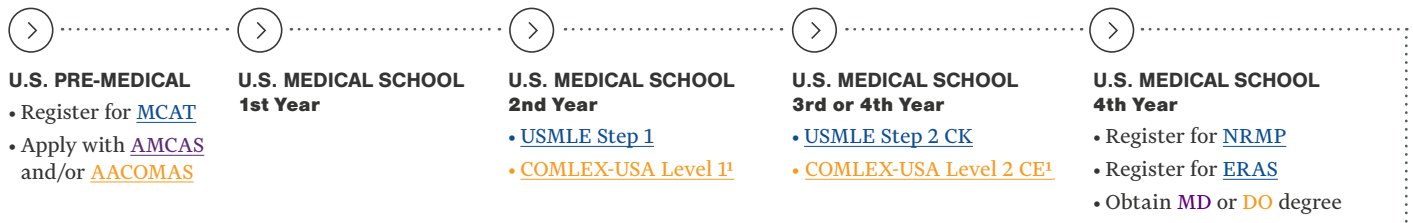


Pathway to Medical Licensure in the U.S.

A GENERAL GUIDE



MD: Doctor of Medicine
 IMG: International Medical Graduate
 DO: Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine
 MD + DO
 ALL



IMG PREPARATION FOR U.S. RESIDENCY²

- Obtain MD degree or equivalent
- [USMLE Step 1](#)
- [USMLE Step 2 CK](#)
- [Obtain ECFMG certification](#)
- Obtain Visa, if indicated

AFTER THE START OF U.S. RESIDENCY

- [USMLE Step 3](#)
- [COMLEX-USA Level 3^{1,5}](#)
- Apply for [state training license⁴](#), if indicated, or full and unrestricted [state medical license](#), if eligible⁶

BEFORE THE END OF U.S. RESIDENCY/FELLOWSHIP

- Begin to apply for employment or make plans for independent practice
- Apply for full and unrestricted [state medical license\(s\)](#)⁵
- Apply with [FCVS](#) (if applicable)
- Apply with [Uniform Application](#) (if applicable)
- Apply with individual [state medical board\(s\)](#) (if applicable)

If indicated/desired:

- Apply for [ABMS/AOA Specialty Board Certification Exam](#)
- Apply for hospital privileges
- Apply for provider status with health insurance companies
- Apply for [DEA Registration](#), if applicable
- Obtain [Medicare/Medicaid privileges](#), if applicable

ONGOING MEDICAL PRACTICE

- [State licensure renewal⁶](#), including state-specific requirements, if indicated, such as:
 - [Continuing Medical Education⁷](#)
 - [ABMS Continuing Certification](#) and/or [Osteopathic Continuous Certification](#), if desired
- If more than one state medical license is desired, apply for [IMLC](#) where applicable

¹U.S. DOs are also eligible to take the USMLE Examination.
²IMGs are eligible to train in ACGME-accredited GME programs.
³Medical school graduates may be able to sit for this exam before residency training.
⁴Training licensure requirements vary from state to state
⁵(41 state medical boards issue a resident/training license).
⁶Licensure eligibility differs from state to state.
⁷State licensure renewals vary from 1- to 3-year cycles.
⁸CME is usually accredited or certified by the ACCME, AMA, AAFP & AOA.



Acronyms

AACOMAS: American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service
AAFP: American Academy of Family Physicians
ABMS: American Board of Medical Specialties
ACCME: Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education
ACGME: Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education
AMA: American Medical Association
AMCAS: American Medical College Application Service

AOA: American Osteopathic Association
CE: Cognitive Evaluation
CK: Clinical Knowledge
COMLEX-USA: Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination
DEA: Drug Enforcement Administration
DO: Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine
ECFMG: Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates
ERAS: Electronic Residency Application Service

FCVS: Federation Credentials Verification Service
GME: Graduate Medical Education
IMG: International Medical Graduate
IMLC: Interstate Medical Licensure Compact
MCAT: Medical College Admission Test
MD: Doctor of Medicine
NRMP: National Resident Matching Program
PE: Performance Evaluation
USMLE: United States Medical Licensing Examination



Definitions

AACOMAS – The [American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service](#) is a centralized application service for colleges of osteopathic medicine in the United States through the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine®.

AMCAS® – The [American Medical College Application Service](#)®, a program of the Association of American Medical Colleges, is a centralized application processing service that is only available to applicants to first-year entering classes at participating allopathic (MD) U.S. medical schools.

