



This Question & Answer document provides information about the Written and Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE), the practical exam used for entry-to-practice for optometry.

This is not new information but a restatement of information provided on the website under “Preparing for the exam.”

The Q&A may be updated periodically to reflect additional questions not answered below.

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**1. What is the exam called?**

- The exam is known as the OEBC Written Examination and the OEBC OSCE.

**2. What is the purpose of the exam?**

- To test whether exam candidates have demonstrated entry-level competence that the profession has determined is required to begin practice of optometry in Canada.

**3. Does this exam reflect testing practices and current practice in optometry?**

- The exam reflects current best practice in assessment of competence, including the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*
- The exam reflects current optometry practice, as described in the *National Competency Profile for Entry-Level Optometry*. Exam content is related to integration of skills, clinical reasoning, critical thinking and professional judgement in the practice of optometry in Canada.

**4. Who decides on and approves the examination?**

- The OEBC board of directors decides on and approves the development of an updated optometry entry-to-practice examination.
- The structure and content of the examination is based on the board-approved blueprint, found at [www.oebc.ca](http://www.oebc.ca)
- The blueprint is based on competencies, derived directly from the *National Competency Profile for Entry-Level Optometry*, published by OEBC in August 2015.

**5. Who creates the competencies?**

- The *National Competency Profile for Entry-Level Optometry* was created by a group of optometrist subject matter experts (SMEs) under the guidance of a competency expert.
- The competencies were validated through a national survey of optometrists in 2015. You can find the National Competency Profile at [www.oebc.ca](http://www.oebc.ca) under “[Preparing for the Exam.](#)”



**6. Who creates the exam blueprint?**

- The blueprint is created by a panel of optometrists who are subject matter experts (SMEs) in OEBC examinations. On October 1 2015, OEBC's board of directors approved the blueprint which became the guide for question development for the OEBC Written Examination and OSCE.

**7. Who develops the exam?**

- Question and station design is developed by optometrists practicing across Canada.

**8. Who selects the content for each exam administration?**

- The Written Examination questions are selected by practicing optometrists. This process is facilitated by OEBC's psychometrician.
- The OSCE stations are selected by practicing optometrists in consultation with the OSCE consultant.

**9. What is an SP?**

- An SP is a standardized patient, a person who has been trained to present the signs and symptoms of a condition and respond to candidate questions, statements and actions consistently.

**10. When and where is the exam held?**

- The OSCE and written examinations are held at accessible sites. The exam administration schedule and locations as well as the exam policy on setting dates and location are available at [www.oebc.ca](http://www.oebc.ca).  
There are two administrations annually - one in Spring, one in Fall
- The OEBC Written Examination is scheduled approximately two weeks before or after the OSCE weekend.
- OEBC OSCE will be on a Saturday and/or Sunday in the Spring and Fall.

**11. What is the language of the examination?**

- Both the Written Examination and OSCE are available in English or French, in addition to a bilingual version of the written examination.

**12. What is the format of the Written Examination?**

- Exam up to Nov. 2019: It consisted of 62 comprehensive cases each with 4 multiple choice questions, requiring the application of knowledge and judgement.
- Exam after Nov. 2019: It consisted of 58 comprehensive cases each with 4 multiple choice questions, requiring the application of knowledge and judgement.
- Exam in May of 2021: The paper-based written exam was replaced with a computer-based



- format, via remote proctoring.
- *Exam after Oct. 2021:* Four digital media cases have been added, thus expanding the variety of question types that are possible on the written exam.

**13. What is an OSCE?**

- The OEBC OSCE is a practical exam. OSCE stands for Objective Structured Clinical Examination. It is a form of practical examination that provides candidates with a consistent exam experience and provides examiners with objective behavioural criteria for scoring candidate performances.

**14. Who else uses OSCEs?**

- OSCEs are used by many Canadian licensing bodies (regulators) as one criterion for entry to practice. Examples include medicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, dental hygiene and nurse practitioners.

**15. What is the format of the OSCE?**

- Exam up to Nov. 2019: It consisted of 16 stations (plus 2 rest stations). Eleven stations were interactive stations; the remaining 5 stations were non-interactive.
- Exam after Nov. 2019: It consisted of 12 stations (rest stations are TBD). Nine stations are interactive stations; the remaining 3 stations are non-interactive. Each station is 8 minutes long with 2 minutes reading time before the 8-minute station begins.
- Exam after Dec 2021: The three non-interactive stations will be enhanced to Technical Skills, thus now all stations require an Examiner and SP. Each station is 8 minutes long with 2 minutes reading time before the 8-minute station begins.
- *Exam after September 2023:* Technical skills (TS) has increased to four stations, with three stations requiring either a Standardized Patient, or a patient. All TS stations require an examiner.
- Total of stations will be twelve, with eight Interactive and four Technical Skills.
- There is additional time before the exam for candidate registration and orientation.
- There are trained Standardized Patients (SPs) in interactive stations, and patients in technical skills stations.

