OSCE checklist for general examination

An OSCE checklist for general examination covers a first look, the hands, the observations, the face and neck, and a safe finish before any system-specific examination. This is our own practice list.

The checklist, step by step

1. Wash your hands, introduce yourself, confirm identity, explain and gain consent. Ask about pain, and whether the patient needs the toilet.
2. Position the patient comfortably and expose only what you need.
3. Look from the end of the bed: alertness, colour, breathing, weight, hydration, lines and devices.
4. Hands: temperature, nails, clubbing, colour of palms, tremor and capillary refill.
5. Observations: pulse, blood pressure, respiratory rate, temperature, oxygen saturation and level of consciousness. Say what the early warning score is, if the chart has one.
6. Face: eyes for pallor or yellowing, mouth for colour, tongue and hydration.
7. Neck: lymph nodes and the thyroid, and the venous pressure if asked.
8. Legs: swelling and calf tenderness.
9. Say which system you would examine next, based on the history.
10. Thank the patient, wash your hands and summarise what you found.

What candidates commonly forget

- Hand hygiene at the start and end.
- Asking about pain.
- Completing the observations and scoring them.
- Saying what you would do if the patient is unwell.
- Linking your findings to a likely problem.

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 a general station frame, see the general OSCE checklist.

Common questions

How do I score the observations?

Hospitals in England use NEWS2 for adults, and other countries may use different charts. Use the chart your exam provides and say what the total means.

Is this a marking sheet?

No. It is our own list for practice.

Sources

- Royal College of Physicians: NEWS2
- NICE: Suspected sepsis in people aged 16 or over (NG253)
- WHO: Hand hygiene

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