UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA
SANFORD SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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USMLE Performance Policy

LCME Standard: N/A
Originating Office: Medical Education
Responsible Executive: Associate Dean, Medical Education
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I. REASON FOR THIS POLICY

This policy ensures that medical students are meeting critical academic and professional milestones necessary for progression through the curriculum and eventual graduation. Timely completion of the USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 exams reflects competency in foundational and clinical sciences, supports readiness for clinical training and residency, and aligns with national licensure requirements. Establishing clear expectations and timelines promotes academic success, protects student wellbeing through early intervention and support, and upholds the integrity of the MD program.

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

To progress to Pillar 2, all Pillar 1 medical students must participate in structured advising and Step 1 preparation, meet institutional performance benchmarks, and pass the USMLE Step 1 by specified deadlines. Students who do not meet these expectations may be required to take a Leave of Absence.

To graduate, students must take and pass the USMLE Step 2 by the end of June in the year prior to graduation, unless granted an approved extension. Graduation will be delayed without timely receipt of an official passing score. Students who fail Step 2 three times will be dismissed from medical school.

III. PROCEDURES

Students are responsible for initiating accommodations for USMLE exams prior to taking the exam (recommend 2-3 months).

USMLE Step 1:

ADVISING

1. Medical Education Learning Specialist meets with the class during Pillar 1 Essentials week.

2. Learning Specialist provides students with the 'Roadmap to Successful Step 1 Preparation' and all students are encouraged to follow this.

3. Students in the last quartile of the medical school class will have regular meetings with the Pillar 1 Director and Learning Specialist during Pillar 1.

4. Pillar 1 Course Directors will continue to increase the Step 1-style questions on weekly quizzes and final examinations.

PROTOCOL

1. All Pillar 1 students will meet with Learning Specialist after the 2nd CBSE and prior to dedicated study to determine specific Step 1 study plan.

2. If a student requires a retake (remediation of final exam is exempt), they will meet with the Learning Specialist to modify their individualized learning plan.

3. Students that fail to achieve at least an Estimated Percent Correct (EPC) of 55 on CBSE #3 (2nd week December), will be required to participate in the Step 1 Prep program.

4. Students that fail to meet with the Learning Specialist will be referred to SPCC for professionalism violation, which could impact the request for a delay for extended study time.

5. Students, who have passed Step 1 by the Friday before Scholarly Activity Course start date, will be enrolled in the course.

6. Students who have not taken Step 1 by the date determined by Associate Dean of Medical Education or did not post a passing score may request a delay in taking Step 1 to participate in the Step 1 Prep program. A student requesting a delay must meet with the Learning Specialist three (3) Mondays prior to Pillar 2 Scholarly Activities Course commencing. If the

Learning Specialist supports the delay, the USMLE Step 1 Deferral form is then emailed for approval by the Pillar 1 Director, Associate Dean of Medical Student Affairs, and Associate Dean of Medical Education.

1. Delay approval

   If a student is approved for a delay by the committee, the student will be required to participate in the Step1 prep program and must take Step 1 by three Fridays prior to Pillar 2 essentials start date.

2. Delay denied

   If the student does not post a passing Step 1 score by Friday before start of Scholarly Activities Course, they will be placed on a Leave of Absence (LOA).

7. All students that have passed Step 1 by the end of February will attend Pillar 2 Essentials the first week in March. If the student does not post a passing score by Friday before Pillar 2 essentials, the student will be on a LOA.

8. Students on LOA will be required to record a passing score on Step 1 prior to re-entering the Pillar 2 curriculum (no more than three total exam attempts). It is recommended that students retake Step 1 by the end of June and are required to post a passing score by November 1 to be enrolled in Scholarly Activity Course in February. Students who go on LOA for not having a passing score will not be eligible for Alpha Omega Alpha selection.

9. MD/PhD students must pass Step 1 prior to starting the PhD phase on a similar timeline to the medical students. Students are recommended to take Step 1 by two Fridays before start of February. Students can request a delay by four weeks if needed, and if students do not pass by the beginning of Pillar 2 Essentials they will need to take a LOA.

10. MD/PhD students meet the Pillar 2 Scholarly Activities Course requirement through the PhD component of the program. MD/PhD students may opt to enroll in the Scholarly Activities Course to support the development of an additional scholarly project.

11. Students who take a delay are not required to take the Scholarly Activity Course but must complete 34 elective credits as part of Pillar 3 and have 4 fewer weeks of vacation in Pillar 3.

Three failed USMLE Step 1 attempts will result in dismissal from medical school.

Exceptions to deadlines include testing site closures and curricular adaptations related to state or national emergencies. These exceptions must be approved by Pillar 1 Director, Pillar 2 Director, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Associate Dean of Medical Education, and the Learning Specialist.

USMLE Step 2:

A student must take and pass the USMLE Step 2 as a requirement to graduate with the MD degree. The USMLE Step 2 shall be taken no later than June 30 the year prior to graduation.

This deadline may be extended for a student who is out of phase with classmates, or for other significant disruptions to their program, and approved by the Associate Dean of Medical Student Affairs or their assigned delegate. Graduation will be delayed if an official notice from the National Board of Medical Examiners indicating a passing score on the USMLE Step 2 Examination has not been received in the office of Medical Student Affairs in time to certify completion of graduation requirements.

Three failed USMLE Step 2 attempts will result in dismissal from medical school.

IV. RELATED DOCUMENTS, FORMS AND TOOLS

This policy is found in the Medical Education Policies and in the Medical Student Affairs Handbook.