

United States Medical Licensing Examination Policy

Effective Date: May 21, 2013

Responsible Party: University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine's Associate Dean for Students

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POLICY ABSTRACT

This policy establishes the requirement for all UAB Heersink School of Medicine students to pass Step 1 and Step 2 CK of the United States Medical Licensing Examination in order to graduate. The policy details eligibility, time limits and number of attempts to pass each step, as well as the consequences of not passing each step.

REASON FOR POLICY

This policy establishes the requirement to pass Step 1 and Step 2 CK of the United States Medical Licensing Examination to graduate. It establishes eligibility, time limits and number of attempts to pass each step, and the consequences of not passing each step.

SCOPE

The policy applies to all students who plan to graduate from the University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine.

POLICY

All students must pass Step 1 and Step 2 CK of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) in order to graduate with the MD degree.

Students are eligible to take USMLE Step 1 after successful completion of all preclinical coursework and must sit for USMLE Step 1 to progress to third-year clinical coursework. Students become eligible to take USMLE Step 2 CK after successful completion of clerkships. If students plan to match into residency, they must record a passing score on USMLE Step 2 CK by the date the school must verify their match participation eligibility with the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP).

Number of attempts: Students who fail to record a passing score after the third attempt of USMLE Step 1 or USMLE Step 2 CK are subject to dismissal by the Student Academic Standing Committee (SASC) from the Heersink School of Medicine.

USMLE Step 1 time limits: Failure to sit for USMLE Step 1 within six months of completion of the second-year coursework may be grounds for dismissal by the SASC. Any exceptions must be approved by the SASC prior to the end of the 6-month time limit. Failure to record a passing score on USMLE Step 1 within twelve months of successfully completing second-year coursework may be grounds for dismissal by the

SASC. Any exceptions must be approved by the SASC prior to the end of the twelve-month time limit.

USMLE Step 2 CK time limits: Students with a May graduation date are required to take USMLE Step 2 CK by November 1 of the academic year in which they will graduate. Students with a May graduation date are required to pass USMLE Step 2 CK at least 1 week prior to the May graduation date. Students graduating in August or December are required to pass USMLE Step 2 CK at least 1 week prior to the graduation date.

PROCEDURE

USMLE Step 1:

- Students are eligible to take USMLE Step 1 after successful completion of all preclinical coursework. Students participating in the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) are subject to further eligibility requirements determined by the MSTP.
- All students must attempt USMLE Step 1 prior to beginning clerkships, electives, or a leave of absence for graduate school or a research program.
- Students who fail USMLE Step 1 on the first or second attempt have the option to complete their clerkship or elective in progress or withdraw immediately (Note: A grade of Withdrawal (W) may be required).
- Students who fail USMLE Step 1 on the first attempt may not begin a new clerkship or elective until the examination is retaken. Students who fail USMLE Step 1 on the second attempt may in some cases begin a new clerkship or elective after the examination is retaken and prior to receiving a passing score. Decisions allowing return prior to a score report are made by the Associate Dean for Students and the Associate Dean for Admissions and Enrollment Management and consider student wellness, academic readiness, financial costs, and anticipated graduation dates.
- Students failing USMLE Step 1 may take up to 8 weeks away from clinical coursework for USMLE Step 1 remediation (see Leave of Absence Policy). Students who require more than 8 weeks of preparation are placed on School Initiated Leave of Absence until their re-attempt (after first failure or second attempt when allowed) or they pass (after second failure) the examination.
- Students who fail USMLE Step 1 on the third attempt are immediately withdrawn from coursework and placed on school-initiated leave of absence pending a decision by the SASC for dismissal or to allow a fourth attempt. In cases where the SASC allows a fourth attempt, the student will remain on school-initiated leave until a passing score is reported.

- Students who fail USMLE Step 1 must meet with the Director of Academic Success to establish a plan for remediation, to monitor preparation, and to determine readiness for retake.