**16. What equipment is in an OSCE station?**

- Props and equipment vary with the needs of the OSCE station and are provided for the tasks and activities requested. The OEBC [OSCE Equipment Guide](#) and OSCE Administration video describe examples of optometry equipment that may be present in an OSCE. Any equipment, tools and props that may be required for the exam are supplied by OEBC.
- See sample cases for interactive stations at [www.oebc.ca](http://www.oebc.ca), [Preparing for the Exam](#).



**17. What happens in an OSCE station?**

- OEBC's OSCE Station video at [www.oebc.ca](http://www.oebc.ca) describes a sample interactive station.
- In an interactive station, the candidate completes the requested activities with an SP and/or patient. An optometrist examiner observes and evaluates the candidate on a predetermined form.

**18. How is the Examination scored?**

- Information about scoring is on the website under "Passing the Exam" and "Scoring and Rescoring."
- A candidate receives a single score for the OEBC Written Examination.
- A candidate receives a single score for the OEBC OSCE. The total score on which pass/fail decisions are based is the sum of ratings across all 12 OSCE stations.
- The score received will result in either a pass or fail of the Written Examination and a pass or fail of the OSCE.

**19. Who is administering the exam?**

- OEBC administers the exam and handles all administrative functions, including registration, score review and score reporting. Additional resources are used as needed.

**20. What is the fee for the exam?**

- Refer to [Exam Fees](#) on the website. Fees are published at least annually after they have been set by the OEBC board of directors.

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**More information about the OSCE:**  
**Questions & Answers about the Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE)**

**Q: What will be the breakdown of the OSCE stations?**

A: Refer to the OEBC Study Guide, Candidate Guide and OEBC OSCE blueprint under "[Preparing for the Exam](#)" on the website.

The Study Guide, Candidate Guide and the OSCE Blueprint describe the structure and content of the OSCE.

OEBC does not provide specific station content or a 'breakdown' of the stations. The OSCE and written examination blueprints list the 9 practice areas and their weightings in each type of exam. Each practice area includes a list of competencies, the ability to perform a practice task with a specified level of proficiency. Each OSCE is based on the blueprint, with the practice areas



represented according to their weightings. An OSCE will always reflect these practice areas according to the blueprint but the exact nature of what a candidate is required to perform in a station may vary from exam to exam. Note that each written case and each OSCE station has a primary competency and is assigned to the blueprint accordingly, however elements from other competencies may appear in these written cases and OSCE stations, reflective of the integrated nature of practice. Stations have been designed to ensure the tasks can be completed by an entry-level optometrist within the allotted time.

**Q: How will I perform procedures on standardized patients if there is no direct contact? How do you define direct contact? Does this include or exclude the performance of certain optometry tests and procedures? Are standardized patients there only to exchange information regarding patient communication?**

A: Please refer to the OEBC Competency Profile under “Resources” and the OEBC Candidate Guide and sample questions (i.e., sample OSCE cases) under “Preparing for the Exam.”

The interactive cases involve no direct contact on the standardized patient. The candidate interacts with a standardized patient (SP) who has been trained to present the signs and symptoms of a condition, and respond to candidate questions, statements and actions consistently.

However, in the Technical Skills stations, candidates may perform procedures on a ‘human eye’, as well as perform on a model, thus, obtaining the required data.

The OEBC exam (written exam and OSCE) is a competency-based exam testing integrated skills and knowledge. In the OSCE, candidates should interact with standardized patients, and patients according to the instructions for that station. They should treat them both as if they are in a real clinical setting, according to current standard of care and ensuring no harm.

**Q: What is the format of an OSCE? What will I have to do at the OSCE?**

A: Candidates may wish to review the OEBC videos at [www.oebc.ca](http://www.oebc.ca) as a source of information about how OSCE administrations and OSCE stations are run in the OEBC exams.

**Q: The Guide shows photos of a BIO, retinoscope, gonioscope, and tonometer. Are they the only equipment used in the OSCE?**

A: Please refer to the OEBC [OSCE Equipment Guide](#).

The [OSCE Equipment Guide](#) and OSCE Administration video describe examples of optometry equipment that may be present in an OSCE. Any equipment, tools and props that may be required for the examination will be supplied by OEBC. Photos of optometry equipment used in Binocular Indirect Ophthalmoscopy (BIO), Retinoscopy, Gonioscopy and Tonometry that may be used in the



OSCE are provided in the guide so that candidates are aware of the brand/model for this particular equipment.

**Q: Regarding the type of gonio lens used for angle assessment during the board exam, will it be a 3-mirror, 4-mirror, with flange, no flange? Or are we able to choose which type of lens we wish to use?**

A: Candidates may be asked to perform techniques such as BIO, Gonioscopy, Tonometry, and RET. Photos and descriptions of models are provided in the [OSCE Equipment Guide](#). Any required equipment and tools will be supplied, and candidates are expected to be able to use the provided equipment.

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