



## **TITLE OF POLICY**

Completion of USMLE Step Examinations

## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

Establishes the USMLE Step examinations that student must complete by specified dates to progress in the curriculum and qualify for entry into National Residency Match Program.

## **RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE**

The Education Committee will review and approve this policy in odd-numbered years or as needed.

## **LCME REFERENCE(S)**

LCME 9.6: Setting Standards of Achievement

LCME 9.9: Student Advancement and Appeal Process

LCME 10.3: Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress and their Dissemination

## **HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES**

Approved by Education Committee February 20,

2017 Approved by Education Committee July 2018

Approved by Education Committee February 2019

Addendum for Step 1 exceptions approved by Education Committee April 2020

Amended and approved by Education Committee February 2021

Amended and approved by Education Committee December 2024

## **POLICY**

Students must pass the following USMLE Step examinations by the specified dates to progress in the curriculum and qualify for entry into National Residency Match Program (NRMP).

### **Step 1**

In order to ensure a level of mastery of basic science that is adequate for clinical training, students must take Step 1 prior to starting Transition to Application Phase Course unless the Associate Dean for Student Affairs has approved a later date due to an extraordinary circumstance. The exception to this is the UNC School of Dentistry Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Residency Program Transfer students whose program dictates that they can take Step 1 after completion of their Application Phase coursework. Students must have a passing score posted for Step 1 before June 30 in the designated year their cohort is expected to complete Step 1, barring any leave of absences.

Students who do not have a passing Step 1 score posted on or before June 30 are placed on administrative leave until a passing score for Step 1 is achieved. This is true of dual degree students as



well, including MD/PhD students, MD/MPH students, or students wishing to pursue a research leave of absence. Students who receive a failing Step 1 score after beginning the Application Phase may complete their current course (or the equivalent at their regional campus). However, they must then pause all additional clinical coursework to prepare for and retake Step 1. Students who fail Step 1 three times will be immediately removed from the current course and referred to the SPC for review and possible dismissal. Students enrolled in a longitudinal Application Phase curriculum cannot continue in that curriculum and must discontinue their studies and start again in a year after passing Step 1 or agree to be transferred to another campus with a non-longitudinal curriculum (pending capacity) and re-enter after a passing score has been received. Scheduled clinical courses are dropped from a student's schedule, which may delay graduation.

*See more information on Step 1 below.*

### **Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK)**

Students must have a passing score posted for Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) on or before November 1 of Individualization Phase in order to ensure a level of mastery of clinical science to support successful performance in internship and to participate in the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP) or any other residency matching program. A student is subject to withdrawal from NRMP if a passing Step 2 score is not posted by November 1 of Individualization Phase.

### **Setting Examination Dates**

Prior to setting Step examination dates, students are advised to check the USMLE Bulletin ([www.usmle.org](http://www.usmle.org)) and Score Reporting Schedule to ensure compliance with SOM deadlines. The National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) posts Step 1 and Step 2 - CK scores on average 4-6 weeks after one's examination date.

- *Step 1:* Students must take Step 1 following the completion of the Foundation Phase and prior to starting their first rotation of the Application Phase.
- *Step 2 CK:* Students are encouraged to take Step 2-CK following the completion of the third year/Application Phase, usually in April or possibly May.

### **Delays**

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs or his/her designee may allow students to delay Step 1 or Step 2-CK due to extraordinary circumstances. Students seeking a delay should plan to meet with their advisor, the Office of Academic Excellence, and the office of Students Affairs to develop a study plan that could include assessment through practice tests of their preparedness to take the exam and could include participating in a commercial review course.

### **Failure of Step Examinations**



**SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE**

Offices of Medical School Education  
Campus Box 7321  
Roper Hall  
150 Medical Drive  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-7530

The Student Progress Committee (SPC) reviews all USMLE Step examination failures. Consequences of a



Step examination failure may include:

- Delayed graduation
- Leave of absence
- Additional clinical electives
- A specially designed clinical science review
- Referral for evaluation of a possible mental, physical, or cognitive concern or condition
- Dismissal from the SOM
- Other recommendations as deemed appropriate

Students with a history of academic difficulty in the SOM who fail Step 1 or Step 2 CK are subject to dismissal by the SPC.

Students who fail Step 1 or Step 2-CK three times will be dismissed by the SPC absent a finding of exigent circumstances.

#### **Assistance Available for Students Who Fail a Step Examination**

Students who fail a Step examination and have no prior history of academic difficulty meet with the Office of Academic Excellence, Office of Student Affairs, and college advisor to design an individualized review plan. Students who fail a Step Examination and have a history of academic difficulty meet with Office of Academic Excellence, Office of Student Affairs, and college advisor to design an individualized review plan. Students are encouraged to access resources and to consider measures including but not limited to:

- A clinical knowledge review plan (Step 1 and Step 2-CK).
- Referral for evaluation of a possible mental, physical, or cognitive concern or condition, where appropriate
- A commercial review course
- An approved leave of absence (medical, personal, administrative, other) for a maximum of two years total

#### **PROCEDURE(S):**

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