the OSCE, a candidate is required to undertake 12 OSCE stations, over a two day period.

The OSCE is of 132 minutes duration in total, and you will be scheduled to attend your examination over two (2) consecutive days with six stations on each day. Each OSCE station is of 11 minutes duration which includes 4 minutes of reading time followed by 7 minutes of assessment.

Candidates will receive a 1 minute warning during the station.

Within an OSCE station, there will usually be at least two examiners to observe and score you on your performance. There may also be actors, simulated patients, and other role players present as necessary. FACEMs acting as role players are often referred to as 'confederates'.

5. Types and format of stations

In completing the OSCE, you should expect to encounter a range of scenarios and tasks that you might normally see as part of your work in the ED. This could include history taking, physical examination, communication, procedural skills, resuscitation, teaching, managing the ED, team work, case synthesis, creating management plans and interpreting investigation results. On occasion you may encounter less common presentations for which you are expected to demonstrate your FACEM level competencies. In any OSCE you are likely to undertake at least one of each of the station types listed above, as well as two or three standardised case-based discussion stations (SCBD).

Please note that Simulation stations which ran until the 2020.1 OSCE will run as SCBD stations until further notice. Any change to this will be communicated well in advance to trainees and DEMTs.

SCBD stations

SCBD stations are designed to explore your knowledge and reasoning through direct questioning and you will be asked by the examiner to outline your approach to the assessment and/or management of the clinical situation presented and to outline the reasoning or the rationale behind your decision making, where asked or required. At least one SCBD station will involve resuscitation. Further information about the SCBD stations can be found in the ***Standardised Case-Based Discussion (SCBD) General Instructions*** available on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site.

It is important to recognise that the format of stations is prescribed in the station instructions to examiners and role players and hence will follow a similar pattern for all candidates, in the timing and structure of information provision and questioning.

Video and written examples of OSCE stations are available on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site and you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with these resources. The College releases all materials from two OSCE stations every year.

The published OSCE Reports from past examinations (available via FE Resources) contain valuable information about the types and format of stations that typically make up an OSCE. These reports also provide examples from examiners of how high performing candidates responded to particular stations and the errors that were made by candidates who did not perform as well in certain stations.

Physical Examination stations

From the 2023.2 OSCE onwards, physical examination stations will return to the pre-COVID format with a 'normal' role player present on whom you perform your examination whilst interacting with an examiner. You can find further information about Physical Examination stations in the ***OSCE Physical Examination (PE) Station Guidelines*** on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site.

6. Interacting with station personnel

In some stations you will interact with role players, such as actors or medical students who may play the role of patients, registrars, etc. or with FACEM confederates or examiners, who may interact directly with you or play the role of a junior or senior colleague.

Role players

Role players are selected, trained and briefed as outlined in the *Procedure for the recruitment, training and appraisal of OSCE non examiner personnel*, available on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site.

Role players are provided with instructions, including set questions or prompts, to assist you to demonstrate your knowledge. Listen carefully to these prompts and ensure you answer any questions asked by role players as fully as you can. Should a role player repeat a question, you should take this as a cue that you have not yet answered some key element of the question. If a role player or examiner interrupts you, you should assume, you have covered the aspect asked about and they are moving you on to cover additional criteria.

In stations where a simulated patient or actor is playing the role of the patient or relative, the candidate's communication skills may be assessed. You should not assume, however, that the presence of a role player in the station indicates that communication skills are necessarily being assessed. The Candidate Instructions that are available during reading time, will tell you the domains that are being assessed in the station and you should read these carefully.

The released station recordings that are available on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site show several stations where the candidates interact with a role player, however communication skills are not necessarily assessed in all those stations. Again, read the station information carefully to see the domains that were assessed.

Examiner interaction

In many OSCEs you are not required to interact with the examiners and hence there is no requirement for you to introduce yourself to them.

