University of North Carolina School of Medicine

Policy for Completion of USMLE Step 1, Step 2-Clinical Knowledge, and Step 2-Clinical Skills Exams

(This policy is effective for all UNC School of Medicine students.)

Summary of the Policy

In order to ensure a level of mastery of basic science which is adequate for clinical training and to ensure sufficient mastery of clinical science to support successful performance in internship, the following requirements apply to all medical students at the UNC School of Medicine:

- Students must take Step 1 prior to starting their first third year/Application Phase clerkship unless the Associate Dean for Student Affairs has approved a later date due to an extraordinary circumstance.
- Students must have a passing score posted for Step 1 prior to December 31 of their third year/Application Phase.
- Students must have a passing score posted for Step 2-Clinical Knowledge (CK) prior to December 31 of their fourth year/Individualization Phase or they will be subject to withdrawal from the National Resident Matching Program.
- Students graduating with the class of 2015, must take Step 2-Clinical Skills (CS) prior to graduation.
- Beginning with the graduating class of 2016, students must have a passing score posted for Step 2-Clinical Skills (CS) by the last day to certify their National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) Rank Order List (typically the fourth Wednesday of February) or they will be subject to withdrawal by the UNC SOM from the NRMP. Students with a history of academic difficulty in medical school who fail Step 1, Step 2-CK or Step 2-CS are subject to dismissal by the Student Promotions Committee (SPC).
- Students who fail Step 1, Step 2-CK or Step 2-CS three times will be dismissed by the SPC.
- All Step exam failures will be reviewed by the SPC.

USMLE Information

Information about the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) eligibility requirements, applications and scheduling, testing, formats, scoring, etc. is available on-line in the USMLE Bulletin. [http://www.usmle.org/bulletin/](http://www.usmle.org/bulletin/) Additional information is available on the USMLE website [http://www.usmle.org/](http://www.usmle.org/), and by calling (215) 590-9700

USMLE Step 1 Exam

When To Take the Exam:
Traditional Curriculum: Students completing second year in 2015 will be expected to take Step 1 in June of 2015. Students must take Step 1 prior to starting their first clerkship. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, or his/her designee could allow students to delay Step 1 due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g. participation in the summer review program). Students seeking a delay should plan to meet with his/her advisor, the Educational Resources Coordinator, the Clinical Academic Resources Director and/or the Associate Dean. This plan would include assessment through practice tests of their preparedness to take the exam and could include participating in a commercial review course.

TEC Curriculum: Students will be expected to take Step 1 in February following the completion of the Foundation Phase. Students must take Step 1 prior to starting their first rotation of the Application Phase. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, or his/her designee could allow students to delay Step 1 due to extraordinary circumstances. Students seeking a delay should plan to meet with his/her advisor, the Educational Resources Coordinator, the Clinical Academic Resources Director and/or the Associate Dean. This plan would include assessment through practice tests of their preparedness to take the exam and could include participating in a commercial review course.

Consequences of a Delay in Passing the Exam:

Students who do not have a passing Step 1 score posted prior to December 31 of their third year/Application Phase will not be allowed to enroll in additional clinical courses or clerkships until a passing score for Step 1 has been posted. Their scheduled clerkships and clinical courses will be dropped from their schedules. It may be necessary to delay graduation.

Assistance Available for Students Who Fail the Exam: Students who fail Step 1 will continue with their current rotation, then delay their subsequent rotation to create time to study for and retake Step 1. Students who have no prior history of academic difficulty in medical school will meet with the Educational Resources Coordinator and their advisor to design an individualized review plan. Students who fail Step 1 and have a history of academic difficulty will meet with the Educational Resources Coordinator, and/or Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and their advisor to design an individualized review plan. Students will be encouraged to work with resources deemed necessary or helpful. These resources may include:

- A specially designed basic science review elective
- An evaluation for a learning disability, anxiety issue, depression, etc.
- A commercial review course
- An approved leave of absence for a maximum of two years
**Consequences for Failures:** Students who fail Step 1 may find it necessary to delay graduation. Students with a history of academic difficulty in medical school who fail Step 1 twice will be subject to dismissal by the SPC. Students who fail Step 1 three times will be dismissed by the SPC.

**USMLE Step 2 - Clinical Knowledge Exam**

**When to Take the Exam:**

Traditional Curriculum: Students with no prior history of academic difficulty in medical school are encouraged to take Step 2-CK during the first quarter of their fourth year. Students who take a leave of absence after completing all or most of their third year are encouraged to take Step 2-CK within two months after leaving the clinical curriculum. Students with a history of academic difficulty will be encouraged to work with the Educational Resources Coordinator, their advisor, and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to design a review program for Step 2-CK preparation. This plan would include assessment through practice tests of their preparedness to take the exam and could include participating in a commercial review course.

