

INTRODUCTION

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland (CPsychI) was established in 2009 in response to the Medical Practitioners Act 2007. The Clinical Membership examination was introduced in 2014. As outlined in CPsychI Regulations, in order to gain membership of CPsychI trainees are required to pass MRCPsych Papers A and B and then pass the CPsychI Clinical Examination. The CPsychI Clinical Examination comprises 2 components; a 12 station Observed Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) and the Clinical Formulation and Management Examination (CFME).

OSCEs have been widely used and validated in clinical post-graduate examinations for over 50 years. While useful to assess particular clinical skills, OSCEs may be criticised for assessing competence in a fragmented way, with certain short clinical tasks falsely isolated from others. It is difficult for the OSCE structure to assess more global clinical skills, like formulation and case management, which are of particular importance in Psychiatry. Previously, these global skills were assessed using a "long case", but this has fallen out of favour due to difficulties with reliability and consistency. CPsychI has developed the CFME (a standardised case assessment) in order to assess candidates' ability to formulate and manage the entirety of a case.

AIMS

To describe and evaluate the introduction of a standardised case assessment, the Clinical Formulation and Management Examination (CFME), to supplement an OSCE in post-graduate Membership examinations in Psychiatry in Ireland.

MATERIALS and METHODS

With informed consent for use only in examinations, a bank of videos of an interview between a real patient and a real consultant psychiatrist have been professionally recorded. These videos are securely stored by CPsychI with the patients' and consultants' permission. The recordings are edited into a 20 minute video demonstrating the main aspects of the case to be examined. A pre-determined questioning route and marking scheme (based on the CPsychI competency-based curriculum) is drafted for each video and refined by the examinations committee. Subtitles are added to each video in case of any sound interference.

Videoed cases are selected and blueprinted for each diet, along with OSCE stations, to ensure appropriate sampling of the curriculum.

On examination day, all candidates watch one of these videos in the examination centre while being invigilated. Candidates may make notes and have 10 minutes to prepare before presenting the case and being questioned by two examiners for 20 minutes. This process is repeated with a second video and 2 further examiners.

The process includes examiners who observe the process and double-mark, as well as external examiners.

The passing standard is now determined using Borderline Regression, although earlier iterations of the examination used the Angoff Method. The CPsychI examinations department is supported by an examinations statistician (Dr M Stephenson) in analysing results.

Examination results are subject to appeal, if the grounds for appeal are met.

At present, only CPsychI trainees are eligible to sit the CPsychI Clinical Membership examination.

RESULTS

- We report here on examinations between 2020-2024.
- In that period, 231 candidates have been assessed using the CFME
- On average the pass rate for the CFME was 73.45%, while the pass rate for the OSCE was 79.36%.
- Comparing the pass rates and Cronbach's alpha of the OSCE and CFME components:

	OSCE Pass Rate	CFME Pass Rate
Autumn 2020	22/34 (65%)	17/23 (74%)
Winter 2020	20/26 (77%)	15/20 (75%)
Summer 2021	26/29 (90%)	25/29 (86%)
Winter 2021	26/31 (84%)	30/32 (94%)
Summer 2022	21/26 (81%)	17/23 (74%)
Winter 2022	37/47 (79%)	33/48 (69%)
Summer 2023	21/26 (81%)	21/29 (72%)
Autumn 2023	24/28 (86%)	19/34 (56%)
Spring 2024	29/31 (94%)	26/37 (70%)
Summer 2024	6/10 (60%)	14/23 (61%)
Autumn 2024	16/21 (76%)	20/26 (77%)

	OSCE Alpha	CFME 1 Alpha	CFME 2 Alpha
Autumn 2020	(Angoff)	(Angoff)	(Angoff)
Winter 2020	(Angoff)	(Angoff)	(Angoff)
Summer 2021	0.73	(Angoff)	(Angoff)
Winter 2021	0.79	(Angoff)	(Angoff)
Summer 2022	0.8	(Angoff)	(Angoff)
Winter 2022	0.79	0.93	0.94
Summer 2023	0.74	0.86	0.89
Autumn 2023	0.67	0.88	0.95
Spring 2024	0.81	0.89	0.8
Summer 2024	(Angoff)	0.94	0.95
Autumn 2024	0.81	0.93	0.96

CONCLUSIONS

- The CFME is an additional assessment approach in postgraduate examinations in Psychiatry and assesses key skills that OSCEs may not.
- Our experience of introducing the CFME has proven it to be practical and feasible.
- Over time the CFME has become increasingly reliable and discriminatory.
- Further evaluation and development continues at CPsychI.

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DECLARATIONS

All of the authors are employed by or seconded to the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland.

No conflicts of interest to declare.

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