



The United States Medical Licensure Examination® (USMLE) Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) Exam - FAQs

General Information:

1. **What is USMLE Step 2 CS?** It is a subsection of the Step 2 exam and tests three things: 1) your ability to exhibit good communication and interpersonal skills, and 2) your abilities to take medical histories and perform physical exams on standardized patients, as well as 3) your English proficiency. Similar to students' experience working with standardized patients and in objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs), Step 2 CS requires students to display their ability to build rapport with patients, elicit a history, perform a focused physical exam, and write an appropriate note within a limited amount of time. Approximately 15 students fail this exam for every 100 students that take it at AUC, mostly due to lack of preparation or lack of understanding the rules of the exam.

2. The test itself is a full day with 12 clinical encounters in the outpatient setting.

- You are given 15 minutes to perform a H&P and 10 minutes to write a Step 2 CS note.
- The 12 clinical encounters are broken up into groups of 3. After the first 3 patients, you will get a 10-minute break. After the next 3 patients you will have a 30-minute lunch provided by the testing facility. After another 3 patients, you get your final 10-minute break, after which you will see your final 3 patients.

3 patients	10-minute break	3 patients	30-minute lunch	3 patients	10-minute break	3 patients
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- The Step 2 CS Notes are simplified into four sections: 1. HPI – including ROS, and relevant PMH, Medications, Allergies, and Family and Social Histories. 2. Focused physical exam. 3. Differential diagnoses with the first being the most likely diagnosis. 4. Initial work up tests you would want to order or do (which may include physical exam maneuvers such as rectal or GU exams; consultations are not allowed).

Evaluation of your performance is based on three separate criteria:

- Integrated Clinical Encounter (ICE):** Evaluates your skills at doing a history and physical, as well as your ability to write the Step 2 CS note. This is scored via checklist by a physician.
- Communication and Interpersonal Skills (CIS):** Judges your ability to gather information and develop rapport with patients.
- Spoken English Proficiency (SEP):** Originally meant for foreign or international medical graduates, tests proficiency in speaking English.

3. **How important is CS?** As with the Step 2 CK, the Step 2 CS is very important. Failure of Step 2 CK or Step 2 CS can decrease chances of achieving a residency match.

4. **Is CS a requirement for graduation?** Yes, AUC students must pass both parts of the Step 2 exam (CK and CS) and receive their scores prior to graduation.

How is Step 2 CS graded? Step 2 CS is **pass/fail**. You need to pass all three criteria (ICE, CIS, SEP) to pass the Step 2 CS exam. AUC believes the ICE portion to be the most difficult section since it includes ability to elicit a proper history, perform a focused physical exam, and write CS style note that is appropriate for the patient's presenting condition and within the specified amount of time.

Preparation:

1. ***Are there any prerequisites for CS?*** While there are no formal prerequisites for taking the Step 2 CS, we strongly recommend that you prepare for this important exam carefully and systematically over several months, including but not limited to 1) an elective in Family Medicine and taking the 2) USMLE Step 2 CS Assessment (CSA) offered through Becker Professional Education (Becker) at US and UK sites. Please see links below for more information. Use every opportunity on the wards and in outpatients to practice clinical encounters with patients from the start of your time in Clinical Sciences.

2. ***What resources should I use in preparing for the exam?***

Resources include, but are not limited to:

- [USMLE Website](#) and [practice note](#)
- Book: We suggest obtaining the *First Aid for the USMLE Step 2 CS* book, which has an in depth explanation of the exam format and also provides practice cases and differential diagnosis drills.
- Becker USMLE Step 2 CS Assessment (CSA): The USMLE Step 2 CS Assessment is a simulated exam where students will see 6 standardized patients in the CS format with opportunities for feedback on encounters and notes. The CSA is available in Chicago, Detroit, Miramar, New York, the UK (Chichester), Washington D.C., and California (starting Summer 2018). Students are recommended to take the USMLE Step 2 CS Assessment 2-6 months before taking Step 2 CS.
- GuideMD for Step 2 CS: Once you register for the USMLE Step 2 CS Assessment through Becker, you will get access to a free 3-month subscription to GuideMD for Step 2 CS, which includes 10 recorded clinical cases (more information is available at www.becker.com/aucmed once you sign in with your AUC email address).
- People: Your Clinical Education Fellow (CEF) in the Transition to Clinical Medicine curriculum (TCM) is a source of knowledge and tips for preparing Step 2 CS and practicing cases as a group to get familiar with the format and timing.
- Electives: Consider taking a family medicine elective in the few months before the test. During these electives students have opportunities to see patients on their own, including taking a history, performing a physical exam, and developing a plan, with the guidance of an attending. Every patient you see can help you to prepare for Step 2 CS and is essentially a long OSCE. Take advantage of any and all opportunities to speak to patients, practice physical exam maneuvers, and elicit feedback from attendings, residents, and peers.

