

# Problem-based Learning: useful assessment instruments

## OSCE

Object Structured Clinical Examination

The OSCE is a sequence of stations, each assessing the performance of different, usually clinical, skills (e.g. taking a patient's history, examination of a patient, administration of a test, etc.). Its purpose is to give a more reliable assessment of a range of performance competencies.

The OSCE requires careful choice of the clinical problems to be sampled based on the competencies to be assessed. Its items are typically short (approximately 5-10 minutes) and there is a strict time limit for doing each station. It needs very careful administration, well-trained examiners, a clear, consistent scoring procedure and a process for judging overall competence.

**How does it test:**

### **Knowledge**

OSCEs provide an opportunity for the examiner at each station to assess students' knowledge, much as one might conduct a viva.

### **Skills**

The primary aim of the OSCE is to test whether students can actually perform the skills they are expected to have rather than just being able to talk about them.

### **Attitude**

At some stations the examiners will be in a position to assess matters such as students' attitudes to clients, or their awareness of ethical issues.

### **Resource implications**

OSCEs require many stations to cover an adequate range of skills and to gain an adequate sample of those skills. They also require a great deal of staff time in both administration and as examiners.

See also: <http://www.kmrrec.org/KM/osce/>

# Triple-jump

The triple-jump is a three-stage written or oral task that assesses a student's ability to analyse and resolve a problem or case. Students are given marks for their performance at each stage of the process.

- 1 The student is presented with a new scenario or case, which requires him/her to identify the main problems or issues in his or her own words. They also identify early hypotheses or key questions at this stage and their initial approach to the task.
- 2 Students are then expected to find suitable data from a variety of resources, to check their reliability and validity, and to interpret the data in relation to their hypotheses or key questions.
- 3 Students then apply their findings to resolve or manage the problem, or to address their key questions and then evaluate how they approached the task, and what they would do differently next time.

## How does it test:

### Knowledge

The examiner is in a position to assess several aspects of the students' knowledge: what they might be expected to already know about the issues raised by the scenario; their knowledge of the resources needed to answer their questions; and their ability to apply those resources to the resolution of the problem.

### Skills

The triple jump allows the examiner to assess the process whereby the students go about the task of analysing and resolving the problem, their skill in using resources and their ability to critically evaluate both resources and their own efforts.

### Attitude

In some cases the examiner may be in a position to assess matters such as students' attitudes to clients, or their awareness of ethical issues.

### Resource implications

Use of the triple jump for summative assessment over a short period of time is heavy on both personnel and material resources. Examiners must be available to interact with students at each stage of the process and many students may need access to a wide range of resources at the same time.

See also: <http://www.indstate.edu/thcme/PSP/cctringlejump.htm>

# Journals

Journals are maintained by students as a record of activities undertaken during various components of a course, particularly professional and/or clinical practice. The format of journals vary from a day-by-day log of activities, including the student's reflections on those activities, to a pro-forma in which the student's performance is recorded under specified headings or criteria.

Journals are most useful in formative assessment. They can be used as a self-assessment tool for students to check their progress against the stated requirements of the course component or attachment. There may be space for staff to sign or validate the student's claims about the experience. They can also provide an important basis for discussions and feedback between staff and students.

In some courses journals are used for summative assessment. However, this use may create tension between the student's desire for a good mark and the role of the journal in the process of critical self-reflection and self-assessment.

## **How does it test:**

### **Knowledge**

The focus of the journal is usually either to record the completion of required tasks or to encourage self-reflection on what has been learned and what needs to be done better.

### **Skills**

The journal provides a relatively rich source of information about students' self-assessed competence in the exercise of clinical and practical skills and the basis of an assessment by the tutor of that competence.

### **Attitude**

If students trust enough to record their ideas honestly in their journals, the journal can be a very effective basis for discussions about the students' attitudes and values (i.e. formative assessment).

### **Resource implications**

To be effective, journals must be read and commented on by tutors on a regular basis: in larger classes this may impose a significant workload on teaching staff.