

MEDICAL STUDENT POLICY

Title: Examination Policy and Procedure	
Relevant LCME Element(s): 9.4: Assessment System	Last approved: 5/5/2021

I. **PURPOSE**

Defines policies and procedures for internal written exams, NBME shelf exams and USMLE Step 1 and 2 exams.

II. **PERSONS AFFECTED:**

Medical students, educational deans, Director of Assessment

III. **POLICY STATEMENT**

Remote exams

If an exam is conducted remotely, the following policies and procedures are in place:

- All students are expected to take examinations at the scheduled time.
 - In the event of an acute illness, death of a family member, or other crisis, students should contact the appropriate individuals prior to the start of the exam.
 - Phase 1 students should call the Associate Dean for Student Affairs at (312) 503-0506 or the Assessment Coordinator at (312) 391-4632.
 - Phase 2 or Phase 3 students should contact the clerkship director and coordinator.
- Exams will be proctored remotely by a coordinator, staff, or faculty member. A report from the remote monitoring program will be reviewed for any deviation from exam protocol
- Students may not take the remote exam in the same room nor consult with anyone or use any resources.
- Use of a device during the exam is strictly prohibited except for texting the Assessment or Clerkship Coordinator.
- Phase 1: Only 1 break of 5 minutes is allowed. The Assessment Coordinator (312-391-4632) must be texted both when leaving and returning using the following format: Your first and last name, the time, and status (leaving / returning). Your cell phone must be in view of your webcam during any break
- You must scan the testing environment with your webcam at the beginning and end of the exam (including the area around your desk, T-MEAL sheet, any scratch paper, and phone).
- If you encounter technical issues while taking the exam:
 - Phase 1: call the Assessment Coordinator at (312-391-4632)
 - Phase 2/3: Contact **FSM IT support** at fsmhelp@northwestern.edu. Be sure to put "Student Exam Assistance" and your cell phone number in the subject line. Ensure you can be reached by cell phone for assistance. If you do not receive a response within 15 minutes, please text/call the head proctor.
- Phase 1: If you feel that a question is wrong or ambiguous, you may email your concerns to the head proctor immediately after completing the exam. Please identify the question by referring to the circled question number on your screen.

Feinberg students must abide by the student code of conduct (<https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/md-education/current-students/policies-services/policies/student-code-conduct.html>) and the Feinberg Standards and Suitability for the Practice of Medicine (<https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/md-education/current-students/policies-services/policies/student-standards-suitability.html>) when taking all

examinations. In addition, students are expected to report any witnessed inappropriate behavior (<https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/md-education/current-students/policies-services/policies/observed-misconduct-policies.html>).

All students are expected to attend examinations at the scheduled time. In the event of an acute illness, death of a family member, or other crisis, students should contact the appropriate individuals prior to the start of the exam. Phase 1 students should call the Associate Dean for Student Affairs at (312) 503-0506 or the Assessment Coordinator at (312) 391-4632. Phase 2 or 3 students should contact the clerkship director and coordinator.

Proctors should be present during every examination. Proctors may be graduate students, staff or faculty members.

All personal effects, including books, newspapers, magazines, jackets, hats, book bags, audio devices, PDAs, cell phones, and other electronic devices are to be removed from desk tops during examinations.

Personal breaks are allowed. If a break is necessary, the student must hand his/her exam materials to a proctor before leaving the room. The length of time during which the student is out of the room should not exceed 10 minutes. Examination time will not be extended for a student who has taken a break.

No examination questions will be changed, corrected, or interpreted during the exam. Students are not permitted to ask faculty members questions once the examination has begun. If the student feels a question is wrong or ambiguous, a note can be made on the back of their signed Code of Conduct.

The examination date will be announced at the beginning of the module or clerkship. Beginning and ending times will be announced at least two days before the exam and will be strictly adhered to. A student's signed Code of Conduct not turned in by the appointed end of the examination will result in the assessment of a penalty to the grade. Students who arrive late for an examination will not receive additional time to complete the exam.

In the event that a fire alarm sounds during an examination, all students must exit the building immediately. Upon return to the examination a revised ending time will be announced.

In the emergency situation where illness or other unexpected occurrence prevents a student from sitting for an examination at the scheduled time, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the module/clerkship director will consider the situation and decide an appropriate course of action regarding postponement of the exam.

If a student wishes to reschedule a Phase 1 examination for a non-emergent reason, the student must petition the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the Associate Dean for Curriculum or the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education in writing at least two weeks in advance of the exam, stating the need for the requested rescheduling and a proposed alternate time for the exam. The associate dean and module/clerkship director will respond in writing taking into consideration the reason for the proposed rescheduling, any history of prior requests, and the feasibility of rescheduling.

Unexcused missed examinations will result in failure of the exam.

