The Clinical Skills Assessment
An assessment of a doctor’s ability to integrate and apply appropriate clinical, professional, communication and practical skills in general practice’

The aim of the CSA is to test a doctor’s ability to gather information and apply learned understanding of disease processes and person-centred care appropriately in a standardised context, make evidence-based decisions, and communicate effectively with patients and colleagues. Being able to integrate these skills effectively is a key element of this assessment.
CSA: The Assessment Centre

- No.30 Euston Square (College headquarters)
- Easy access via Euston Station
- Bespoke Assessment Centre
- 3 floors
- 3 simultaneous circuits
- 13 consultation rooms on each circuit
- Morning or afternoon sessions available
- ST3 registrars can apply (on-line)
CSA: The circuits

- Bring ‘doctor’s bag’ contents
- Candidate stays in ‘surgery’ unless on ‘home visit’
- 13 cases
- Simulated consultations, ten minutes each
CSA: What are the cases like?

- Each case is linked to learning outcomes from the MRCGP curriculum.
- Cases for each circuit are selected to represent the range and diversity of consultations seen in General Practice.
- Each case has undergone detailed analysis, feedback and live testing before it is used.
- Examiners mark the same case all day, to maintain calibration. They work with the examiners and role players on the other two floors to maintain standardisation.
Cases selected for each day using case selection blueprint

Ensures standardised selection of cases by:

- Gender and age
- Difficulty
- Case focus e.g. psychological, preventative, acute/chronic/undifferentiated, physical examination required
- Case type e.g. telephone consultation/home visit/aspects of diversity
CSA: Who are the examiners?

- All examiners are working NHS GPs selected from across the UK
- All examiners are carefully selected, trained and monitored
- Examiners sit in the background, observe and mark
- Examiners are instructed not to interact with candidates
- Examiners mark the same case all day
- Some cases are video-recorded for Examiner/Role Player training & QA purposes
CSA: Who are the patients?

- Trained role players play simulated patients
- Script, with detailed instructions about the patient,
  - medical history and presentation
  - psychosocial background
  - personality
- Role players trained to respond to individual candidates’ approaches, although the beginning of each case is the same
- Each morning, the three role players for each case (one for each circuit), calibrate their case portrayal to standardise the presentation to all candidates
CSA: Marking Cases

- Each case has marking schedule consisting of 3 domains
  - Data Gathering, Technical and Clinical Assessment skills
  - Clinical Management skills
  - Interpersonal skills

➢ Each domain carries equal marks
CSA: The three domains

1. DATA-GATHERING, TECHNICAL & ASSESSMENT SKILLS:
Gathering and using data for clinical judgement, choice of examination, investigations and their interpretation. Demonstrating proficiency in performing physical examinations and using diagnostic and therapeutic instruments. (Blueprint: Problem-solving skills, Technical Skills)

2. CLINICAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS:
Recognition and management of common medical conditions in primary care. Demonstrating a structured and flexible approach to decision-making. Demonstrating the ability to deal with multiple complaints and co-morbidity. Demonstrating the ability to promote a positive approach to health. (Blueprint: Primary Care Management, Comprehensive approach)

3. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:
Demonstrating the use of recognised communication techniques to understand the patient’s illness experience and develop a shared approach to managing problems. Practising ethically with respect for equality and diversity, in line with the accepted codes of professional conduct. (Blueprint: Person-centred approach, Attitudinal aspects).
CSA: Marking Cases

- Four possible grades for each domain:
  - Clear pass (3)
  - Pass (2)
  - Fail (1)
  - Clear fail (0)

  ➢ Each domain carries equal marks

- Grade descriptors on RCGP website under ‘CSA marking’

- Grades are converted to numerical scale to give an overall mark

- Examiners can flag up serious concerns which may be followed up by the RCGP
CSA: Standard setting

- Cases change each day
- Pass mark for each case created using the Borderline Group method. This is used to calculate the overall pass mark for each day
- Daily pass mark established to allow for differing case mix on different day
- Details on CSA webpage under ‘CSA marking’
CSA: Results and Feedback

- Results and feedback via ePortfolio

- Candidates given their overall score and passing score for that day

- Areas of improvement as identified by 2 or more examiners flagged (picking from 16 feedback statements)

- Further detailed information on what these mean and tips for improvement - RCGP website, CSA webpage, ‘CSA Results and feedback’
CSA: Failing Candidates

- A candidate who has failed will find the feedback helpful in preparing again for the CSA.

- The CSA may be attempted a maximum of four times.
CSA: Further Resources

• RCGP website, CSA webpage
  • ‘Information for Candidates’
    • Directions to the centre
    • Timekeeping and conduct
    • Format, timing, marking of the assessment
    • Equipment to bring
  • ‘Introduction to the cases’ document
  • Feedback
    • How to use the suggestions for improvement
• Preparation Courses at CSA Assessment Centre