



Policy Title:

United States Medical Licensing Examinations (USMLE) Step Policy

Policy Identifier:

USCSOMC – UME – 1.12

Prepared by: M1/M2 and M3/M4 Subcommittees	Creation Date:
Reviewed by: Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education	Review Date:
Approved by: USC SOMC Curriculum Committee	Approved Date: 10/15/24
Approved by: MD Program Policy and Procedures Committee	Effective Date: 11/21/24
Category: Undergraduate Medical Education	

LCME Standards

- 9.4 - Assessment System
- 9.6 - Setting Standards of Achievement
- 9.9 - Student Advancement and Appeal Process
- 10.3 - Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress and Their Dissemination
- 10.5 - Technical Standards

Scope

University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia (USC SOMC) MD students.

Policy Statement

Students at USC SOMC are required to pass Step 1 and Step 2 of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) prior to graduation. A USC SOM student must be enrolled at USC SOMC to take Step 1 or 2 of the USMLE. A student will be permitted to attempt Step 1 and Step 2 of the USMLE three times each. Failure on the third attempt will result in a student being referred to the Academic Review Committee and subject to dismissal from USC SOMC.

Reason for Policy

The LCME expects that the faculty of a medical school establish criteria for student selection and develop and implement effective policies and procedures regarding, and make decisions about, medical student application, selection, admission, assessment, promotion, graduation, and any disciplinary action. The medical school makes available to all interested parties its criteria, standards, policies, and procedures regarding these matters.

Definitions

- USC SOMC: University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia
- USMLE: United States Medical Licensing Examination



NBME: National Board of Medical Examinations
LCME: Liaison Committee on Medical Education
UME: Undergraduate Medical Education
CBSE: Comprehensive Basic Science Examination

Procedures

Step 1 Procedures

1. Second-year students are required to complete applications for Step 1 during the second year in sufficient time to request test dates before the start of the MIII year. This process is supported by the Office of Student Affairs.

In addition, students with documented disabilities should apply to the NBME with completed documentation as soon as possible, but not later than February 1, for permission to take the USMLE under nonstandard conditions. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all deadlines are met and that all appropriate documentation is received by the NBME. Note that the student must have formal notice of the approved accommodations from the NBME to take the CBSE with similar accommodations; otherwise they will be required to take the CBSE under standard conditions. The Assistant Dean of Pre-Clerkship Curriculum is available to aid in this process. Please note that accommodations granted for Step 1 may be different than what has been granted by the Student Disabilities Resource Center at the University of South Carolina. [More Information on the USMLE website](#) and the forms for applying for Step 1 accommodations are [here](#).

2. As part of the preparation to sit for the USMLE Step 1, students must receive an equivalent percent correct (EPC) score on the National Board of Medical Examinations (NBME) Comprehensive Basic Science Exam (CBSE) that reliably predicts passing Step 1. This score is set each year by the Assistant Dean of Pre-Clerkship Curriculum and shared with M-II students before or by May 1. The CBSE will be administered at the SOM Columbia at least three times between the end of final exams of the M-II year and the beginning of M-III Orientation. Students who have received accommodations from the NBME are allowed to take the CBSE in circumstances similar to those granted by NBME.

Students who take Step 1 without having achieved the required EPC on the CBSE will be in violation of the Honor Code and referred to the Honor Committee. The exception to this is if the student has taken the CBSE five times (which is the limit set by the NBME) and not achieved the required EPC. If this is the case, the student is requested to take and demonstrate scores equivalent to the required EPC on three approved practice exams at a standard pace or the pace given as an accommodation by USMLE. The Assistant Dean for the Pre-Clerkship Curriculum will approve the practice exams and give permission to take Step 1 after successful completion of the examinations. If a student in this circumstance takes Step 1 without permission, the student will be in violation of the Honor Code and



referred to the Honor Committee.

Students who have not met the required EPC on the CBSE by the beginning of M-III Orientation will be placed on administrative leave and will not be registered for the M-III year and referred to the Financial Aid Officer.

