



# Ochsner Clinical School USMLE Step 2 Study Plan

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## Introduction

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](http://www.usmle.org)) and the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates website ([www.ecfm.org](http://www.ecfm.org)) are good resources to learn about these exams and your particular situation as a University of Queensland student. Registration for CK and CS is more straightforward than for Step 1. 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**. Most successful students advise that an earlier test date is better to reduce stress.

The CK exam is a clinically-focused, multiple choice exam that can be taken locally at the Prometrics site. However, note that CK still contains much of the basic science tested in Step 1.

The CS exam is administered at 5 centers across the United States. There are many test dates, but exam slots fill quickly. You will need to book several months in advance. CS is a series of twelve 15-minute OSCE type exams over an 8 hour testing period. After your time in the room with the standardized patient, you will then have 10 minutes to complete a note about the patient encounter.

This study guide is based on advice from the Ochsner academic faculty, administration, and students in the class of 2016 who scored very highly on the examination.

## Study resources for CK

### Essential resources:

1. USMLE World – 6 month subscription provided by OCS. This resource provides excellent explanatory material.
2. NBME Practice materials – Critical information for CK; practice tests as below.
3. Doctors in Training was highly recommended by three high-scoring students.

### Other resources:

4. [www.onlinemeded.org](http://www.onlinemeded.org) – free resource.
5. USMLE step 2 secrets
6. Step Up to Medicine
7. Case files for OBGYN, Internal Medicine and Pediatrics, while on rotations.

8. First Aid for CK is not nearly 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. There's a smart phone app allowing you to do questions during your downtime. We recommend completing ALL of these questions.
2. Rx – contains buzzwords, but questions are easier than the actual exam
3. Kaplan Q Bank. Students had mixed reviews on this – some liked the questions, while others described the questions as too hard or unfair.

### **Practice Tests:**

1. NBME practice exam. These are good to practice getting your timing down. Three exams may be enough to find out where you are and point out areas to focus. Students have said NBME 4 was most predictive exam and that results from this exam were within +/- 10 points of their final CK score.
2. UWorld Self-Assessment was highly rated by students, who said results from this exam were within +/- 2 points of CK score.

## **Timeline for Study**

High-scoring students have recommended allocating between 2-4 months to study for CK.

You should plan on taking Step 2 CK **no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>** of your fourth year. The CK score may not return until up to 6 weeks after completing the exam. Your exact timing to sit for CK will be influenced by a number of factors. These will include when you will be doing your away rotations, when you will be going back to Australia, and your personal insights regarding your readiness. In general, you should not take the exam while you are on an away rotation either here or in Australia. The ultimate goal is to have both the Step 2 CK and CS scores available for September 1<sup>st</sup> when you submit your applications for residency positions. Completing the exam by May 1<sup>st</sup> removes this task from your mind, allowing focus on clinical rotations, obtaining letters of recommendation, and completing the rest of your ERAS application. Should you stumble on either exam, you will have enough time to retake the exam before the ERAS entry deadline.

You should do an NBME practice exam at the start of your preparation period. This will give you an early indication of your readiness as well as help you to prioritize particular areas for study. You should concentrate on the USMLE World question bank, as this includes good explanations of the answers. When doing the question banks, you should be sure that you understand the rationale for the answer. You should have a clear understanding of why you may have missed a question and use additional resources as necessary.

You should plan on taking several (2-3) if not all of the available NBME practice exams under simulated exam conditions, but do not allow practice exams distract you from study. Take your

last practice exam about 2 weeks prior to sitting for the exam. You should also take one or two 8-hour simulated exams from the USMLE World question bank. As with Step 1, the CK exam is a physically and mentally demanding endurance event. Full length practice exams prepare you for this challenging experience.

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

Be sure to incorporate exercise, rest and good nutrition into your lifestyle during your study preparations. Relax the day prior to the exam and don't try cramming because you may become overly stressed just prior to the exam. Get plenty of rest 2-3 days prior to the exam. Have a plan for nutrition and fluids during the exam which you've developed from your 8 hour practice exams. Think positively!

## Study resources for CS

### Essential text resources:

1. 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.
2. CS cases and template on USMLE website.
3. Crush Step 2: The Ultimate USMLE Step 2 Review
4. Kaplan resources

As with CK, You should **plan on taking CS prior to May 1. Early planning is essential to secure a seat for the Step 2 CS exam given the limited locations and dates of this exam.** There may be a delay of 2-3 months after the test before your CS score returns.

Preparation for this should include 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. You should be very familiar with the materials on the USMLE web site and utilize all of the practice materials. You should practice multiple patient encounters with a role playing friend under test-like conditions, being sure that you can complete the evaluation and the note within the allotted time. The practice examination offered by OCS is excellent preparation for this exam.

Know the format as explained on the website! You can also practice this in some of your clinic settings as well. The ability to use the computer to write a note quickly is an essential skill. If you feel that you are not proficient, Kaplan has some online courses to help bring you up to speed.

Please contact Dr. Richard Deichmann ([rdeichmann@ochsner.org](mailto:rdeichmann@ochsner.org)) or Dr. G Dodd Denton ([gdenton@ochsner.org](mailto:gdenton@ochsner.org)) should you need advice or have any questions.