

Table. Current and Future United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE)

	Step 1	Step 2, Clinical Knowledge	Step 2, Clinical Skills	Step 3	
Current USMLE					
Primary focus of content	Foundational science	Clinical science: emphasis on competencies leading to diagnosis	Clinical skills	Clinical science: emphasis on competencies in management	
Formats	MCQs	MCQs	Standardized patients	MCQs, CCS	
Timing ^a	End of 2nd year of medical school	4th year of medical school	4th year of medical school	Mid-1st to 3rd year of residency	
Recent key changes	All MCQs use a clinical or experimental vignette; interpretation of heart sounds; reduce number of medical “buzz words”	Interpretation of heart sounds; introduction of scientific abstracts and pharmaceutical advertisements	New communication and interpersonal skills scale; notes require integration of case findings; history checklist eliminated	Interpretation of heart sounds; introduction of foundational science and abstracts and advertisements	
Future USMLE^b					
	Step 1	Step 2, Clinical Knowledge	Step 2, Clinical Skills	Step 3A: Foundations of Independent Practice	Step 3B: Advanced Clinical Management
Primary focus of content	Foundational science and clinical science: diagnosis and preventive care ^b	Clinical science: management; communication skills; EBM; patient safety; professionalism ^b	Clinical skills	Foundational science; communication skills; EBM; patient safety; professionalism	Clinical science: emphasis on competencies in management
Formats	MCQs	MCQs, possibly CCS short cases	Standardized patients	MCQs	MCQs, CCS
Timing ^a	Unknown	Unknown	Likely 4th year of medical school	Mid-1st to 3rd year of residency	Mid-1st to 3rd year of residency
Key changes	Increase in clinical medicine content ^b	Emphasis on competencies other than patient care and medical knowledge; more emphasis on clinical skills ^b	Advanced communication (eg, delivering bad news, counseling) ^b	Significant increases in EBM, foundational science, communication skills, and patient safety	More emphasis on clinical skills

Abbreviations: CCS, computerized case simulations; EBM, evidence-based medicine; MCQs, multiple-choice questions.

^a Time during the US medical education process when most students, graduates, or both sit for the examinations.

^b Step 1 and Step 2 changes will not occur before 2016 and these changes are tentative.