

SPEX and Clinical Competence Assessment Comparison Table*

	Special Purpose Examination (SPEX)	Clinical Competence Assessment
Description	One-day computerized test of multiple-choice questions focusing on a core of general clinical knowledge and underlying scientific principles deemed to be a necessary foundation for the safe and effective practice of medicine. Measures the knowledge requisite for the undifferentiated practice of medicine.	One-to-two day on-site evaluation that may be tailored to meet the informational needs of a referring agency. A battery of standardized and personalized assessments is used to examine a physician's medical knowledge, clinical judgment, and case management skills. Specific tools utilized vary by program.
Typically used to examine:	Physicians who are applying for licensure by endorsement and have not passed a cognitive knowledge exam within the past 10 years. Physicians seeking licensure reinstatement or reactivation who have been away from clinical practice for a <i>short</i> time (e.g., less than two years) and have not previously been disciplined by a medical board for issues related to patient care.	Physicians who are suspected of having clinical competence deficiencies (e.g., when concerns about a physician's clinical competence arise during a board investigation or during a peer review process). The results are intended to be "diagnostic" in nature, suggesting areas of remediation or focused educational activities. Physicians seeking license reactivation or seeking hospital privileges after having been away from clinical practice for several years (e.g., three years or more) or planning career transition (e.g., administrative to clinical practice; surgical specialty to primary care).
Outcome:	Numeric score with recommended pass score of 75. Performance profiles provide general feedback on the relative strengths and weaknesses across several of the content areas sampled by SPEX – intended only to guide examinee self-improvement efforts.	Narrative report summarizing the physician's performance on each testing modality and identifying the physician's strengths and weaknesses; includes recommendations for educational remediation of any identified weaknesses. Opportunities for subsequent education and remediation may also be provided (additional time and costs involved).
Methods of application:	Board-Sponsored; or Self-Nominated (must possess a current, unrestricted medical license)	Referred by organization (such as a state medical board, physician health program, or hospital); or Self-Referred
Where Offered:	Prometric Testing centers; located throughout the US, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands	Current collaborators: PACE Program (CA); CPEP (CO); FL Competency Advancement Program; Upstate NY Clinical Competency Center (Albany); PMSCO Healthcare Consulting (PA); KSTAR (TX); and Physician Assessment Program (WI)
When Offered:	Year-round	Year-round
Cost:	Current: \$860 Effective June 1, 2009: \$1,200	Varies by program (beginning around \$6,500)
Additional info:	http://www.fsmb.org/plas_speex.html	http://www.fsmb.org/plas_MMCCAR.html

*The SPEX and clinical competence assessment resources are available through the Post-Licensure Assessment System (PLAS), a joint initiative of the Federation of State Medical Boards and the National Board of Medical Examiners. Updated April 2009.