3. All students, including MD/PhD students, must pass Step 1 to be promoted to the third year and progress to third-year clerkships. MD/PhD students are additionally required to pass Step 1 before matriculating into their PhD program. Students who have taken Step 1 prior to the start of the first clerkship in the M-III year and have not yet received their score will be allowed to start the first clerkship, but will not be officially promoted until a passing Step 1 score is received. If a student in this circumstance receives a failing Step 1 score, they will be immediately removed from the clerkship.

If Step 1 is taken after the start of the first clerkship, students must receive a passing score on Step 1 prior to beginning clerkships.

4. After completion of a successful second attempt of Step 1, the student will re-enter the third year of medical education in the next scheduled clerkship. Any student who extends preparation time beyond what is stated in this policy will need to request a leave of absence and will then be required to have a passing score reported at least 2 weeks before being allowed to return to educational activities. If a student has not passed Step 1 by the end of the fall semester, they would not start rotations until the start of the fall semester the following academic year.
5. Any second-year student who is unsuccessful on his/her second attempt at Step 1 will be referred to the Academic Review Committee and immediately be placed on an administrative leave for the remainder of that academic year to prepare for the third and final administration of Step 1 and is expected to complete an application in sufficient time to ensure a test date and score reporting by the beginning of the first third-year clerkship period of the next academic year. In the interim, the student will not be permitted to progress further in the third year of medical education. The student will not earn academic credit for any clinical clerkship; a grade of W will be entered on the student's transcript for those clinical clerkships from which he/she was pulled. If successful on the third attempt, the student will begin third-year clerkships in the first clerkship period of the subsequent academic year and is required to complete the entire third year in sequence. A student who fails Step 1 on the third attempt will be referred to the Academic Review Committee and subject to dismissal from USC SOMC.

Step 2 Procedures

1. All students will need to register for the Step 2 exam. Students with documented disabilities should apply to the NBME with completed documentation for permission to



take the USMLE under nonstandard conditions at the time of registration even if they have previously received accommodations for Step 1. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all appropriate documentation is received by the NBME by April 1. The Assistant Dean for Clinical Curriculum and Assessment is available to aid in this process. Please note that accommodations granted for Step 2 may be different than what has been granted by the Student Disabilities Resource Center at the University of South Carolina. [More Information on the USMLE website](#) and the forms for applying for Step 2 accommodations are [here](#).

2. The Step 2 examination should be taken upon completion of the M3 year. The deadline for taking the Step 2 examination is December 20 of the fall M4 semester for students graduating in May and August 31 for students graduating off-cycle in December. Students are highly encouraged to take the exam in time to have the score back for the ERAS application release in late September. Any exceptions to the scheduling portion of this policy will need to be approved by the Assistant Dean for Clinical Curriculum and Assessment.
3. Students will complete the NBME Comprehensive Clinical Science Self-Assessment (CCSSA) in preparation for the Step 2 exam. USC SOMC will provide students with one voucher for the CCSSA. It is not a gate exam, therefore students do not have to pass the CCSSA in order to take Step 2. Completion of the CCSSA should occur ideally in the weeks leading up to the Step 2 exam.
4. M4 students are required to complete a 4-week, 4-credit hour Step 2 preparation course as one of the required rotations of the fourth-year curriculum. Students are highly encouraged to take the exam at the end of this rotation. A passing score on the Step 2 exam is required to receive credit for this course. Students who do not pass on their initial attempt and therefore do not receive credit for the course will need to schedule an additional rotation to satisfy the appropriate credit requirement for graduation.
5. Any student who fails their initial attempt on the Step 2 exam will be expected to complete an application for re-examination in a timely manner to allow sufficient time for completion of graduation requirements. A second failure of the Step 2 exam will require the student to appear before the Academic Review Committee. A student who fails Step 2 on the third attempt will be referred to the Academic Review Committee and is subject to dismissal from USC SOMC.

Contacts

Assistant Dean of Pre-Clerkship Curriculum
Assistant Dean of Clinical Curriculum and Assessment
Office of Undergraduate Medical Education

History

Date of Change	Change
----------------	--------

11-21-24	Expanded to include Step 1 and updated procedures.
3-11-24	Moved policy to new template