

Personal Protective Equipment and physical distancing protocols for MCC OSCEs during COVID-19 pandemic

PREAMBLE

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was declared by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, the Public Health Agency of Canada and provincial public health agencies have issued a number of directives to ensure the safety and health of all. These directives include recommendations regarding travel, physical distancing, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

As the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) is deemed to provide an essential service, we will be permitted to administer our examinations if we adhere to public health recommendations for risk mitigation. In the following pages, we will outline our protocols for the safe administration of our Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE).

Screening questionnaire

All examination staff, standardized participants (SP), physician examiners (PE) and candidates will be required to complete a screening questionnaire prior to participating in the examination.

Questions will include:

1. Are you experiencing any of these symptoms? Fever, NEW or worsening cough, difficulty breathing/shortness of breath.
2. Are you experiencing any of these symptoms, without an explanation? Fatigue/malaise, chills, sore throat, runny nose or sneezing, nasal congestion, hoarse voice, digestive symptoms (including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), flare up of chronic conditions, loss of taste/smell.
3. Within the last 14 days, have you been in close contact (without personal protective equipment) with someone who has been confirmed to have COVID-19, or who is being tested for COVID-19 and is awaiting results?
4. Have you travelled outside of Canada within the past 14 days?

Anyone answering 'yes' to any of the above questions will not be permitted to participate in the examination.

MCC OSCE physical distancing protocols

To decrease the risk of virus transmission, we will institute a number of physical distancing protocols, as outlined below:

- Avoidance of large gatherings

- In-person orientations for candidates and PEs will be replaced with online orientations
- Candidate, PE, SP and staff sign-in and sign-out will be performed in small groups, using a staggering protocol
- Use of physical barriers in high-traffic areas
 - Plexiglass (or equivalent) barriers will be placed in high-traffic areas, such as the sign-in/sign-out desks for candidates, PEs, and SPs
- Promotion of two metre separation of persons, where possible
 - Use of tape or other visual cues placed at two metre intervals at places where persons are expected to congregate, including at sign-in/sign-out desks and in any areas where small groups of candidates will be gathered during the OSCE (e.g., where they line up outside of each track)
 - Use of tape or other visual cues to direct the flow of traffic in hallways
- Use of visual cues when two metre separation is not possible (e.g. inside OSCE station rooms), including:
 - The placement of chairs in OSCE station rooms to maximize the distance between participants
 - The use of tape on the floor to prevent candidates from approaching an SP who is on a hospital bed

MCC OSCE Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) protocols (including donning and doffing)



All staff, candidates, SPs and PEs will be required to use appropriate PPE at all times. For the purposes of this examination, this will include the use of a disposable (non-medical) face mask that covers the mouth, nose and chin.

Participants will be provided with an earloop mask when they arrive at sites. Candidates, PEs and staff will also have the option of wearing their own mask (if that is their preference) provided that it covers their mouth, nose and chin and that it is clean (not visibly soiled or wet). SPs, however, will be required to wear the disposable (non-medical) mask provided by MCC, to ensure standardization.

Staff, candidates, SPs and PEs will be required to adhere to proper donning and doffing of masks as outlined below:

How to put on a face mask (donning)

- Perform hand hygiene (using hand sanitizer or washing hands with soap and water)
- Remove glasses/eyewear (if applicable)
- Place mask over face, covering mouth, nose and chin, and secure with straps behind ears
- Perform hand hygiene (using hand sanitizer or washing hands with soap and water)
- Replace glasses/eyewear (if applicable)
- Perform hand hygiene (using hand sanitizer or washing hands with soap and water)
- Avoid touching the mask until it is time to remove it
 - Masks should be removed:

- If they are wet or soiled (e.g., after sneezing)
- While eating or drinking

How to remove a face mask (doffing)

- Perform hand hygiene (using hand sanitizer or washing hands with soap and water)
- Carefully remove the mask using the straps and pull away from face without touching the front
- Place in a waste bin
- Perform hand hygiene (using hand sanitizer or washing hands with soap and water)

Appropriate receptacles will be provided to dispose of PPE.

Candidates will each receive one mask for the duration of the examination. An additional mask will only be provided to candidates if their original mask becomes soiled.

Examination staff, PEs, and SPs will each receive one mask at the beginning of each administration. An additional mask will only be provided to participants if their original mask becomes soiled.

Use of gloves

Non-latex gloves (as well as face masks) will be worn by staff during sign-in and sign-out.



Non-latex gloves (as well as face masks) will be worn by staff and SPs during the application of any make-up that is required for simulation purposes (e.g., to simulate a skin lesion on the SP).

Non-latex gloves will be provided to additional participants if requested but are not deemed essential. Rather, frequent hand hygiene will be promoted.

Hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene



Hand hygiene will be strictly enforced. Candidates will be asked to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer or to wash their hands with soap and water at the beginning of every OSCE encounter.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be prominently displayed in all locations where staff, candidates, SPs, PEs are expected to be. This includes, but is not limited to, at sign-in/sign-out desks, in every OSCE station room, in at least two locations in each track outside of the OSCE station rooms.

Candidates will receive instructions during orientation, instructing them on the need for hand-washing before each OSCE station.

Participants will be reminded of the importance of respiratory hygiene (i.e., cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue or cough into their elbow followed by performing hand hygiene; avoid coughing or sneezing in the direction of others; avoid sneezing while wearing a face mask).

Touching



The practice of physical touching will be strongly discouraged. Participants will be instructed to refrain from shaking hands or hugging.

During OSCE encounters, candidates will be instructed to avoid shaking hands with or touching the SPs and PEs in any way. Physical examination stations will be modified so that

candidates will be asked to refrain from touching SPs in any way. Candidates will also be instructed to refrain from bringing any medical instruments with them to the examination (e.g., stethoscope, reflex hammer, etc.).

In contrast to our typical practices, candidates will not hand their identification barcode labels to PEs. Rather, PEs will be provided with a sheet of labels for all the candidates scheduled for their track. When the candidate enters the room, there will be a double confirmation of the barcode.

MCC cleaning and disinfecting protocols (e.g., for props)



Hand sanitizing gel and disinfectant wipes will be available at the registration desk at all exam sites. Site staff will wipe down the surfaces on a regular basis during registration.

Washrooms will be checked regularly throughout the day. Site staff will wipe down all high traffic surfaces such as door and stall handles, taps if not touchless, toilet flusher if not touchless, etc. We will also ensure that there is enough hand soap in the washrooms for candidates. Disposable paper towels will be provided if touchless hand dryers are not available.

Items and areas that are touched during the exam are to be regularly cleaned with disinfectant wipes or a disinfectant spray. These areas include doorknobs outside of the exam rooms and props which will be cleaned by the hall monitors. The examination staff and SPs will clean the inside of the room, including the interior doorknob, the chair that the candidates use, laminated instructions, and props that remain inside the room.

As physical examination stations will be modified, no physical examination kits will be provided in the OSCE station rooms. We will also minimize the use of props for the exams. When props are used, we will ensure that they can sustain repeated cleaning (for example, by adding protective plastic covers to paper props). Props will be sanitized after each use.

For the break rooms where drinks and food are being served, single-use items will be considered where possible (e.g., water bottles). Items that are not single use and are touched by many people, for example a coffee carafe, will be cleaned on a regular basis by the examination staff. Cleaning wipes and hand sanitizer will be readily available for those on break.

The above protocols reflect the MCC's own protocols, which are based on the guidelines issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada and have been adapted for the context of our examinations. Exam participants are responsible for adhering to any further local public health restrictions or regulations that may be in effect in the location of the exam.
