



USMLESM

**An Informational Overview from the
Federation of State Medical Boards &
National Board of Medical Examiners**

December 2024

Topics

- What is USMLE?
- Why is USMLE important?
- How is USMLE governed?
- How is the exam developed?
- How is the pass/fail standard determined?
- What enhancements to USMLE are being explored?
- How can I get more information or data?

What is USMLE?

United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE)

- The USMLE is a jointly sponsored program of
 - Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB)
 - National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME)



- ECFMG/Intealth is a key collaborator



ECFMG[™]
A Member of Intealth



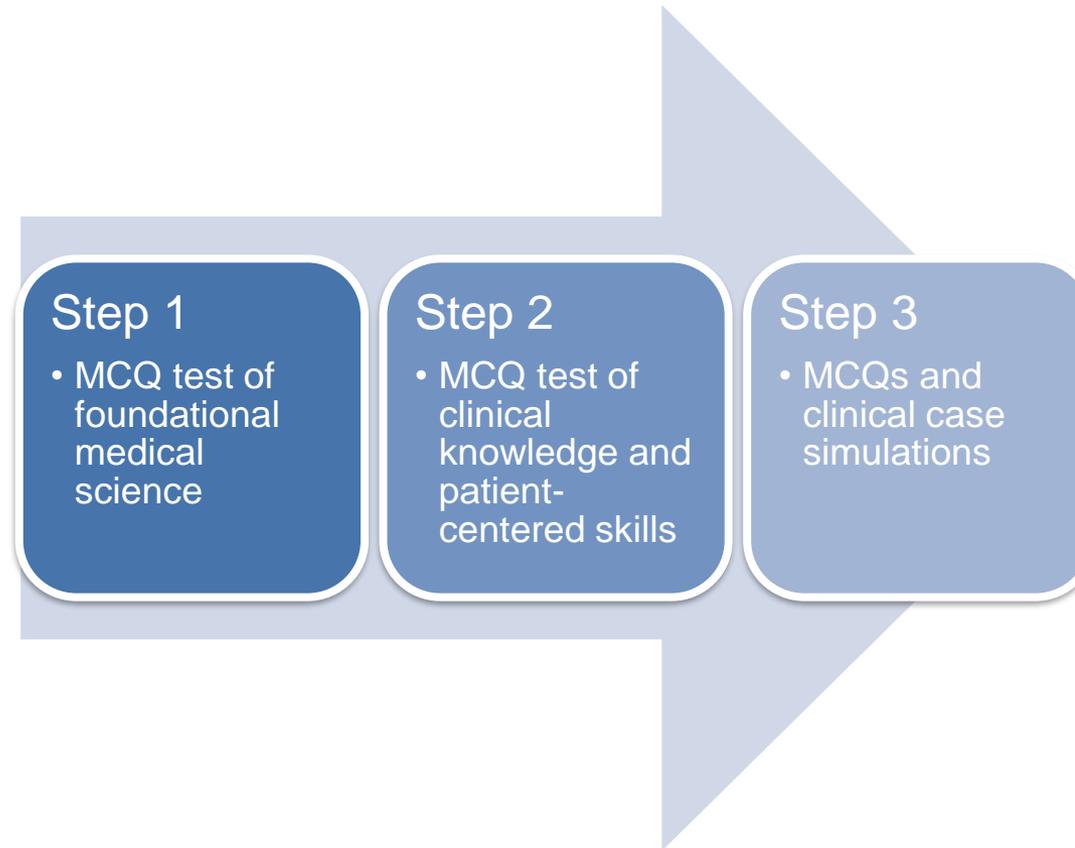
Introduction to USMLE

- Established in 1991... over 3 million test administered to date
- Single exam composed of 3 “Steps”
- Provides state boards with assessment of physician knowledge, clinical and communication skills
- As of 2023, 63% of all licensed physicians in the US have taken all or part of the USMLE sequence
 - 58% have taken all Steps (1, 2 and 3)
 - This is a 2% increase in both measures since 2022
- A required examination for graduates of accredited US medical schools granting MD degree, and all graduates of international medical schools
 - Open to students and graduates of accredited osteopathic medical schools granting DO degree

USMLE:

A single three Step examination for initial medical licensure

- Assesses physician cognitive, clinical and communication skills
- Provides a national standard
- Assists medical boards in their public protection mission
- Facilitates license portability



Comparison of USMLE Components

		Step 1	Step 2		Step 3
			CK	CS*	
Eligibility requirements		Medical student/graduate			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MD or DO • Pass Steps 1 & 2 • GME**
Test administration		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered year-round • 4 attempt limit per Step • Limited to 3 attempts within a 12-month period • 4th attempt must be 12 months after first attempt & six months from most recent attempt 			
Test length (days)		1	1	1	2
Format	MCQ items***	280	318		412
	SP stations			12	
	CCS cases				13

* Discontinued January 2021; attempts and results still reported on official USMLE transcripts

