



# QUILLEN COLLEGE of MEDICINE

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

## Policy Name/Number: USMLE Policy / SPROMO-0519-003

<b>Policy Owner:</b> Student Promotions Committee	
<b>Committees, Departments, or Individuals Responsible for Implementation:</b> Beth Anne Fox, MD, MPH / Vice Dean for Academic Affairs (effective January 2022)	
<b>Original Approval Date/ By:</b> 1/19/2011 / Kenneth Olive, MD / EAD	<b>Effective Date:</b> 4/23/2025
<b>Most Recent Revision Date:</b> 4/23/2025	<b>Policy Advisory Committee Review Date:</b> 9/11/2025
<b>Date of Next Review:</b> 4/23/2028 <i>(All policies are reviewed by the Policy Advisory Committee every 3 years unless circumstances for an earlier review is identified.)</i>	

### (A) Policy Statement:

“The United States Medical Licensing Examination® (USMLE®) is a three-step examination for medical licensure in the United States and is sponsored by the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) and the National Board of Medical Examiners® (NBME®).”

The USMLE step exams assesses a medical student's ability to apply knowledge, concepts, and principles, and to demonstrate fundamental patient-centered skills, that are important in health and disease and that constitute the basis of safe and effective patient care.

- Step 1 assesses whether you understand and can apply important concepts of the sciences basic to the practice of medicine, with special emphasis on principles and mechanisms underlying health, disease, and modes of therapy.
- Step 2 CK assesses whether you can apply medical knowledge, skills, and understanding of clinical science essential for the provision of patient care under supervision and includes emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention.
- Step 3 assesses whether you can apply medical knowledge and understanding of biomedical and clinical science essential for the unsupervised practice of medicine, with emphasis on patient management in ambulatory settings. Step 3 is usually taken during residency.

Students are responsible for being aware of USMLE reporting periods to ensure a score is returned prior to defined dates.

Students are responsible for the timely application and payment of all fees and expenses related to the examinations. Information and application forms are available online at <http://www.usmle.org>.

### (B) Purpose of Policy:

As a requirement for graduation, all Quillen College of Medicine students must pass USMLE Step 1 and USMLE Step 2, Clinical Knowledge (CK).

### (C) Scope of Policy (applies to):

All Quillen College of Medicine students.

### (D) Policy Activities:

## Step 1 Exam:

The Quillen College of Medicine created the Pathway to Step 1 Success process to ensure students are best prepared to take and pass Step 1. All students must complete the Pathway to Step 1 Success process as outlined in Appendix A.

All students must have a passing Step 1 score to begin clerkships in the M3 year.

Two BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship courses will be offered each academic year; course enrollment is dependent on student readiness to take Step 1 as outlined in the Pathway to Step 1 Success process. All students must take the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course to begin the M3 clerkship year.

Students are expected to take Step 1 before the first BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course and must receive a passing score before proceeding to the clerkships in the M3 year.

If a student demonstrates adequate readiness, as outlined in the Pathway process, for Step 1 but is not prepared to test before the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course:

- The student may participate in the first BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course.
- The student will be scheduled for additional dedicated study time during the first clerkship period.
- The student should continue participation in an immersive review course and academic counseling and may request tutoring support.
- The student will not begin their first clerkship until a passing Step 1 score has been received.

Students who are determined to need further preparation prior to taking Step 1, as outlined in the Pathway process, will not proceed to the first BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course.

- These students are required to enroll in an immersive Step 1 review course, if they have not already done so, meet with academic counseling to revise their individualized study plan, and engage in ongoing progress meetings with academic counseling.
- They will not begin M3 clerkships until they have taken and passed Step 1, with the intent to join the second BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course offered in June.
- A passing Step 1 score is required prior to beginning clerkships.
- Students who do not achieve a passing Step 1 score by the second to BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course will delay the start of clerkships until the beginning of the next M3 academic year.

A maximum of three attempts to pass the Step 1 exam are permitted. Any student not receiving a passing score after their third attempt will be dismissed or permitted to withdraw from the Quillen College of Medicine. Students must complete their medical education by graduation date of the sixth year from their date of matriculation. The six-year completion is non-negotiable.

## Leave of Absence:

Any student who has not received a passing score for Step 1 by the start of the second BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course in June of the academic calendar will be referred to the Student Promotions Committee for a mandatory administrative leave of absence (LOA) to study and take Step 1 before proceeding in their medical education.

