

Preparation tips to support success for international nurses undertaking the Nursing Council of New Zealand OSCE

The Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) assesses whether internationally qualified nurses meet the standards expected of a nurse practising in New Zealand. While many succeed, some struggle, below are some reasons for this, followed by some practical tips to improve performance.

Preparation

- Travel fatigue may impact performance. Adequate time to recover from a long flight before you take the orientation and preparation and OSCE is advisable.
- The OSCE scenarios are based on the Nursing Council Standards of Competence for Registered Nurses (RNs) and Enrolled Nurses (ENs), the Code of Conduct and the RN and EN Scope of Practice. Familiarise yourself with these documents.
- Nursing practice relies on listening, speaking and communicating adequately in English. Practice listening and speaking in English before the OSCE.
- Practise clinical documentation in English.
- Each OSCE scenario is 8 minutes. Familiarise yourself with completing tasks in short and strict time periods.

Rote learning

- The OSCE scenarios vary and are changed frequently. Memorising procedures and scenarios is inadequate preparation and does not enable easy adaptation to scenario changes. Rote learning does not assist clinical judgement. The scenarios require nurses to apply their nursing knowledge across a range of clinical scenarios. These cannot be successfully learnt by rote.
- **Candidates who arrive expecting certain scenarios, who speak** from a rigid script may get confused when presented with something different after rote learning.
- Always read the station descriptor/scenario very carefully before entering the room, don't rely on what you may have heard or been told.



Read the candidate instructions properly

- Do not ignore or skim-read the candidates' instructions posted outside the station.
- This can lead to mismatched responses during the scenario and missed opportunities to demonstrate competence.

Limited recent clinical experience

- Nurses who haven't worked recently in a clinical setting may find it difficult to meet clinical expectations.
- Recent hands-on clinical experience will assist you to demonstrate safe and competent practice.

Differences in practice across countries

- Nursing practice, equipment and documentation varies internationally.
- A standard in one country may not apply in New Zealand.
- You need to adapt to local expectations and understand protocols - read the Nursing Council documents available on the website to understand the differences and pay attention at the two-day orientation and preparation course.
- Nurses in New Zealand are expected to think critically and make safe, informed decisions. It's not enough to recognise abnormal findings - you must understand what could be causing them, their implications and the appropriate nursing intervention.

Communication challenges

- Effective communication is a core component of safe nursing care.
- Candidates must be able to communicate clearly and respectfully with patients, families, and colleagues, in English. It is recommended that you practice speaking English frequently before the OSCE.
- Miscommunication can compromise patient safety and result in OSCE failure.
- Speaking English under pressure may lead to rushed speech. Speak slowly to enable simulated patients and examiners to understand.
- Listen actively and engage naturally rather than from a rigid script.