OSCE checklist for thyroid examination

An OSCE checklist for thyroid examination covers the general look, the hands and eyes, the neck with a swallow test, and signs of thyroid status. This is our own practice list.

The checklist, step by step

1. Wash your hands, introduce yourself, confirm identity, explain and gain consent.
2. Look from the end of the bed: build, restlessness, weight, skin and hair, and any visible neck swelling.
3. Hands: sweating, tremor, palm colour and nail changes. Feel the pulse for rate and rhythm.
4. Eyes: lid retraction and lid lag. Check eye movements and look for bulging.
5. Neck: look from the front, then ask the patient to sip water and swallow. Ask for the tongue to be stuck out.
6. Stand behind the patient. Feel the gland, then feel it again while the patient swallows.
7. Describe the size, shape, surface and tenderness of any swelling, and whether there is one lump or several.
8. Feel the lymph nodes in the neck, and listen over the gland for a bruit.
9. Say that you would check reflexes, and test for weak muscles around the hips and shoulders.
10. Say what you think the thyroid status is, and that you would check blood tests.
11. Thank the patient and wash your hands.

What candidates commonly forget

- Feeling the neck from behind.
- Asking for a swallow.
- Giving the thyroid status: overactive, underactive or normal.
- Describing a swelling in standard words.
- Checking the eyes.

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

Why do I ask for a swallow?

The thyroid moves up with swallowing. It helps tell a thyroid lump from other neck lumps.

What are the signs of thyroid status?

An overactive thyroid often brings weight loss, fast pulse and tremor. An underactive one often brings tiredness, feeling cold and dry skin. The NHS pages on both conditions list them.

Is this a marking sheet?

No. It is our own list for practice.

Sources

- NICE: Thyroid disease (NG145)
- NHS: Overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism)
- NHS: Underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism)
- WHO: Hand hygiene

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