In certain station types, such as SCBDs and Physical Examination stations, you may primarily have direct interaction with an examiner throughout the station, rather than with a role player. In other station types, examiners may interact with candidates such as by taking a 'referral call' from the candidate near the end of the station, or by asking a candidate to present findings directly to them. In these cases, the Candidate Instructions will clearly state that interaction with an examiner is required in the station. In addition, where an examiner perceives that an error has been made in the conduct of the station, they may intervene to ensure the candidate is not disadvantaged.

Examiners are ultimately responsible for the conduct of these stations and as such, may 'interrupt' you on occasion, where enough material has been presented and/or there is a need to move the station forward to ensure they can cover all domains being assessed.

The Candidate Instructions outside the station will clearly indicate what is expected of you in the stations.

7. Candidate Instructions

During the initial 4 minutes of reading time outside a station, a screen will display the Candidate Instructions, which provide important information about the station. This includes the situation you can expect, the tasks you will be expected to perform and the relative weighting of the domains that you will be assessed against. Other relevant information about the station content (e.g. the context and relevant lab results and scans etc.) will also be provided. Where props are provided during reading time, these may be provided on the screen or placed on a chair below the screen. It will advise on the screen if there is a prop provided on a chair below.

It is important that you carefully read the Candidate Instructions available during reading time to ensure you know what to expect inside the station, who you will interact with and the tasks you need to address.

There will be another large screen inside the examination room with the Candidate Instructions and any props available which you may refer to, as well as a printed copy of the information.

8. Scoring of the OSCE

Your performance in every OSCE station is marked independently by two or more examiners, against set Domain Criteria for each domain assessed. You will be advised of the domains being assessed in the station, and the weighting of each, in the Candidate Information, available during reading time.

Details of the domain criteria that may be assessed in a station are found in the resource: *OSCE Domain Criteria* available on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site.

Candidates are scored on a seven point scale by a minimum of two examiners acting independently. A rating of four in a particular domain or sub-domain means a minimum level of competence has been demonstrated. Examiners also award a global rating for each station which is out of five and based on a candidate's overall performance in relation to the expected standard. This global rating does not directly determine a 'pass' or 'fail' in a station, but is combined with all other candidates' global ratings to determine a cut score for the station using a method called Borderline Regression.

The passing score for the examination is the 'cut score' plus one (1) Standard Error of Measurement (SEM). Further information about the process of determining minimum competence and standard setting can be found in the *Procedure for determining 'minimum level of competence' criteria for the Fellowship Clinical Examination* and *Standard Setting for the Fellowship Examinations*, available on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site.

9. Feedback from candidates

Following the conclusion of the examination, candidates will be invited to provide general feedback about the OSCE as well as specific feedback about each of the OSCE stations. The College is committed to continuing to improve examinations and assessment and all constructive comments will be fed back to the relevant parties. A report containing a summary of the candidate feedback and the College response to it is published on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site.

10. Recording of stations at the OSCE

All stations of the OSCE are video recorded, in accordance with: [The Policy and Procedure for the Recording of Stations at the Fellowship Clinical Examination \(OSCE\)](#).

The Council of Education approved the policy and its implementation in February 2019. The policy does not authorise general candidate access to recordings but access only under the conditions as specified in the policy. Candidates who are unsuccessful at an OSCE a total of three or more times are eligible to view the recordings of their stations, in accordance with the policy.

11. OSCE Facts and FAQs

The College often receives questions about how an OSCE station is prepared and scored and sometimes misconceptions about the OSCE are raised. The College has published a resource that seeks to counter many common misconceptions, *OSCE Facts and FAQs*, that is available on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site. If you have heard something about the OSCE that you think needs clarifying, please email your query to Fellowship.exam@acem.org.au

12. ACEM Resources

As referred to in many sections of this document, the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site is the key location for all information about the ACEM OSCE. The site provides a myriad of resources including relevant procedures, information about the OSCE and its components, released OSCE station materials, examination reports from past OSCEs, sample videos and other educational materials.

If you have further questions about the OSCE that are not covered in this document or in the resources available on the [Fellowship Examination Resources](#) site, please email your query to Fellowship.exam@acem.org.au.