

Old DMS Policy on USMLE exams:

DMS students must take USMLE Step I prior to beginning their first clerkship during Year 3. They must also take USMLE Step II (both CK and CS exams) prior to Class Day during Year 4.

New DMS Policy (draft) on USMLE exams:

The USMLE exams (Step I, Step II CK, and Step II CS) are important steps on the way to eventual licensure as a physician, which all medical students must take and pass prior to being eligible for licensure in all 50 states. In 40 states, passage of these exams is also required for the graduate to obtain a trainee license. In addition, specific exam scores from these exams are used by many residency programs to screen applicants; rank applicants; and exclude applicants. In short, it is each student's interest to pass these exams on the first attempt, and to obtain as high a score as possible, especially for Step I.

While DMS recognizes that ultimately it is the responsibility of each student to take and pass each exam, DMS accepts its obligation to provide every student an excellent curriculum which should help each student do well on the exam, as well as counseling to help each student pass on the first attempt, or prepare for a second attempt when necessary. It is in each student's interest, and the interest of the School, for each student to perform on these exams as well as possible. It is also the expectation of each residency program that DMS graduates will have passed the first three USMLE exams prior to beginning their PGY I years. In the rare situation when a DMS student has been unable to do this, the residency program needs to know this in advance, so it can make alternate plans for its residency schedule, etc.

Therefore, DMS sets the following policy and guidelines for all medical students with respect to USMLE exams. DMS does require students to take these exams by specific dates, but does not require students to pass the exam in order to be eligible for promotion to the next academic year. The DMS Faculty, through their CSPC, determine eligibility for promotion and graduation.

For USMLE Step I

Information for students: The DMS Liaison to the NBME will brief all Year 2 students about Step I during the Fall of Year 2. This is a difficult exam. Over the past few years, the pass rate nationally has been about 91.7%, while the pass rate for DMS Year 2 students has been about 96.7%. DMS students, on average, perform about 6 NBME points better than the national cohort of Year 2 students. In the past few years, our experience has been that between 1 and 4 students fail the exam on their first attempt.

Preparation: The Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education works with the Director of Learning Services to help the Year 2 curriculum representatives set up an appropriate board review course during the spring of Year 2, and to provide further advice about

preparation for the exam. DMS may also help arrange specific practice exams on site. Ultimately, it is each student's responsibility to design a preparation plan for this important exam.

Special attention for highest risk students: Over the past few years, review of student performance has revealed that those students in the lowest 10% of the class in terms of performance on Year 2 courses are at highest risk of failure of Step I. Virtually without exception, each student who has failed on the first attempt has struggled with Year 2 exams. This is not surprising, since Year 2 exams are in the style of the USMLE exams, and SBM material comprises a large fraction of Step I material. The Director of SBM will counsel these students about their specific study plans, and will work with the Assistant Dean of Clinical Education to help arrange additional study time, if that is requested by the student.

Dates and deadlines: All DMS students must take Step I prior to beginning their first clerkship at DMS. Scores are usually reported back to the student 6-8 weeks later (usually while the first clerkship is underway).

Remediation for students who fail: In the unusual situation that a student fails this exam, the student should discuss scheduling and remediation plans with the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education and the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education as soon as the failure is reported. A study period and a second attempt at the exam must be scheduled by April 15 of Year 3, in order to permit results to return in a timely fashion, and to permit adequate counseling concerning Year 4 schedules and residency applications.

For USMLE Step II CK and II CS:

Information for students: The DMS Liaison to the NBME will brief all Year 3 students about the two Step II exams during the late Spring of Year 3. Step II CK has been a difficult exam. Over the past few years, the pass rate nationally has been about 94.9%, while the pass rate for DMS Year 4 students has been about 95.9%. DMS students, on average, perform about 5 NBME points better than the national cohort of Year 4 students. In the past few years, our experience has been that between 0 and 6 students fail the Step II CK exam on their first attempt. The Step II CS exam is new. Last year the national pass rate was about 96%, and the DMS pass rate was 99%.

Preparation: The ICE course during Year 3 incorporates a number of specific sessions designed to help students prepare for Step II CK in areas not covered by individual clerkships. The OSCE experiences as part of ICE are designed in part to help students prepare for the Step II CS exam. Ultimately, it is each student's responsibility to design a preparation plan for this important exam.

Special attention for highest risk students: Over the past few years, review of student performance has revealed that those students in the lowest 10% of the class in terms of performance on Year 2 courses, and in terms of ongoing difficulty with Year 3 clerkship exams, are at highest risk of failure of Step II CK. Virtually without exception, each student who has failed on the first attempt had struggled earlier with Year 2 and Year 3 final exams. This is not surprising, since Year 2 and most Year 3 exams are in the style of the USMLE exams, and SBM material comprises a large fraction of Step II material. The Assistant Dean for Clinical Education will counsel these Year 4 students about their

specific study plans, and will help arrange additional study time, if that is requested by the student.

Dates and deadlines: All DMS students must take Step II CK and Step II CS by December 1 of their fourth year. Scores are usually reported back to the student 6-8 weeks later for Step II CK, and usually 12 weeks later for Step II CS.

Remediation for students who fail: In the event that a student fails either Step II exam, the student should discuss scheduling and remediation plans with the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education and the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education as soon as the failure is reported. A study period and a second attempt at the exam must be scheduled by March 15 of Year 4, in order to permit scores to return in time for the student to obtain a training license in advance of beginning his or her internship.