3. ***What types of clinical cases might I see during CS?***

- Acute vs. chronic cases
- Counseling vs. physical exam cases
- Follow-up lab results
- Telephone cases
- Pediatric cases, but with the child not in the room

4. ***What should I do if I get a telephone case?***
 - Treat as if the patient or guardian is in the room
 - Take your time
 - Ask all your usual questions
 - These are usually pediatric cases
 - Use any extra time from the encounter on the note

5. ***What is the Integrated Clinical Encounter (ICE)?*** The ICE includes the following components:
 - Taking a full history
 - Completing a focused physical exam
 - Post-exam discussion with patient
 - Completing a Step 2 CS note

6. ***What is meant by Communication and Interpersonal Skills (CIS)?*** The CIS focuses on five functions:
 - a) Fostering the relationship
 - Expresses interest in the patient as a person
 - Treats the patient with respect
 - Listens and paid attention to the patient
 - b) Gathering information
 - Encourages the patient to tell his/her story
 - Explores the patients reaction to the illness or problem
 - c) Providing information
 - Provides information related to the working diagnosis
 - Provides information on next steps
 - d) Making basic decisions
 - Elicits the patient's perspective on the diagnosis and next steps
 - Finalizes plans for the next steps
 - e) Demonstrating basic supporting emotions
 - Facilitates the expression of an implied or stated emotion or something important to him/her
 - Helps patients with behavior change

Registering for Step 2 CS:

1. ***When should I take CS?*** AUC recommends that students take the Becker USMLE Step 2 CS Assessment 2-6 months before taking Step 2 CS. Typically March through July is the busy season for taking CS. AUC recommends students to register and pay for the exam early and then pick a date after they have completed an internal medicine and a family medicine elective. When students wait to register and take the exam during the busy season, it may be extremely difficult to find a testing session or student may have to travel to a further away location to complete the exam. To help ensure a better match season, students are encouraged to have their passing scores in by the time they apply for residency in mid-September of the application year, which means you would have to take Step 2 CS by mid-July. Please refer to the timelines from the Office of Student and Professional Development (OSPD) which state that both Step 2 CS and CK scores need to be reported by **October 1st** in order to receive interviews by residency programs. The last and final date to take and pass Step 2 CS to be eligible for ranking in The MATCH[®] is December 31st of the application year. OSPD Advisors are available to discuss residency match timelines as well as

resources. Students are also recommended to sign up for the ECFMG® Reporter and monitor the ECFMG Website (<http://www.ecfmg.org/>) in order to stay up-to-date on important information related to International Medical Graduations (IMGs) such as recommended times for registering for examinations.

2. ***How long will it take to receive my CS score?*** Step 2 CS scores are not typically reported until **at least a month** after the exam, if not longer. This is important to note for applying to residency or if you have taken a leave to complete the exam. Your score must be reported before your leave expires. Specific time frames based on test dates may be found here:
<https://www.ecfmg.org/news/2017/04/20/2017-and-2018-schedules-for-reporting-step-2-cs-results/>
3. ***What are the logistics I need to consider for CS?*** You will need to travel to a regional test center in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, or Philadelphia to take the examination. Due to the limitations in testing locations, you should register as early as possible for the Step 2 CS so that you get the most flexibility of dates and locations possible, as well as to get your score in before applying to residency in mid-September of the application year.
4. ***How much does the CS cost?*** \$1565 (<http://ecfmg.org/fees/index.html>)