- During a LOA, financial aid is not available per federal regulations.
- Delays in taking and passing Step 1 exams can result in delayed graduation to December or may require the student to join the next graduating class the following year.
- Any student who must take a LOA at this time will be required to submit a study plan to the Student Success Committee and the Student Promotions Committee.

Students granted a leave of absence are required to: 1) submit a passing Step 1 score to return from the leave of absence (USMLE exam results are typically available two to four weeks after the test date) and 2) complete the MD degree by the sixth graduation date following their date of matriculation.

### Repeating Step 1:

If a student has taken the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course, proceeds to the first clinical clerkship, and does not receive a passing score on the first attempt, the student will immediately be withdrawn from the clerkship. The student will not be permitted to proceed to additional clinical clerkships until a passing Step 1 score has been achieved and will be enrolled in a Study Skills course. A passing Step 1 score must be submitted by the beginning of the fourth clerkship of the academic calendar, or the student will be referred to the Student Promotions Committee for a mandatory administrative LOA to study for, take, and pass Step 1.

If a student has not yet taken the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course and does not receive a passing score on the first attempt, the student will have the option to take a second attempt to pass Step 1 if this can be done prior to the second BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course. If the student takes Step 1 before the course, the student may proceed to the second BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course while awaiting the results. A student is not permitted to proceed to clinical clerkships until a passing Step 1 score has been achieved on the second attempt.

A second failure on Step 1 will result in the student being referred to the Student Promotions Committee for a mandatory administrative LOA until a passing score on a third attempt is received and at which time clerkships can resume.

- When a student is on a leave of absence, financial aid is not available per federal regulations
- Graduation may be delayed

### Step 2 Exam:

Students are strongly encouraged to take Step 2 CK at the beginning of their final clinical year. Students are required to take Step 2 CK at least once eight months prior to their graduation date to ensure the score is available for the residency application for Match. This also allows a student time to retake the Step 2 examination prior to the rank order list deadline should they be unsuccessful on their first attempt.

Any student requesting to delay their first attempt of Step 2 CK for extraordinary circumstances must meet with the Vice Dean of Academic Affairs at least 30 days before the required deadline. A decision to delay will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Any delay or failure of the Step 2 CK examination may impact a student's ability to participate in the residency match program and may delay graduation.

Students have three attempts to obtain a passing score on the Step 2 examination or they will be dismissed or permitted to withdraw from the Quillen College of Medicine.

The Director of Tri-TRAILS will discuss with each student enrolled in the accelerated pathway program the timing of Step 2 CK in consultation with their chosen ETSU residency program. If any student wishes to match into a program outside of ETSU during the residency match, the Director of Tri-TRAILS will provide guidance as to timing of the initial Step 2 examination to be eligible for interviews and rank list submission for external residency programs.

The Student Success Committee and/or the Student Promotions Committee, in consultation with Academic Support Services, may mandate a student to take an external step preparation course if they receive a failure or cannot make progress toward taking the step examination. The Financial Aid Office can amend the student's financial aid package to accommodate the reasonable costs, to include travel and the cost of the course.

### Leave of Absence:

Students requesting a leave of absence after the M3 Clerkship year are to: 1) provide the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs with a study plan outline and 2) present the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs with periodic reports of Comprehensive Basic Science Exam Self Assessments results indicating the student's progress toward preparedness to sit for the exam.

Students granted a leave of absence are required to: 1) submit a passing Step 2 score to return from the leave of absence

and 2) complete the MD degree by the sixth graduation date following their date of matriculation.

The National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) determines the passing score for Step 2 CK and sets rules for eligibility for the exam. This body also sets all policy regarding repeats of any step of the exam and the frequency of any repeats. Both passing scores and rules regarding repeats change occasionally and all students should be familiar with the current policy. This information is available through the USMLE website at [www.usmle.org](http://www.usmle.org)

Step 1 and Step 2 exams:

Potential Consequences of Delaying Step Exams:

- Being placed on a leave of absence;
- Being ineligible to receive financial aid;
- Delayed beginning of the M3 or M4 year. All required third-year clerkships must be completed before beginning clinical requirements of the fourth year;
- Delayed Graduation date;
- Dismissal for not being able to complete the MD degree by the sixth graduation date following their date of matriculation, including any leaves of absence.

