

## Preparing for Vivas, OSCEs and other Oral Examinations

Oral examinations, including Vivas and OSCEs, require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills 'in action' and in the presence of examiners. This form of assessment is authentic, closely reflecting the requirements of the workplace and assisting students in developing workplace-relevant professional skills. As a result, your preparation also needs to be authentic, incorporating elements of roleplay and practice in addition to traditional forms of revision. While the Unit Assessor's directions and guidance always take precedence, the following step-by-step process can guide you to prepare effectively for your oral examination.

### 6 Steps to Prepare for VIVAs, OSCES and other Oral Examinations



Revise relevant module, class and workshop content and any [Notes or Concept Journals](#) you have used to learn key **terminology, concepts or skills**.

- Look for 'signposted' content (material highlighted as key content in modules, workshops or the discussion board). In conjunction with the Assessment Brief, use these signposts as a guide to where to focus your revision
- The type of oral examination will also determine the content you need to revise and the best form for that revision. Study Skills that may help are outlined in [StudyHub](#)
- In addition to content knowledge, revise the rationales underlying the professional or clinical decisions required in your discipline so that you can answer questions about your reasoning or judgement.

**Practice** is the most important learning strategy for oral examinations. Practising authentically (as close as possible to real-life or exam conditions) helps you to develop confidence, fluency and coherence in answering questions. Practice also teaches you to think 'on your feet' in front of others and embeds practical skills in your muscle memory. Your delivery and demeanour are important. Consider audience factors to maximise the authenticity of practice. Will the examiner/s be the only other person present, or will you interact with or examine a patient or client? Will you have to explain procedures or concepts in everyday language? Audience considerations determine the optimal **tone, pace, emphasis and vocabulary** for each question.

- Practice with other students from the Unit. Having a common disciplinary background will ensure valuable feedback and mutual learning
- Practice with friends and family. Prepare a list of revision questions for others to ask. If your exam involves interacting with a patient or client, friends can perform this role and give you valuable feedback from a lay perspective
- Practice alone. Record yourself practising so you can review and make notes on your strengths and weaknesses. You can also ask others for feedback on the recording.

On the examination day, ensure you are well-rested and have eaten a meal. Take water with you into the exam. Where your specific examination rules allow, during the exam:

- Listen attentively to the question. Ask examiners to **clarify, repeat a question**, or repeat a part of a multipart question when needed. Take notes during the question if allowed.
- Focus on addressing all elements of the question, trying not to rush your answers. Consider the type of information the question is trying to elicit; do you need to **explain, apply, differentiate** or give **examples** of concepts? Do you need to demonstrate or explain steps in your **reasoning** or **decision-making**?
- Examiners may offer additional prompts; they want students to succeed! If this happens, don't panic; redirect your thinking and response in the direction suggested.
- Speak clearly and confidently. If you feel overwhelmed or lose your train of thought, pause momentarily and ask for the question to be repeated. Say so when you don't know an answer and refocus on the next part of the task or question.

After the exam, reflect on and celebrate **what went well**. Identify a few things that did not go so well and what you might do differently in future. **Read or listen to feedback and use it** to identify opportunities for further improvement. Consider ways to respond to that feedback when preparing for future assessments. See the Learning Zone Quick Guides on [Reviewing and using Feedback](#) for further information.

## Step 4

### Revise

## Step 5

### Practise

## Step 6

### Examination Day & Responding to Feedback

