

## Guidelines for Assessing Students' Clinical Reasoning Skills Using the Mini-CEX

Clinical reasoning is the cognitive process that uses thinking strategies to gather and analyze patient information, evaluate the relevance of the information, and decide on possible actions to improve the patient's physiological and psychosocial outcomes. More than simply gathering data about a patient, clinical reasoning is about taking the next step to determine what is the best course of action based on what is known or what can be reasonably hypothesized from clinical data. (The Thinker's Guide to Clinical Reasoning)

The following guiding questions have been created to assist clinicians in providing feedback and guidance to clerks on their ability to apply clinical reasoning in their clinical decision making. These may be used to promote conversation, interaction and feedback following the observed clinical encounter. They are not exhaustive, but may serve as a quick framework to employ in assessment.

**Remember** – The Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX) is intended to facilitate **formative** assessment (i.e. not pass/fail decision) of core clinical skills in 3<sup>rd</sup> year clerks. Formative assessment is considered feedback and should help guide the learner along the clinical reasoning continuum as outlined below.

### PART I:

Clinical Reasoning	Unsatisfactory			Satisfactory		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<input type="radio"/> Is unable to identify or respond to high acuity situations <input type="radio"/> Unable to explain decision making processes <input type="radio"/> Is unable to identify important differential diagnosis list of common problems			<input type="radio"/> Is able to generate a short differential diagnosis list of common problems <input type="radio"/> Is able to identify urgent and/or life threatening problems <input type="radio"/> Is able to identify some components of a management plan <input type="radio"/> Is able to explain rationale behind decision making		

### Suggested guiding questions to facilitate feedback that leads to improvement.

- *How did you reach your differential diagnosis?*
- *Describe your reasoning; what were the important points that helped you come to this diagnosis or rule out others?*
- *Have you asked yourself "What else could this be?"*
- *Did you use any evidence informed principles to reach your conclusion?*
- *Can you describe the investigations that may be helpful in confirming/ruling out your diagnosis?*
- *What are your next steps and why?*

### Want to know more?

The Thinker's Guide to Clinical Reasoning: <https://www.criticalthinking.org/store/products/clinical-reasoning/395>