

Policy on USMLE Examinations

I. PURPOSE

To define requirements for USMLE examination completion at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (UPSOM).

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Medical students

III. POLICY

All students must pass USMLE Step 1 and Step 2-CK examinations as graduation requirements for the MD degree. UPSOM will not certify a student for more than three (3) attempts at the same Step exam.

Students who fail a Step Exam are referred to the Committee on Student Promotions (CSP) (see Policy for Academic Progress and Promotion). After a Step Exam failure, CSP has the prerogative to place a student on Academic Observation or Academic Warning as per the Guide of Expected Outcomes. A student who has failed either USMLE Step 1 or Step 2-CK examinations three times will be dismissed from the UPSOM.

If a student does not take the Step Exam by the school deadline, they will be referred to CSP, and may be placed on Academic Observation, Academic Warning, or dismissed as per the Guide of Expected Outcomes.

Students must take and pass the USMLE Step 1 before beginning the Clerkship Phase (including electives). Students must obtain prior approval from the Academic Success Team in order to delay taking USMLE Step 1 as per the UPSOM Step 1 Guide. Students may start Clerkship Phase in Period 1 if a Step 1 result is pending. If students delay Step 1 past Preclerkship Course, a passing result must be available before starting either the Clerkship Phase, research, or other special program.

USMLE Step 2-CK must be attempted within two months of successful completion of the Clerkship Phase. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee must approve any exceptions in advance, in collaboration with the school's Academic Success Team. USMLE Step 2-CK must be passed within 14 months of the student's completion of the Clerkship Phase.

If a passing score on Step 2-CK has not been received by 7 days prior to the match verification date (Credentials Verification Deadline as per the National Resident Matching Program), the student will not be certified for the match by UPSOM.

In order to be approved for a research/special program or personal leave of absence after the Foundations Phase, a student must first take and pass USMLE Step 1.

In order to be approved for a research/special program or personal leave of absence after the Clerkship Phase, a student must first take and pass USMLE Step 2-CK.

IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

- Office of Medical Education
- Office of Student Affairs

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Policy on Academic Requirements for Advancement and Graduation
- Policy on Academic Dismissal and Appeals
- Policy on Leaves of Absences
- Policy on Requirements for Granting of the MD Degree
- Policy on Academic Progress and Promotion
- Policy on Time Limitations for Completing Portions of the MD Degree Program

VI. REFERENCES

- LCME Standard 9.9: Single Standard for Promotion, Graduation and Appeal Process
- LCME Standard 10.3: Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress and Their Dissemination

VII. APPROVALS

Curriculum Committee, originally approved August 2, 2021. Revision approved July 7, 2025.

VIII. PROCEDURES

The Academic Success Team provides students with guidance and resources to support student academic progress—see the Policy on Academic Remediation and Observation for a full description.

Students who do not pass USMLE Step 1 are generally permitted to complete the clerkship/elective in which the student is enrolled if more than 50% of the rotation has been completed. The student must receive a passing score on Step 1 prior to starting another clerkship/elective.

Students who do not pass USMLE Step 2-CK are generally permitted to complete the rotation in which the student is enrolled. The student may then continue in the curriculum.

The Committee on Student Promotions reviews the complete academic records of students who do not pass any USMLE exam.

As above, students must obtain prior approval from the Academic Success Team in order to delay taking USMLE Step 1—such delays would last one month (See Step 1 Guide). Extended delays require approval from the Committee on Student Promotions. Students who wish to delay USMLE Step 2-CK past the deadline must contact the Academic Success Team and may be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions.

Sanctions

Students who do not pass the USMLE Step exams may jeopardize the student's ability to meet UPSOM graduation requirements and/or obtain a medical license. Failures of either exam require review by the School's Committee on Student Promotions.