Actions related to USMLE Step 1 failure

	Status	Continuation in Clerkship or Elective	Return to Coursework
Failure of 1st Attempt	Active with Deficiency or Academic Probation* Reviewed by SASC Returned to Active in Good Standing upon receipt of passing score on Step 1 provided no other academic issues need resolution	Student's option to complete clinical coursework currently in progress before withdrawing or to withdraw immediately (Note: A grade of W may be required) School-initiated leave of absence may be required	After re-taking Step 1
Failure of 2nd Attempt	Academic Probation Reviewed by SASC Returned to Active in Good Standing upon receipt of a passing score on Step 2 CK provided no other academic issues need resolution	Student's option to complete clinical coursework currently in progress before withdrawing or to withdraw immediately (Note: A grade of W may be required) School-initiated leave of absence may be required	May return with permission upon re-taking Step 1 May be required to receive a passing score on Step 1 prior to return
Failure of 3rd Attempt	Reviewed by SASC with option for dismissal If allowed to continue, Academic Probation continues until completion of all coursework	Required to withdraw immediately from clinical coursework currently in progress School-initiated leave of absence required	Subject to dismissal by the SASC Return to coursework dependent upon SASC decision

*Status change depends on whether other academic issues require resolution.

USMLE Step 2 CK

- Students are eligible to take USMLE Step 2 CK after successful completion of all clinical clerkships required by their track.
- Students must attempt USMLE Step 2 CK by November 1 of their MS4 year. Exceptions must be approved by the Associate Dean for Students.
- If students plan to match into residency, they must record a passing score on USMLE Step 2 CK by the date the school must verify their match participation eligibility with the NRMP.
- Students who fail Step 2 CK on their first attempt have the option to continue in coursework while preparing for their Step 2 CK retake. Students who choose to withdraw from coursework may withdraw immediately or upon completion of coursework in progress (Note: A grade of W may be required).
- Students who fail USMLE Step 2 CK on their second attempt have the option to complete coursework in progress or to withdraw immediately (Note: A grade of W may be required). Student may not participate in further coursework until they receive a passing score on USMLE Step 2 CK or receive permission from the Associate Dean for Students and the Associate Dean for Admissions and Enrollment Management to return to coursework after their third attempt and prior to receiving a passing score. Decisions allowing return prior to a score report consider student wellness, academic readiness, financial costs, and anticipated graduation dates.
- Students who fail USMLE Step 2 CK on the third attempt are immediately withdrawn from coursework and placed on school-initiated leave of absence pending decision by the SASC for dismissal or to allow a fourth attempt. In cases where the SASC allows a fourth attempt, the student will remain on leave until a passing score is reported.
- Students who fail USMLE Step 2 CK must meet with the Director of Academic Success to establish a plan for remediation, to monitor preparation, and to determine readiness for retake.

Actions related to Step 2 CK failure

	Status	Continuation in Coursework	Return to Coursework
Failure of 1st Attempt	Active with Deficiency or Academic Probation*	Student's option to complete clinical coursework currently in progress before withdrawing or to withdraw immediately (Note: A grade of W may be required)	Students are not required to withdraw from coursework
	Reviewed by SASC Returned to Active in Good Standing upon receipt of passing score	School-initiated leave of absence may be required	

	on Step 2 CK provided no other academic issues need resolution		
Failure of 2nd Attempt	Academic Probation Reviewed by SASC Academic Probation continues until completion of all coursework	Student's option to complete coursework currently in progress before withdrawing or to withdraw immediately (Note: A grade of W may be required) School-initiated leave of absence may be required	May return with permission upon re-taking Step 2 May be required to receive a passing score on Step 2 prior to return
Failure of 3rd Attempt	Reviewed by SASC with option for dismissal If allowed to continue, Academic Probation continues until completion of all coursework	Required to withdraw immediately from coursework currently in progress School-initiated leave of absence required	Subject to dismissal Return to coursework dependent upon SASC decision

HISTORY

Policy Created: 05/21/2013

Approved: 10/01/2021 by UA Systems Office

Revised: 03/01/2025

University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine policies shall be reviewed periodically to determine whether revisions are appropriate to address the needs of the medical school community.