OSCE checklist for breast examination

An OSCE checklist for breast examination starts with consent and a chaperone, then moves through inspection, palpation of every area, the armpit and neck nodes, and what to say next. This is our own practice list.

The checklist, step by step

1. Wash your hands, introduce yourself, confirm identity and explain the examination in plain words.
2. Gain consent, and offer a chaperone. Keep the room private.
3. Ask about the lump or symptom and where it is, before the examination starts.
4. Expose the chest with respect, and offer a gown or sheet to cover whichever side you are not examining.
5. Inspect both breasts with the arms down, then raised, and then with hands on hips. Look at shape, skin and nipples.
6. Lie the patient back at an angle. Examine the normal breast first.
7. Palpate every part of the breast, including behind the nipple and the tail towards the armpit, with a system that leaves no gaps.
8. If you find a lump, describe its site, size, shape, edge, surface, consistency, tenderness and whether it moves.
9. Feel the armpit and neck lymph nodes.
10. Cover the patient, thank them and wash your hands.
11. Say that a lump needs further assessment, and what that would involve.

What candidates commonly forget

- Offering a chaperone and saying it aloud.
- Asking where the lump is before examining.
- Examining the normal side first.

- Using a system so that no area is missed.
- Checking the lymph nodes, and covering the patient at the end.

How to use this list

This is our own practice checklist. Exam bodies mark in their own way. Use it to build a routine, then say each step aloud as you do it. You can also practise with an AI patient on this site, and try one station free with no sign-up. For original examination stations, see the PLAB 2 stations list.

Common questions

Do I examine both breasts?

Yes, usually. Start with the side that has no symptoms, then the side with the lump.

What should I say about a lump?

Describe it in standard words, and say that you would arrange further assessment. NICE publishes referral guidance for suspected cancer.

Is this a marking sheet?

No. It is our own list for practice.

Sources

- NICE: Suspected cancer, recognition and referral (NG12)
- NHS: Breast cancer in women
- NHS: Breast pain
- WHO: Hand hygiene

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.