## Appendix A

### Pathway to Step 1 Success Process

Quillen COM is taking the following steps to ensure students are best prepared to take and pass Step 1:

The Comprehensive Basic Science Exam (CBSE) will be used to help determine the plan of study.

1. Any student who must participate in the remediation of any part of a course such as a retake of the NBME CAS examination(s) or retake a course(s) between the M1 and M2 year, will not participate in the end of M1 year CBSE but rather concentrate on completing pre-clerkship courses. These students will be given the CBSE at the completion of their remediation, prior to the start of the M2 year.
2. Every student, except as listed above, must take the CBSE exams when scheduled. No excused absences will be permitted. No make-up testing will be available to any student who misses a CBSE exam, however, the student may purchase a self-assessment to determine their progress toward Step 1 success. The CBSE becomes the target for progressing on the Pathway to Step 1.
3. M1 year: May CBSE 1 exam:
  - a. CBSE 1 exam to be given at the end of the spring semester.
  - b. If score is  $< 40\%$ , the student will be referred to an academic counselor for the development of individualized educational assignments targeted for content previously covered to complete weekly over the summer break (Identify modules or review content such as Boards and Beyond and Amboss). Weekly quizzes, or other formative evaluation methods, may be required in addition to other assignments or evaluation methods.
  - c. If CBSE 1 score is  $\geq 40\%$ , the student will be provided with recommendations for summer study by academic counseling.
4. There will be two CBSE exams in the Fall semester of the M2 year.
  - a. Should a student perform exceptionally well (meet targets indicating a 99% chance of passing Step 1) on multiple NBME assessments, they may consult academic counseling and the Vice Dean of Academic Affairs to request sitting for and taking Step 1.
  - b. Early requests to take Step 1 will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Additional stipulations may be required before approval will be given.
  - c. No student will be allowed to sit for Step 1 prior beginning the M2 year.
5. CBSE 2 will be given after the M2 fall break
  - a. If score is  $\geq 70\%$  on two CBSE exams, the student will be permitted to take Step 1 before the dedicated study period if desired.
  - b. If score  $< 70\%$ , the student will be permitted to register for Step 1 but may not take the exam until receiving recommendations to sit for the exam from the Student Success Committee in consultation with academic counseling.
6. CBSE 3 will be at the end of the M2 Fall Semester, prior to the Winter Break
  - a. If score is  $>60\%$ , students may proceed to the dedicated Step self-study period and a study skills course; academic counseling and tutoring are available to the student if requested.
  - b. If score is 51-60%, students may proceed to the dedicated Step self-study period and will be required to meet with academic counseling to develop a study plan for taking Step 1. Periodic meetings with academic counseling to monitor progress may be required. A study skills class will be available to assist with test-taking strategies.
  - c. If score is  $\leq 50\%$ , students are at the highest risk for failure of Step 1. The student will be required to obtain an external course to prepare for Step 1 during the beginning of the dedicated Step study period. It is strongly recommended students meet with academic counseling during the winter break to discuss potential external courses that would meet their learning and study needs in order to register for the course as soon as possible. This must occur by the beginning of the dedicated study period. Students must meet with academic

counseling to create an individualized study plan and establish regularly scheduled meetings with academic counseling to monitor progress. Compliance will be monitored by the Student Success Committee. A study skills course and tutoring are available as well.

