How NEBDN has moved OSCEs online

The National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN) provides an overview on how the Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) has been adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure that student and trainee dental nurses can qualify to enter the workforce.

OSCEs

An Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) is designed to test various aspects of clinical practice, from communication skills to hands-on practical skills and everything in between. During the exam, the student attends ten or more 'stations' using scenario-based questions to undertake tasks which are completed in a strict five-minute timeframe. The OSCEs are usually held in several centres across the UK on the same day and require a lot of large-scale, face-to-face interaction. The OSCE was first proposed in 1979 by Professor Ronald Harden in Dundee and has gone on to become fully embedded in healthcare training; it is unique to NEBDN as part of their assessment methods.

What changed?

Clearly the lockdown of March 2020 affected everyone; this, alongside the cessation of normal dentistry, affected so many students of every kind and student dental nurses were no exception. NEBDN continued to work very hard, quickly adapted to new ways of working (from home), and introduced new systems and processes to support the effective transition to delivering online examinations. Many hours of work went into designing a system so that students could be examined and allowed to qualify as dental nurses so that there would be no shortfall in the dental nurse workforce.

Dates were fixed for the revised OSCEs and detailed instructions were sent by NEBDN to all those that are involved in the OSCEs.

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Moving OSCEs online

In the new format, OSCEs are carried out using a video platform called Zoom, a web-based video conferencing application that allows users to meet online. A set script is read to the candidate and they are given time to study the scenarios. The candidate can ask to scroll backwards and forwards through the scenarios. Some may ask questions, but apart from offering some clarity, there is not a lot the facilitator can say. This is no difference from the face-to-face OSCE, but it may seem a little strange for some when using the video platform, which is why NEBDN hold mandatory practice sessions prior to the exam. The OSCEs are recorded and this is what will be examined; this is carried out extremely efficiently and quickly by another set of associate examiners.

Advice

It is important to remember that examiners don't want a candidate to fail; none of those who choose to be examiners seek to fail individuals and all associate examiners have, at some point, experienced the very same

feelings as the candidate themselves. The best advice for any candidate is to:

- Read the question and extract what the information is asking you to do
- Make brief notes, you have an opportunity to so, do so!
- Run through the scenario in your head; how would you deal with this if presented in real life?
- Talk calmly and run through what you have just pictured in your head
- Do not be afraid to take a little time to organise your thoughts.
- All exams are fraught with nerves and stress, so take a big deep breath, relax and just tell the examiner what you have learnt and what you know from the many hours of learning you have undergone to get to the OSCE exam.

For candidates sitting an OSCE, NEBDN provide further guidance on their resources page: <https://www.nebdn.org/qualifications/diploma-in-dental-nursing/resources/>.

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