TEC Curriculum (including Transitional (Accelerated) Third Year (2015-16)): Students will be encouraged to take Step 2-CK following the completion of the Application Phase, usually in April or possibly May. Students who take a leave of absence after completing all or most of their Application Phase are encouraged to take Step 2-CK within two months after leaving the clinical curriculum. Students with a history of academic difficulty will be encouraged to work with the Educational Resources Coordinator, their advisor, and/or the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to design a review program for Step 2-CK preparation. This plan would include assessment through practice tests of their preparedness to take the exam and could include participating in a commercial review course.

**Consequences of a Delay in Passing the Exam:** Students who have not passed Step 2-CK by December 31 of their fourth year/Individualization Phase will be subject to withdrawal from the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP); however, students who were withdrawn from the NRMP and then pass Step 2-CK by Monday of Match Week can receive assistance if desired from the Office of Student Affairs and career goal advisors in finding a residency position in the NRMP’s Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP). It may be necessary to delay graduation.

**Assistance Available for Students Who Fail the Exam:** Students who fail Step 2-CK and have no prior history of academic difficulty in medical school will meet with the Educational Resources Coordinator, advisor, and/or Associate Dean for Student Affairs to design an individualized review plan. Students who fail Step 2-CK and have a history of academic difficulty will meet with the Educational Resources Coordinator, and/or Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and their advisor to design an individualized review plan. Students will be encouraged to work with resources deemed necessary or helpful. These resources may include:

- A specially designed clinical knowledge review plan.
- An evaluation for a learning disability, anxiety issue, depression, etc.
• A commercial review course
• An approved leave of absence for a maximum of two years

In general, students will be encouraged to be prepared to successfully retake Step 2-CK as soon as it can be rescheduled according to their plan (usually in about six weeks.)

**Consequences for Failures:** Failure may result in one or more of the following recommendations:

• Delayed graduation
• A leave of absence
• Additional clinical electives
• A specially designed clinical science review
• An evaluation by the University Counseling Center, Department of Disability Services, University Reading Program, University Writing Center, or Student Health Services
• A commercial review course
• Other recommendations as deemed appropriate

Students who do not have a passing Step 2-CK score by two Wednesdays preceding graduation will not be eligible to graduate. Students with a history of academic difficulty in medical school who fail Step 2-CK a second time are subject to dismissal by the SPC. Students who fail Step 2-CK three times will be dismissed.

**Step 2 Clinical Skills Exam**

**When To Take the Exam**

Fourth-year students graduating with the class of 2015 must take Step 2-CS prior to the final day of the fourth-year. Students participating in the National Resident Matching Program must have a scheduled test date by December 31st of their fourth year or the SOM may withdraw them from the NRMP.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2016, SOM students participating in the National Resident Matching Program must take Step 2-CS by November 15, of their fourth year/Individualization Phase of medical school and must have a passing Step 2-CS score by noon on the fourth Wednesday in February of their fourth year/Individualization phase of medical school or they will be subject to withdrawal from the National Resident Matching Program. Students not participating in the Match must have a passing Step 2-CS score posted two Wednesdays preceding graduation.

**Consequences of a Delay in Passing the Exam**

The NBME releases Step 2-CS scores during seven reporting periods throughout the year. Students who have not taken Step 2-CS by November 15th risk having their scores released during a reporting period after the last day to certify Rank Order Lists for the Match and will be subject to withdrawal from the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP.) Students who pass Step 2-CS after the last day to Certify
their ROL and before two Wednesdays preceding graduation will have met the Step 2-CS requirement for graduation.

**Assistance Available for Students Who Fail the Exam:** Students who fail Step 2-CS will meet with the Clinical Academic Resources Director, advisor, and/or Associate Dean for Student Affairs to design an individualized review plan. Students will be encouraged to work with resources deemed necessary or helpful. These resources may include:

- A specially designed clinical skills review plan.
- An evaluation for a learning disability, anxiety issue, depression, etc.
- A commercial review course
- An approved leave of absence for a maximum of two years

In general, students will be encouraged to be prepared to successfully retake Step 2-CS as soon as it can be rescheduled according to their plan.

**Consequences for Failures**

Beginning with the 2016 graduating class, students will not be eligible to graduate who fail to have a passing Step 2-CS score posted by two Wednesdays preceding graduation. Students with a history of academic difficulty in medical school who fail Step 2-CS a second time are subject to dismissal by the SPC. Students who fail Step 2-CS three times will be dismissed.

History of this policy:
September 26, 1996 – Curriculum Policy Committee approved the institution
September 11, 1997 – Reviewed by the Curriculum Management Committee
October 6, 1997 – Reviewed by the Third- and Fourth-Year Course Directors
October 10, 1997 – Reviewed by the Curriculum Policy Committee
November 6, 1997- Reviewed by the First- and Second-Year Course Directors
February 11, 1998 – Reviewed by the Student Advisory Committee
April 9, 1998 – Policy approved by the Curriculum Policy Committee
April 2000 - Policy revised by the Curriculum Management Committee
December 17, 2012 – Policy revised by the Education Committee
June 9, 2014 – Policy revised by the Education Committee