- c. A student may purchase a self-assessment exam at any time to measure their progress towards a successful result on the Step 1 examination.
  - d. Students must receive a recommendation to take Step 1 by the Student Success Committee in consultation with academic counseling after consistent CBSE scores or self-assessments are obtained, indicating a > 95% chance of passing Step 1.
7. CBSE 4 will be given during the 3<sup>rd</sup> (third) or 4<sup>th</sup> (fourth) week of the dedicated Step 1 study course for any students that have not taken Step 1 or are not scheduled to take Step 1 prior to the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course.
- a. If score is >50%, these students may proceed to the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course and will be scheduled for additional study time during the first clerkship period. The student should continue with an immersive review course and academic counseling and may request tutoring. They will not begin the first clerkship until a passing score on step 1 is returned.
  - b. If score is ≤ 50%, students are at the highest risk for failure of Step and will not proceed to the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course
    - i. They will be required to obtain an immersive review course to prepare for Step 1 if they have not already done so, meet with academic counseling to review and revise their individualized study plan, and meet with academic counseling regularly to monitor progress.
    - ii. They will not begin the M3 clerkships but will continue to study for, take, and pass Step 1 with plans to proceed to the second BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course offered in June.
    - iii. Students must have a passing Step 1 score to proceed to the M3 clerkships.
  - c. Students must receive a recommendation to take Step 1 by the Student Success Committee in consultation with academic counseling, after consistent CBSE scores, including NBME Step 1 self-assessments indicating a > 95% chance of passing Step 1.
8. CBSE 5 will be given after the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship Course for any students that have not taken or attained a CBSE score >50% on CBSE 4. The timing will be determined by the Office of Academic Affairs in consultation with academic counseling and the Student Success Committee.
- a. These students will be expected to achieve a ≥65% score on two assessments before being allowed to take Step 1.
  - b. A recommendation to take Step 1 may be given to students who have not achieved this benchmark on rare exceptions with extensive counseling and documentation of potential outcomes.
  - c. Any student who has not received a passing score for Step 1 by the start of the second BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course in June of the academic calendar will be referred to the Student Promotions Committee for a mandatory administrative leave of absence (LOA) to study and take Step 1 before proceeding in their medical education.
    - i. During a LOA, financial aid is not available per federal regulations.
    - ii. Delays in taking and passing Step 1 exams can result in delayed graduation to December or may require the student to join the next graduating class the following year.
    - iii. Any student who must take a LOA at this time will be required to submit a study plan to the SSC and the Student Promotions Committee
  - d. Students must have a passing Step 1 score to begin clerkships in the M3 year as per the Student Promotions Committee USMLE policy: <https://www.etsu.edu/com/msec/resources/policies.php>
9. General information:
- a. Ideally, all students should score ≥65% on two assessments prior to taking Step 1 to have confidence in their preparation and improve their chances for success in passing Step 1.
  - b. Students are expected to be prepared to take Step 1 before the first BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course and should receive a passing score before proceeding to the clerkships in the M3 year.
  - c. All students must take a BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkships course to begin the M3 year clerkships.
  - d. All students must take Step 1.
    - i. If a student has taken the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course, proceeds to the first clinical clerkship, and does not receive a passing score on the first attempt, the student will immediately be withdrawn

from the clerkship. The student will not be permitted to proceed to additional clinical clerkships until a passing Step 1 score has been achieved and will be enrolled in a Study Skills course. A passing Step 1 score must be submitted by the beginning of the fourth clerkship of the academic calendar, or the student will be referred to the Student Promotions Committee for a mandatory administrative LOA to study for, take, and pass Step 1.

- ii. If a student has not yet taken the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course and does not receive a passing score on the first attempt, the student will have the option to immediately make a second attempt to pass Step 1 if this can be done prior to the second BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course. If the student takes Step 1 before the course, the student may proceed to the second BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course while awaiting the results. A student is not permitted to proceed to clinical clerkships until a passing Step 1 score has been achieved on the second attempt.
- iii. A second failure on Step 1 will result in the student being referred to the Student Promotions Committee for a mandatory administrative LOA until a passing score on a third attempt is received and at which time clerkships can resume.
  - 1. When a student is on a leave of absence, financial aid is not available per federal regulations
  - 2. Graduation may be delayed
- iv. Any student unable to pass Step 1 by the beginning of the BRIDGE to Clinical Clerkship course and the M3 clinical clerkships of the next academic year will be referred to the Student Promotions Committee for consideration of dismissal or the student will be permitted to withdraw.
- v. A student who fails to achieve a passing score on Step 1 after three attempts will be subject to dismissal or be permitted to withdraw from Quillen College of Medicine
- e. All students must have a passing Step 1 score to begin clerkships in the M3 year.
- f. Delays in taking or passing Step 1 may result in delaying graduation to December and in some rare cases, could result in the student delaying graduation for a year.
- g. Any student must complete their medical education by the sixth graduation date following their initial matriculation. This is non-negotiable, and no exceptions will be made.

10. Student performance on Step 1 and corresponding CBSE scores will be reviewed at least every two years and as needed to adjust target scores and to provide students with the highest opportunity for success.