

Ochsner Clinical School
USMLE Step 2 Study Plan
Revised 9/10/2019
Office of Student Affairs

Bottom Line

1. The best study approaches for CK are (1) continuous study for shelf exams during third year rotations, and (2) USMLE world resource and question banks
2. Take the CK exam between years 3 and 4 if possible; if not, no later than May 1st
3. Focused and well-organized students do best. Take notes during study and review these notes the week prior to the CK exam
4. Take your study plan seriously from day 1 of year 3 and review many questions.

Introduction

This study guide is based on advice from Ochsner Clinical School students in the class of 2019 who scored at least 30 points better on step 2CK than on step 1.

The Step 2 exam is divided into 2 parts, the clinical knowledge (CK) exam and the clinical skills (CS) exam. The USMLE website (www.usmle.org) and the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates website (www.ecfmg.org) are good resources to learn about these exams and your particular situation as a University of Queensland/Ochsner Clinical School student. The two parts of the Step 2 exam can be taken any time after the end of third year, but should be taken **before May 1st** of your fourth year of school.

The CK exam is a clinically-focused, multiple choice exam that can be taken locally at the Prometrics site. Successful students uniformly advise that you should take CK between years 3 and 4, if you are ready to pass at that time.

The CS exam is administered at 5 centers across the United States. There are many test dates, but exam slots fill quickly. You can get your testing permit 1 year in advance, so the best advice is to sign up for spring dates sometime in the fall of the previous year. CS is a series of twelve 15-minute OSCE stations completed over an 8 hour testing period. After your 15 minutes in the room with the standardized patient, you will have 10 minutes to complete a note about the patient encounter.

Study resources for CK

Recommended resources

1. USMLE World – 6 month subscription provided by OCS. This resource provides excellent explanatory material.
2. End-of-rotation shelf exams – take these seriously and cover pertinent step material on every rotation during your third year.
3. Online Med Ed videos (www.onlinemeded.org). This resource contains short videos applicable to both “the boards and the wards.”

Other resources

1. Rotation-specific resources:
 - a. Step Up to Medicine (IM) and IM Essentials by ACP online. **More of CK is IM than anything else.**
 - b. Case files for all rotations
 - c. UWorld and ACOG questions for OBGYN
 - d. Blueprints and PreTest for pediatrics
 - e. First Aid Psychiatry
 - f. Pestana for Surgery Shelf
2. Osmosis (www.osmosis.org) contains more videos now. Very comprehensive clinical reasoning videos
3. Sketchy Medical
4. Amboss
5. ANKI flashcards
6. Doctors in Training (DIT) videos.
7. Master The Boards
8. First Aid for CK is not as helpful as first aid for step 1, but it gives a general outline of topics that need to be covered. We do not recommend this as a sole resource, but it provides a nice framework for clinical scenarios.

Question Banks:

1. USMLE World - A smartphone app allows you to do questions during your downtime. Complete ALL of these questions – be sure to understand the reasoning behind all correct and incorrect answers. Do at least 1 pass. Do the questions in a “timed” mode, especially if you struggled with time management for step 1. Consider completing 40-60 questions per day.
2. USMLE World Biostatistics Subject Review - A quick and easy resource to use to review this material. A great way to get easy points on the examination. 90-day subscription costs \$25.

Practice Tests:

1. UWorld Self-Assessment was highly rated by students, who said results from this exam were within +/- 2 points of CK score.
2. NBME practice exam. Use these earlier in your dedicated study to get your timing down and to point out areas to focus study. Results from NBME 4 are the most predictive (+/- 10 points final CK score).

Timeline for Study

Throughout third year: Take shelf examinations seriously and prepare diligently with rotation-specific materials. Complete relevant questions in UWorld while on the corresponding rotation. Doing this will pace you for completion of the entire question bank by the end of your third year.

End of third year: NBME practice examination to determine your readiness and prioritize areas for study.

Between third/fourth year: Concentrate on USMLE World question bank as your principal resource, including reading/understanding the rationale for all correct and incorrect answers. Again, we highly recommend taking CK during this time period if you are prepared to pass.

April of your fourth year: Take NBME practice examinations under simulated exam conditions. Take UWorld 8-hour simulated examination to ensure you have the stamina for the exam.

No later than **May 1st**: Sit for the CK examination.

Pointers for CK

Most students require 2-4 months to prepare adequately for CK. We cannot stress enough how important it is that you study well during your rotations and perform well on Shelf exams. They make a huge difference on how confident you will be and how long you need to study.

Your CK score may not return until 6 weeks after completing the exam. CK examinees testing late June through late August 2020 will experience much longer delays.

<https://www.usmle.org/announcements/default.aspx?ContentId=232>

Factors determining appropriate timing for you to sit for CK

1. When are you doing away rotations? Don't take the exam then.
2. When are you doing your Australian rotation? We recommend against taking the exam in AUS, though some students have done this in Melbourne or Sydney.
3. Personal insights (from practice examinations) of your readiness
4. Take CK prior to May 1st.

Consider taking a short practice exam at your chosen Prometrics testing center about a week prior to the exam so that you can familiarize yourself with the site, testing conditions and identification requirements at the site.

Incorporate exercise, rest and good nutrition during your study preparations. Relax the day prior to the exam. Don't cram on that day – you risk overly stressing yourself.

Plan for nutrition and fluids during the exam.

Think positively!

Study resources for CS

Essential preparation resources:

1. OCS Practice Exam for CS
2. First Aid for USMLE Step 2- This is the key text from which to base your study for CS. This resource has wonderful practice cases
3. Practice CS cases with another student who will give you feedback.
4. Amboss has an excellent computer interface for you and your practice partner that is very similar to the real thing.
5. Osmosis has good clinical reasoning videos, which can help with differential diagnosis training.
6. Review the patient note interactive on USMLE website (<http://www.usmle.org/practice-materials/index.html>).

Timeline for study

Before December 1: Book a date to take your exam before May. **You must plan early to secure a seat for the Step 2 CS exam.** We cannot emphasize this too strongly. Inform appropriate OCS administrators of your need to take a LOA to travel to the exam.

May 1st: Latest recommended date to take CS exam

Pointers for CS

Avoid taking the exam in Philadelphia. While the vast majority of our students pass CS, of those who did not pass in 2018 and 2019, 70% took the exam in Philadelphia. Anecdotally, students noted that proctors were nicer, facilities were better, and standardized patients were less stressed at other sites.

Develop a thorough grasp of how the oral exams are administered, what is being tested, how to conduct a patient interview, and how to write the patient note.

Become very familiar with the materials on the USMLE web site. Know the exam format well. First Aid for CK explains what to expect on test day.

Practice with a partner, or even better with several different partners. Use a timer every time, including your first practice. During practice, commit to the role playing and complete the patient note as you would on test day, including the timing. Complete at least 2 cases per day (one for you and one for a practice partner) until entire resource is completed.

Use mnemonics for ROS and PMH.

The exam does not emphasize clinical knowledge, but your ability to empathize and communicate your thoughts effectively to your patient.

Your CS score will not return until 3 months after the test. CS will not be administered between March 27 and April 4, 2020. <https://www.ecfmg.org/news/2019/04/05/results-reporting-schedule-for-step-2-cs/#2020>

Please contact Dr. G Dodd Denton (gdenton@ochsner.org) should you need advice or have any questions.

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