** GME recommended but not required

*** Approximate

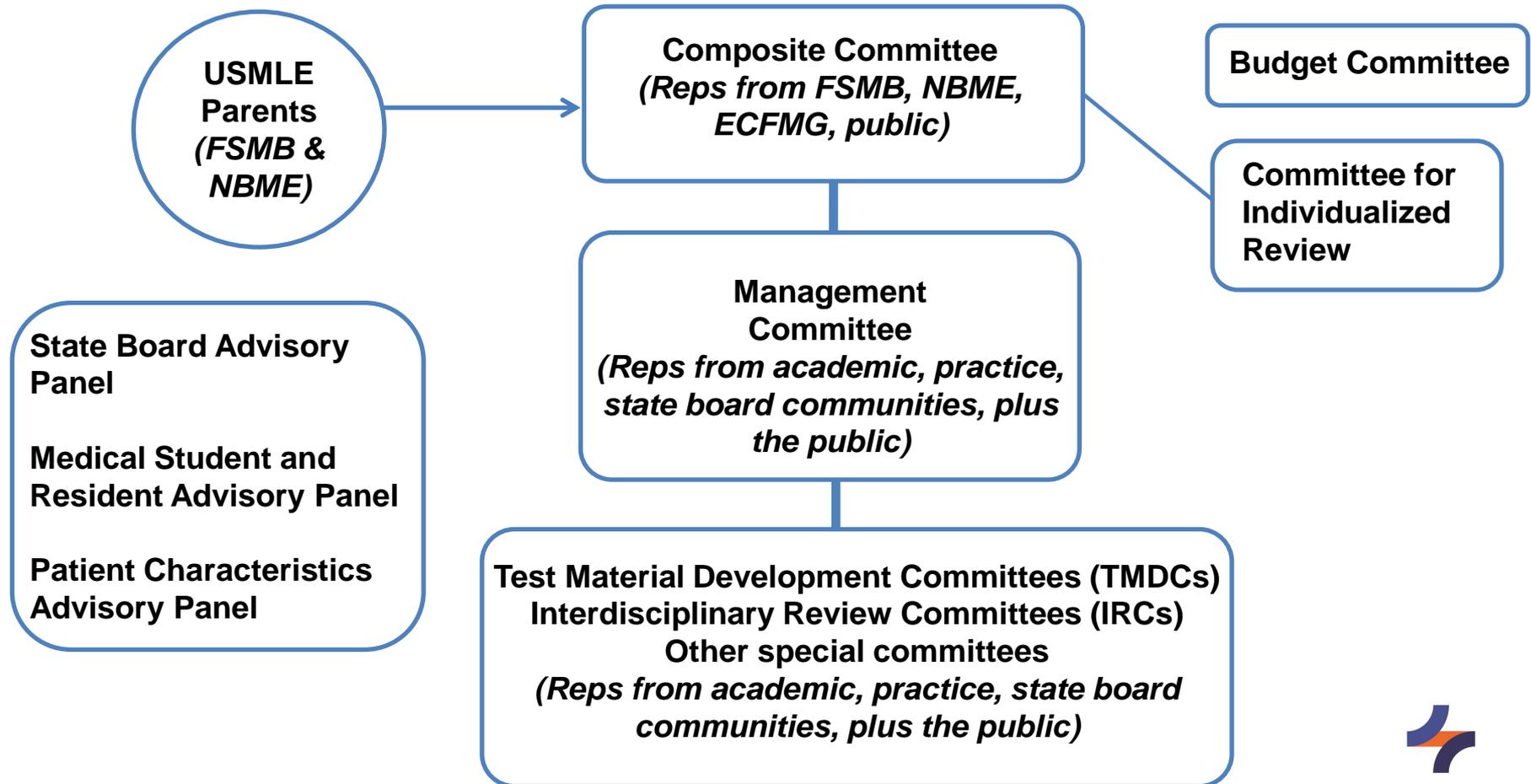
Why is USMLE important?

