



# USMLE/COMLEX STEP 3 REQUIREMENTS

POLICY 12.01.17

**The following are responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in this document**

**Responsible Policy Administrator**  
Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education

**Responsible Department**  
Graduate Medical Education

**Contact** (508) 856-2903

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## Policy Statement:

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UMass Chan Medical School (UMass Chan) residents must provide a passing score for Step 3 of the USMLE (US Medical Licensing Exam) or COMLEX (Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Exam) for promotion to a PGY3 position. Any applicant to a UMass Chan fellowship program or transfer to a PGY3 or above residency position must provide a passing score on USMLE or COMLEX Step 3 to be eligible for appointment. Applicants who do not pass Step 3 prior to their program start date as required will not be appointed to the UMass Chan program. Residents who fail to meet the promotion requirement by the end of their PGY 2 year may be terminated per provisions below but may be rehired (at program director discretion) upon provision of passing score results.

- A first failing score will be grounds for termination if no further attempt to pass is made by the end of the PGY2 year. The resident may be rehired upon passing Step 3 at the discretion of the program director.
- A second failing score will be subject to review by the program's clinical competency committee (CCC) in conjunction with the resident's evaluative file. The CCC may recommend a remediation plan that includes test preparation, counseling, educational assessment and/or possible leave of absence to prepare the resident for a third attempt to pass Step 3. The CCC may recommend reappointment without promotion at the end of the PGY2 year pending Step 3 results and set a deadline for passing Step 3. The CCC may also recommend termination if warranted by other factors in the resident's overall performance.
- A third failing score will be subject to further review by the program CCC. The CCC may recommend reappointment without promotion at the end of the PGY2 year since the MA BORM prohibits a 4th attempt prior to completion of an additional year of ACGME accredited training. The CCC may also recommend termination if warranted by other factors in the resident's overall performance.

- A passing score on the Step 3 exam is required for successful completion of a 3-year residency program.

A passing score on the Step 3 exam is required for appointment to a PGY4 position.

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## **Reason for Policy**

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Passage of USMLE (or COMLEX for DOs) is required for medical licensure. A resident who completes training but is unable to pass the Step 3 exam will not be eligible for a medical license. Many states, including Massachusetts, now limit the number of attempts permitted after which a physician may be permanently ineligible for licensure. The Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine's (BORM) licensing requirements require anyone who fails Step 3 on the third attempt to complete an additional year of ACGME-accredited training before being allowed to retake Step 3. If they fail on a fourth attempt, the physician will never be eligible for a MA license.

A licensing examination does not, in and of itself, assess competence to practice medicine but may reflect many other factors ranging from knowledge base, integration of knowledge or test anxiety and other issues. Each residency program has a clinical competency committee (CCC) that assesses each resident's progress in achieving competency for independent medical practice.

While continuation of training could simply postpone the inevitable in some cases, one goal of GME is to support residents/fellows to achieve their maximum potential. It is appropriate that the CCC make determinations about reappointment and promotion based on a full evaluation of the resident if successful completion of the Step 3 exam requires a 3<sup>rd</sup> year of training.

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## **Entities Affected By This Policy**

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- ◆ UMass Chan residents completing a PGY 2 year for promotion to PGY3
- ◆ Applicants for PGY3 and higher residency positions and all fellowship positions
- ◆ Each residency program clinical competency committee

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## **Related Documents**

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UMass Chan GME Personnel Policies

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## **Responsibilities**

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- ◆ Residents must provide passing score results of their USMLE or COMLEX Step 3 exam to the OGME
- ◆ Program Director and CCC will recommend termination, reappointment with non-promotion or reappointment with promotion and remediation plan for residents who fail to pass Step 3 after a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt.

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## **Procedures**

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- ◆ Each resident is expected to take USMLE or COMLEX Step 3 no later than 18 months after the start of his/her PGY1 year.

- ◆ Scheduling may be postponed due to extenuating circumstances with the approval of the Associate Dean for GME prior to the 18-month deadline.
- ◆ A resident who fails to pass Step 3 on the first attempt must arrange to retake Step 3 as soon as possible while taking into account the need for additional preparation or support and possible training schedule modifications.
- ◆ If a resident fails to pass Step 3 on a second attempt, the program clinical competency committee must review the results in conjunction with the resident's file to recommend next steps which may include a remediation plan, academic support or counseling. If the resident will complete his/her PGY2 year prior to passing Step 3, the CCC may recommend reappointment without promotion or possible termination to the program director who will make the final decision.
- ◆ If a resident fails to pass Step 3 on a third attempt, the CCC will again convene to review the results and resident's file to recommend either continuation in the program or termination to the program director who will make the final decision.
- ◆ At completion of the third year of training, the resident must pass Step 3 in order to be eligible for a certificate of completion for a 3-year program or for continuation in a program of more than 3 years duration. Recommendation for termination is subject to appeal per GME Personnel Policies.
- ◆ UMass Chan will file a Match Waiver Request with the NRMP or San Francisco Match for any fellow who matches but fails to meet our appointment eligibility requirement prior to the program start date.

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## Approvals

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*Deborah M. DeMarco*

Responsible Policy Administrator  
Deborah DeMarco, Assoc Dean for  
Graduate Medical Education

March 2003

Date  
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