

POLICY ON USMLE and COMLEX-USA BOARD EXAMINATIONS

PURPOSE:

This policy addresses the requirement that to be eligible to obtain a medical license in the United States, candidates must have taken and passed all three Steps/Levels of either the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) or the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination (COMLEX-USA).

DEFINITIONS:

See the *NSU Graduate Medical Education Glossary of Terms* dated April 1, 2021; the *ACGME Glossary of Terms* dated April 15, 2020; as well as the *Common Acronyms/Abbreviations Used in Graduate Medical Education* last updated April 4, 2019.

BACKGROUND:

Both the USMLE for allopathic physicians and the COMLEX-USA for osteopathic physicians assess a physician'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. Each of the three Steps of the USMLE and the three Levels of the COMLEX-USA complements the others; no Step or Levels can stand alone in the assessment of readiness for medical licensure.

POLICY:

COMLEX-USA Levels 1 & 2 and USMLE Steps 1 & 2 Requirements Prior to Training:

Each new resident must have successfully completed Step 1 and Step 2 of the USMLE or Level 1 and Level 2 of the COMLEX prior to the beginning of residency training ("Residency"). Any agreement of appointment or offer letter will be contingent upon passing Steps 1 and 2 or Levels 1 and 2. Each resident is responsible for providing proof of passing Steps 1 and 2/Levels 1 and 2. Residents who have not passed Steps 1 and 2 or Level 1 and 2 by their PGY-1 appointment date will be released from their contract.

Each new fellow must have successfully completed Step 1, Step 2, and Step 3 of the USMLE or Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 of the COMLEX-USA prior to the beginning of fellowship training ("Fellowship"). Any agreement of appointment or offer letter will be contingent upon passing all three Steps or Levels. Each fellow is responsible for providing proof of passing Steps 1, 2 and 3 /Levels 1, 2, and 3. Residents who have not passed Steps 1, 2 and 3 /Levels 1, 2, and 3 by their Fellowship appointment date will be released from their contract.

COMLEX-USA Level 3 and USMLE Step 3 Requirements During Training:

1. Residents must take and pass the USMLE Step 3 or the COMLEX-USA Level 3 to be eligible for promotion to the PGY-3 level in GME programs. While residents must adhere to this requirement, each program has the ability to set a more stringent timeline and requirement regarding the successful completion of this exam.
2. Residents transferring from another program must document a passing score on the USMLE Step 3 or the COMLEX-USA Level 3 within six months of the starting date of their resident contract or the start of their PGY-3 year, whichever is later.

PROCEDURE:

1. Residents shall submit documentation of a passing score on the USMLE Step 3 or the COMLEX-USA Level 3 or provide a copy of their full medical license to the GME Office prior to the start date of their PGY-3 contract.
2. Residents are strongly encouraged to read and become familiar with the eligibility requirements, policies, and procedures of the USMLE or the COMLEX-USA.
3. Residents are strongly encouraged to take and pass the Step 3/Level 3 license examination well in advance of the start of their PGY-3 year. The recommended timing for taking the exam is before the end of the PGY-1 year.
4. Residents who have not passed the required licensing examination prior to the start of their PGY-3 year will remain at the PGY-2 level for both compensation and academic/clinical responsibilities until either a passing score is earned, and proof provided, or the resident fails the maximum number of retakes for either exam.

5. The maximum number of retakes for the USMLE Step 3 or the COMLEX-USA Level 3 shall be defined by the USMLE and COMLEX-USA requirements. Candidates failing the maximum number of retakes of either examination are no longer eligible to complete the examination and are therefore not eligible to obtain a medical license in the United States. Candidates who fail the USMLE Step 3 or COMLEX-USA Level 3 after the maximum number of retakes will be terminated from the residency program in accordance with the terms of the resident GME Agreement.

Initial Approval by GMEC on August 11, 2022