Users and Uses of USMLE Results

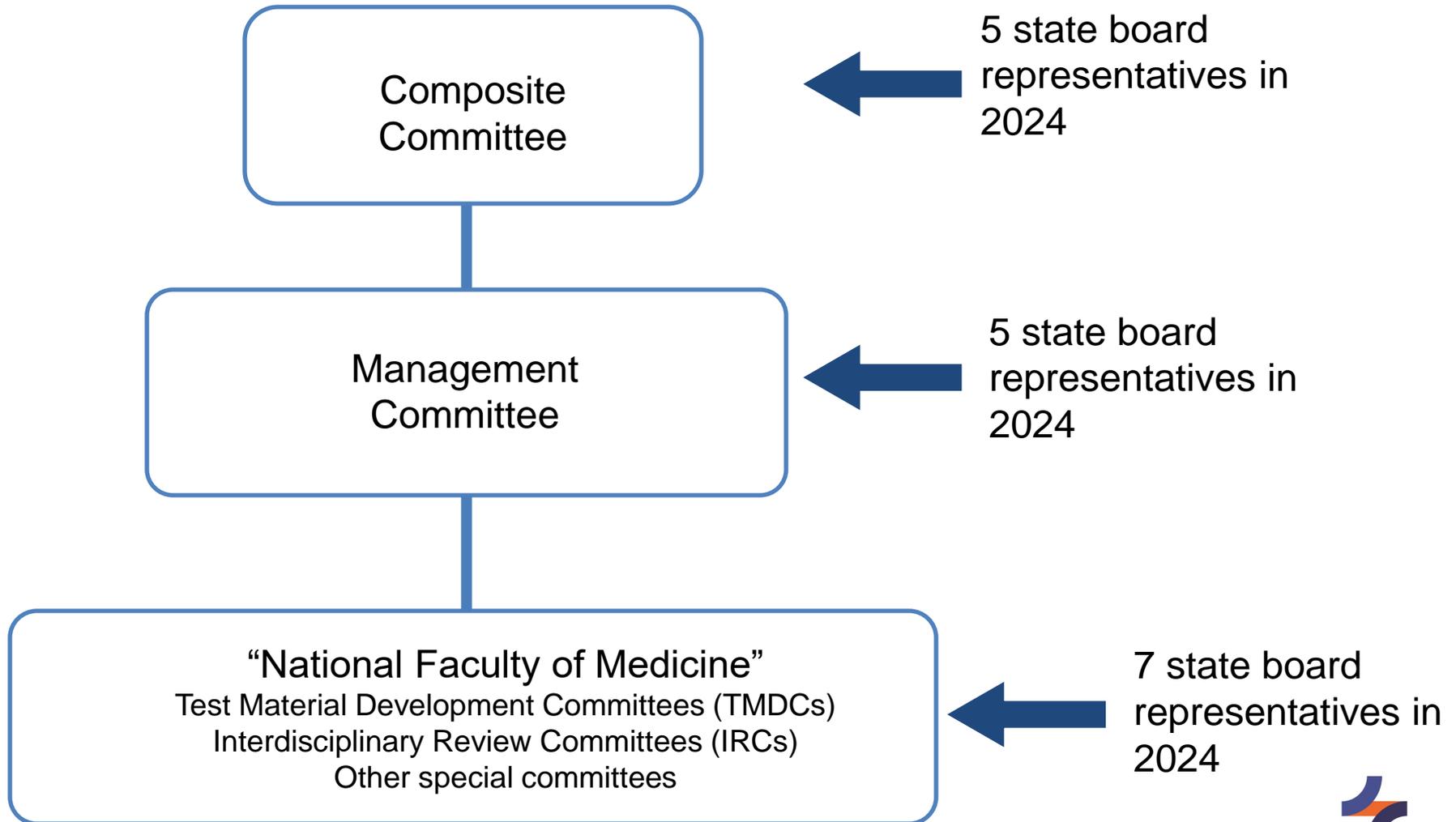
User	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Licensing Jurisdictions	Protecting the health of the public Training and unrestricted licenses		
ECFMG (International graduates only)	ECFMG Certification Entry into GME in the U.S.		
Medical Schools	Promotion & graduation decisions Curriculum evaluation		
Residency Programs	Screening for interviews Ranking of applicants		
LCME	Accreditation (aggregated results)		
Examinees	(all of the above)		

How is USMLE governed?

USMLE Committee Structure



USMLE Committee Structure



How is the exam developed?

Developing Content for USMLE

- Content is developed by a “national faculty” of physicians and scientists...
 - All volunteers
 - Drawn from the academic, licensing and practice communities
 - 400+ physicians representing specialties and expertise from across the country

USMLE Test Development

- All items and cases...
 - Are developed and reviewed by content experts
 - Pass through multiple levels of review
 - Are pre-tested prior to use as live (scored) material
- Each Step...
 - Uses multiple test forms
 - Has thousands of items (or hundreds of cases) in the test pool

***How is the pass/fail standard
determined?***

Standard Setting (minimum passing score)

- USMLE uses an “absolute” standard
 - A minimum level of demonstrated proficiency for examinees is established in advance; there is no ‘curve’ applied
- Set by the USMLE Management Committee
- Reviewed approximately every 4 years

Standard Setting (cont'd)

- Management Committee reviews information & data from variety of sources
 - Results from standard setting exercises involving panels of physician experts unaffiliated with USMLE
 - Survey input from state boards, deans, faculty, students
 - Trends in examinee performance
 - Data on reliability of scores

***How can I get more
information or data?***

USMLE Website

<https://www.usmle.org/usmle-updates-research>

- Performance Data
- Score Interpretation Guidelines
- Research & USMLE-related publications

<https://www.usmle.org/what-to-know/exam-security-fairness>

- Irregular Behavior

<https://www.usmle.org/common-questions>

- FAQs

Other Informational Resources

- Quarterly FSMB Update on USMLE
- Extensive research on USMLE has been published in professional, peer-review journals such as *Academic Medicine*
- FSMB webinars on topics such as.....
 - USMLE scoring
 - Annotating for irregular behavior
 - Communication with state boards
- FSMB publications
 - *Journal of Medical Regulation* (pictured),
eNews, *NewsLine*



USMLE on Social Media



- [linkedin.com/company/usmle](https://www.linkedin.com/company/usmle)

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a dark blue rectangular background.

facebook

- [facebook.com/usmle/](https://www.facebook.com/usmle/)



- x.com/theusmle

Key Contacts

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