



# VCU

## USMLE Step Examinations Policy

### Policy Statement and Purpose

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The United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) is a multiple step examination required for medical licensure in the United States. In order to successfully complete the undergraduate medical education program at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, students must achieve a passing score on the Step 1 and Step 2 CK portions of the examination as a requirement prior to graduation.

### Stakeholders

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The faculty, staff, and students of the VCU School of Medicine are responsible for knowing this standard operating procedure, its contents, and provisions.

### Definitions

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**USMLE:** United States Medical Licensing Examination.

**Step 1:** USMLE Step 1 Examination. Step 1 assesses a student's understanding and application of important concepts within the foundational sciences necessary for the practice of medicine. Step 1 is taken in a student's second year of medical school.

**Step 2 CK:** USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge Examination. Step 2 CK assesses the ability of students to apply medical knowledge and demonstrate an understanding of the skills necessary to provide patient-centered medical practice. Step 2 CK is taken in a student's third year of medical school.

**AFS Course:** Advanced Foundational Seminar. This course is designed to support students by providing a proactive, structured and engaged process for preparing for Step 1.

**AFS Faculty Committee:** The Advanced Foundational Seminar Faculty Committee is responsible for reviewing students requests for extended Step 1 study time. This committee is comprised of faculty and administrative personnel involved in the design and delivery of the Advanced Foundational Seminar course.

**Promotions and Advancement Committee:** The committee responsible for reviewing students' attainment of required competencies, and the committee to which students appeal adverse actions related to advancement and graduation. This committee makes decisions about remediation or dismissal of students.

**NBME:** National Board of Medical Examiners.

**CBSE:** Comprehensive Basic Science Exam.



**VCU** School of Medicine

LMS: Learning Management System.

## Responsibilities

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**Students:** Students are responsible for adhering to all established deadlines for scheduling and completing USMLE Step exams. Students must schedule subsequent attempts for Step exams as outlined below for any failures that may occur.

**AFS Faculty Committee:** The AFS Faculty Committee will review all requests for additional Step 1 study time. This committee is the sole committee that can grant approval for delaying Step 1.

**Promotions and Advancement Committee:** The Promotions and Advancement Committee will review all students who fail to comply with the procedures for Step examinations as outlined within this policy. The committee will make decisions regarding consequences for students in instances of non-compliance with the requirements established in these procedures.

## Procedures

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### USMLE Step 1

#### *Preparation for Step 1*

- Students are encouraged to meet with their Step 1 counselor to develop an individual study plan.
  - Students in the fourth quartile are required to meet with their Step 1 counselor.
    - Failure to meet with their Step 1 counselor as required will result in a professionalism concern.
- After passing all M2 courses and prior to entering dedicated Step 1 study time, students must complete a practice NBME CBSE.
  - Results from the practice CBSE will be reported to the students Step 1 counselor.
- Students must successfully complete all M2 coursework, including remediation exams, prior to entering dedicated study time and taking Step 1.
- The Associate Dean of Pre-Clinical Medical Education will announce specific deadlines for successful completion of Step 1 at the beginning of each new academic year.
  - These deadlines will be posted to the academic calendar within the LMS.

#### *Delay of Step 1*

- Students must take Step 1 prior to the start of Transitions to M3 Clerkships.
- Students who are unable to take Step 1 by required timeline must submit a request for delay.
  - Written requests for delay must be submitted to the student's Step 1 counselor.
  - The Step 1 counselor will advance the request to the AFS Faculty Committee for review.
    - The AFS Faculty Committee will review these requests and provide a decision that either grants the student extended study time prior to taking Step 1 or requires the student to complete Step 1 by the originally required timeline.



- If a request for delay is granted, the student will automatically be enrolled into the Advanced Foundational Seminar Course.
  - Any student who fails to take Step 1 by the end of the additional allotment of preparatory time will be required to take a leave of absence **and** will not be allowed to begin their M3 curriculum until the following academic year.
- Failure to receive approval for a delay of Step 1 from the AFS Faculty Committee **and** take Step 1 within the required timeframe will result in the student being referred to the Promotions and Advancement Committee.
  - The Promotions and Advancement Committee will determine appropriate consequences for failure to comply with this policy, which may include dismissal from the institution.

### *Step 1 Failures*

- Students who do not pass Step 1 on their first attempt will be placed on academic probation and be required to take a leave of absence.
- During this time, students will have up to two (2) additional attempts to achieve a passing score on Step 1.
  - Students who do not achieve a passing score on Step 1 after a total of three (3) attempts will be immediately dismissed from the institution.
- Students who have failed their first attempt at Step 1 may submit a request for additional financial aid funds to be used for completion of a Step 1 preparation course.
  - Written requests for additional funds must be submitted to the financial aid office.
  - Students may only request additional financial aid funds for this purpose one (1) time. Any subsequent requests will be denied.

### **USMLE Step 2 CK**

#### *Preparation for Step 2 CK*

- Students may petition to take Step 2 CK prior to the completion of their M3 Clerkships by submitting a written request to the OME.
  - Requests will be reviewed for approval by the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education.
- To allow adequate time for score reports to be received for inclusion into ERAS applications, students are strongly encouraged to take Step 2 CK by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Students must take Step 2 CK no later than October 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Students who are unable to take Step 2 CK by the required October 1<sup>st</sup> deadline will be required to submit an exception request to the OME.
  - Exception requests will be reviewed for approval by the leadership team within the OME.
- Students should schedule their Step 2 CK test date during a non-clinical elective.
  - Absence requests will not be granted to take Step 2 CK during Acting Internships, Senior Advanced Clinical Electives or deferred M3 Clerkship make ups.
  - Scheduling and taking Step 2 CK during a time when students have clinical responsibilities otherwise will be considered an unexcused absence.

### *Step 2 CK Failures*

- Students will have three (3) attempts to achieve a passing score on Step 2 CK prior to their anticipated graduation date.
  - Students who do not achieve a passing score on Step 2 CK after a total of three attempts will be immediately dismissed from the institution.
- Students who have failed an attempt at Step 2 CK will be allowed to register for an additional Independent Study Elective.
  - Students who have failed an attempt at Step 2 CK will work with the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education and Associate Deans for Student Affairs to develop an individualized plan for remediating Step 2 CK.
  - Students will be provided additional elective time up to a maximum of eight (8) weeks to prepare for and take Step 2 CK.
    - Enrollment in this elective will count toward non-clinical elective time.
    - This Independent Study Elective may be taken prior to both a second and third attempt taking Step 2 CK.
- Students who have failed an attempt at Step 2 CK may submit a request for additional financial aid funds to be used for completion of a Step 2 CK preparation course.
  - Written requests for additional funds must be submitted to the financial aid office.
  - Students may only request additional financial aid funds for this purpose one (1) time. Any subsequent requests will be denied.
- Students who are off cycle will work with the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education and Associate Deans for Student Affairs to develop an individualized plan for successful completion of Step 2 CK.

### **Related Policies** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Review Cycle and Revision History** \_\_\_\_\_

The policy is reviewed and may be revised by the Curriculum Council as necessary, but at least every three years.

**Initial Policy Approved: 02.24.2022**

**Current Revision Approved: 02.24.2022**

### **Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards** \_\_\_\_\_

LCME Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the MD Degree:

- LCME Standard 10, Element 3