OSCE checklist for mental state examination

An OSCE checklist for mental state examination runs through appearance, speech, mood, thoughts, perceptions, thinking ability and insight, and asks about risk. This is our own practice list.

The checklist, step by step

1. Introduce yourself, confirm identity, explain and gain consent. Sit at an angle and keep a calm voice.
2. Appearance and behaviour: dress, grooming, eye contact, movements and how the patient relates to you.
3. Speech: speed, volume and amount.
4. Mood: ask how the patient feels in their own words. Note the visible emotion too.
5. Thoughts: how they flow and what they are about, including worries, ideas of harm and unusual beliefs.
6. Perceptions: ask about hearing or seeing things that others do not.
7. Cognition: orientation, attention and memory. Use short, simple tests.
8. Insight: ask whether the patient thinks something is wrong and whether they want help.
9. Risk: ask directly about thoughts of self-harm, suicide and harming others, and about plans.
10. Summarise in plain words and say what you would do next.
11. Thank the patient.

What candidates commonly forget

- Asking about suicidal thoughts directly.
- Describing what you saw as well as what the patient said.
- Covering perceptions.
- Testing orientation and attention.
- Giving a brief summary and a plan.

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

Is a mental state examination the same as a history?

No. A history asks about what happened. The examination records what you observe and hear in the room.

Should I ask about suicide?

Yes, directly and calmly, if the task fits. NICE guidance on self-harm covers assessing risk.

Is this a marking sheet?

No. It is our own list for practice.

Sources

- NICE: Self-harm, assessment and management (NG225)
- NICE: Depression in adults (NG222)
- NHS: Psychosis

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