

Tips for Assessors – Field Notes

Field notes play a vital role in assessing candidate competence during the clinical field assessment (CFA) period of the PRA-BC program. They are not, however, sufficient on their own to determine clinical competence; they must be part of an assessment system that collates, summarizes, and interprets the data to make decisions.

The Significance of Field Notes	
For Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforces feedback received from assessor(s) Inform candidates of area(s) of weakness or strength
For Assessors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents areas of strength and challenge (need for reassessment and/or follow-up) Evidence to support summative decisions with respect to competency and documentation of areas for re-assessment or follow-up.
For the Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents candidate performance and progression over the CFA period Evidence of feedback and/or support from assessor Supports outcomes and/or decisions regarding candidate progression

Principles of Field Notes

Field notes should cover a broad range of competencies, address any previously-identified concerns, and provide a sufficient, reliable 'picture' of a candidate's competence.

- Field notes do not replace feedback; they document feedback.
- Good field notes focus on higher-order of skills versus basic medical knowledge (see chart below)
- Field notes do require a reflective discussion with the candidate
- Competency-based assessment requires looking for patterns of performance and trajectory

If you have previously commented on an area that needs improvement or correction, follow-up on this to ensure that change has occurred.

Higher-Order Skills	Basic Medical Knowledge
History	Physical Exam
Diagnosis	Treatment
Gathering Data	Interpreting Data
Analytic Diagnosis	Pattern Recognition
Differential Diagnosis (and why)	Diagnosis
Undifferentiated Cases	Clear-cut Cases



Characteristics of a Good Field Note

- Date recorded (helps indicate trajectory and follow-up)
- Identifies a clinical problem/case, sentinel habit, clinical domain, and assessment
- Focuses on the individual (not a comparison against others)
- Focused on higher-order skills
- Uses clear and unambiguous language
- Sufficiently detailed to “paint a picture” of the performance in question (i.e. specific actions and/or behaviours)
- Includes only a manageable amount of information
- Reflects current assessment standards (read more about [CFPC Evaluation Objectives](#))
- Identifies areas for follow-up and/or further assessment

Note: Field Notes **MUST** be co-signed by candidate prior to returning form(s) to PRA-BC offices.

Reference

1. Clinical Assessors Training Program for Practice Ready Assessment in Family Medicine. Training the Trainers. National Assessment Collaboration - Practice Ready Assessment in Family Medicine (NAC-PRA-FM). Pre-Training Reading. Pilot Meeting: February 2-3, 2015. Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.