NBME Subject Examination Policy

Students are expected to take the NBME subject examination on the scheduled day during the clerkship rotation. In the event that a student must postpone the exam due to illness or other emergency, the student must contact the clerkship coordinator and clerkship director as soon as possible. The student should

work with the clerkship director and Associate Dean for Student Affairs to schedule a time to take the examination within 7 days of the original exam date unless other arrangements are made with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

Students are expected to arrive on time to the NBME subject examination. Students who are late to the exam will not receive additional time to complete the exam. Being late for a shelf exam is considered a violation of professional conduct and may affect the final clerkship grade at the discretion of the clerkship director.

The passing score for NBME subject examinations in Phase 2 and 3 clerkships is set at the most recent Hofstee recommended passing score from the NBME.

If the student fails the NBME Subject Examination but has completed all the other requirements of the clerkship, the final clerkship grade is an Incomplete. The student will be referred to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to create a learning plan and will be provided resources for study skills as indicated. The student must retake the examination within six months of completing the clerkship, unless otherwise approved by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. The student must provide their desired retake date to the clerkship director at least two weeks in advance.

Once a retake date is chosen by the student, it should not be cancelled or rescheduled without the approval of the clerkship director. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

The final clerkship grade for a student who has failed their first attempt at the NBME Subject Examination and passes on their second attempt can only be a Pass- they will not be eligible for High Pass or Honors.

If the student fails the examination a second time, then the student:

- Meets with the clerkship director
- Meets with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs
- Will make plans to participate in additional time in the clerkship (minimum of 2 weeks, up to or including, a complete retake of the clerkship at the clerkship director's discretion)

If the student successfully completes the clerkship and passes the NBME Subject Examination on the third attempt, the final grade will be "Pass." Extra time required to complete the clerkship will be designated on the transcript.

If the student fails the NBME Subject Examination a third time, their grade will be a Fail and they will be referred to the Student Promotions Committee.

USMLE Step Examination Policy

All students must pass USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 CK in order to graduate from Feinberg School of Medicine.

USMLE Step 1:

Passing the USMLE Step 1 examination is a requirement for advancement to Phase 2. M2 students will usually take the Step 1 examination during the month of April (prior to the start of Introduction to Phase 2). Students who had M2 standing in AY 2020-21 will need approval from the Director of

Academic Support or the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to delay Step 1 until after the start of clerkships. Students who are approved to delay will need to successfully pass the Comprehensive Basic Science Examination (CBSE) to demonstrate knowledge consolidation prior to the start of clerkships. For these students, Step 1 must be taken and passed prior to the start of Phase 3 rotations.

Students who fail their first attempt at Step 1 may complete the clerkship they are currently on. Students will not be allowed to begin another clerkship until the Step 1 examination has been retaken. If the retake is unsuccessful, they can complete the clerkship they are enrolled in and will then be placed on leave of absence as described below.

Students who fail the Step 1 examination on their first attempt must meet with the Director of Academic Success to finalize a plan to retake the exam. The director will provide feedback on a student's study plan. Once the study plan has been finalized, permission will be granted for the USMLE Step 1 retake.

A student who has failed USMLE Step 1 on the first attempt must retake the examination no later than six months after receipt of the score report. If a student cannot meet this deadline, they must appear before the Student Promotions Committee (SPC) to request an extension.

If a student does not pass the Step 1 examination on the second attempt, they will be placed on a leave of absence to focus on a study plan with assistance from the Director of Academic Success. The student must appear before the SPC and request permission to retake the examination for a third time. The student will need to present a study plan and timeline to the SPC. The SPC may approve or deny the request for a third USMLE retake.

If granted permission to take the exam a third time, the student must sit for the exam no later than six months after receipt of the second score report. Failure to do so will result in an SPC appearance at which time outcomes such as dismissal from FSM will be considered.

Any student failing the Step 1 examination a third time will appear before the SPC. The SPC will consider outcomes such as dismissal from FSM based on academic grounds.

USMLE Step 2 CK

All students must pass Step 2 CK to fulfill graduation requirements. Students usually take this examination after completion of their required M3 (Phase 2) clerkships. Students who fail the Step 2 CK must meet with the Director of Academic Success to create a study plan. If a student does not pass the Step 2 CK examination on the second attempt, they will be placed on a leave of absence to focus on a study plan with assistance from the Director of Academic Success. The student must appear before the SPC and request permission to retake the examination for a third time. The student will need to present a study plan and timeline to the SPC. The SPC may approve or deny the request for a third USMLE Step 2 CK retake.

IV. REVISION HISTORY

5/5/2021: Reinstated requirement to pass USMLE Step 1 to proceed to clerkships. Changed COVID-19 addendum regarding remote examinations to "Remote Exam Policy."

1/29/2021: Removed USMLE Step 2 CS requirement.

12/3/2020: Policy regarding USMLE Step 1 timing changed for AY 2020-21.

11/4/2020: Procedures revised to accommodate change in virtual exam monitoring.

6/17/2020: Procedures revised to accommodate virtual exams due to COVID-19.

V. **APPROVING BODY:**
Curriculum Committee