USMLE and Licensure Examinations Policy

Scope: All residents and fellows participating in University of Washington graduate medical education training programs (i.e., residencies or fellowships).

Purpose: The United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) assesses 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 complements the others; no Step can stand alone in the assessment of readiness for medical licensure.

In the United States and its territories, the individual medical licensing authorities ("state medical boards") of the various jurisdictions grant a license to practice medicine. Each medical licensing authority sets its own rules and regulations and requires passing an examination that demonstrates qualification for licensure. Results of the USMLE are reported to these authorities for use in granting the initial license to practice medicine. The USMLE provides them with a common evaluation system for applicants for initial medical licensure.

The Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination (COMLEX) serves as the equivalent examination for residents who completed osteopathic training in the United States, and the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (MCCQE) serves as the equivalent examination for residents who completed medical training in Canada.

Examination Requirements: To meet appropriate educational standards and national quality standards in preparation for licensure and certification by the American Board of Medical Specialties, trainees must successfully pass one of the following examinations:

United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE):
- USMLE Steps 1 and 2 (CK and CS) within 6 months of commencement of training in a UW residency or fellowship program, regardless of training level, and
- USMLE Step 3 within 6 months of starting their PGY-3 year. Trainees entering a UW program after their PGY-3 year must pass Step 3 prior to commencement of training.

USMLE limits on Step 3 for licensing boards:
- USMLE program: requires the dates of passing the Step 1, Step 2, and Step 3 examinations to occur within a seven-year period; and allow no more than six attempts to pass each Step or Step Component without demonstration of additional educational experience acceptable to the medical licensing authority.
- Washington: 3 attempts for passing Step 3, and a 7-year limit on completion of the USMLE.
- Idaho: 2 attempts for passing Step 3, and 7-year limit on completion of the USMLE.

Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination (COMLEX):
- Step 3 must be completed within 6 months of starting the PGY-3 year.
- Washington state does not have a limit on the number of attempts to complete the COMLEX.

Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (MCCQE):
- Part 2 must be completed within 6 months of starting the PGY-3 year.
- Graduates of Canadian medical schools must pass Steps 1 and 2 of the MCCQE. The exam is accepted by Washington state for licensure,
All appointments and promotions are subject to fulfillment of these requirements. Residents and fellows must fulfill these requirements in order to be considered in good academic standing in the program. Residents and fellows who do not meet these requirements (e.g., do not pass an exam by the required deadline) may be subject to academic remediation by the program.

Individual training programs may further institute more restrictive deadlines for completion of exam Steps or Parts by their trainees.

**Procedures:** Trainees are required to submit proof of passing examination scores into the Test Scores section of MedHub while completing the UW GME Online Application during the initial appointment process. Trainees must provide subsequent exam results (e.g., Step 2, 3) directly to their training program for upload into MedHub, or be issued a full unrestricted Washington state license within the timeframe indicated under Examination Requirements above.

Residents and fellows are responsible for registering for the appropriate exam, payment of all exam fees, and for reviewing the examination timelines to ensure their results will be available by the appropriate deadline.

Programs are responsible for making reasonable accommodation (e.g., during approved rotations) for trainees to schedule time away from the program to take the exams, and for providing appropriate clinical coverage during such absences.

**Compliance:** The GME Office will audit compliance records on a semiannual basis and provide completion reports to programs as needed.

**Resources:**
- National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME)
  - USMLE Step 1 and Step 2
- Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB)
  - USMLE Step 3
  - State-specific Requirements for Step 3 Eligibility