COMLEX-USA – The [Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination](#) (COMLEX-USA) is a multi-part assessment given by the [National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners](#) (NBOME) to students and graduates of osteopathic medical education programs accredited by the American Osteopathic Association's Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation. The NBOME eligibility criterion requires COMLEX Level 1 to be taken after successful completion of the 1st academic year of an osteopathic medical school program. Level 2-CE can be taken after successful completion of the 2nd academic year and passing Level 1. The COMLEX-USA Level 3 is usually taken during residency training and after successful completion of Levels 1-2, though in certain circumstances Level 3 may be taken by osteopathic medical school graduates prior to beginning residency training.

ECFMG® – The [Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates](#) (ECFMG) provides a certification program for international medical graduates (IMGs) to assess their readiness prior to entering into ACGME-accredited residency or fellowship training programs in the United States.

ERAS® – The [Electronic Residency Application Service](#) (ERAS)® was developed by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to allow all medical school students and graduates to apply electronically for residency positions in accredited U.S. programs of graduate medical education.

FCVS – The [Federation Credentials Verification Service](#), a service of the [Federation of State Medical Boards](#), establishes a permanent, lifetime repository of primary-source verified core credentials (medical education, postgraduate training, examination history, board action history, board certification and identity) for physicians and physician assistants. This repository can be forwarded, at the applicant's request, to nearly any state medical board, hospital, health care facility or other entity.

IMLC – The [Interstate Medical Licensure Compact](#) offers a new, voluntary expedited pathway to licensure for qualified physicians who wish to practice in multiple states. While making it easier for physicians to obtain licenses to practice in multiple states, the Compact strengthens public protection by enhancing the ability of states to share investigative and disciplinary information. The Compact is being implemented in a growing number of states, with others expected to adopt it soon.

MCAT® – The [Medical College Admission Test](#)® is a standardized, multiple-choice examination designed to assess the examinee's problem solving, critical thinking, knowledge of science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine. A new version of the test is expected in 2015.

ABMS Continuing Certification – [Continuing certification](#) is an ongoing program that embodies a lifelong dedication to professional growth and excellence as well as a commitment to the ABMS/ACGME Core Competencies. ABMS approved new Standards for Continuing Certification in 2021. The Standards – which will be effective January 1, 2024 – provide a framework for certification programs that meaningfully engage physicians in activities relevant to their practice and that ensure physicians have the knowledge, judgment, and skills to provide excellent patient care. The Standards also maintain the social contract between the medical profession and the public to improve the quality, safety, and value of health care.

NRMP® – The [National Resident Matching Program](#) provides a uniform date of appointment to positions in graduate medical education (GME). It provides an impartial venue for matching applicants' and programs' preferences for each other consistently.

OCC – The [American Osteopathic Association](#) (AOA) Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists consists of 18 specialty-certifying boards. Effective in 2013, each AOA specialty certifying board requires an [Osteopathic Continuous Certification](#) (OCC) process for all doctors of osteopathic medicine (DOs) with time-limited certifications. OCC runs on a 6-10 year cycle depending upon the specific specialty board.

UA – The [Uniform Application](#), a service of the [Federation of State Medical Boards](#), is a Web-based application that standardizes, simplifies and streamlines the licensure application process for MDs, DOs and Residents. Applicants fill out the online UA once and then use it whenever they apply for a license in another state for the rest of their careers. The UA is a standard licensure application form that serves as the core of a state's license application without replacing unique state-level requirements, which are collected and submitted via a state-specific addendum.

USMLE® – The [United States Medical Licensing Examination](#)® (USMLE®) is a jointly sponsored program of the [Federation of State Medical Boards](#) and the [National Board of Medical Examiners](#)®. The USMLE is open to students/graduates of accredited medical school programs issuing the MD or DO degree and to students/graduates of international medical schools eligible for certification by the ECFMG. In general, Step 1 is usually taken at the end of the 2nd academic year of medical school; Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) is generally taken before the end of the 3rd academic year. Most examinees take Step 3 within the first 18 months of residency training, though under certain circumstances some IMGs and U.S. medical school graduates may take Step 3 prior to beginning residency training.



More information is available at www.fsmb.org.
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This document identifies the various pathways for licensure recognized by state laws and does not constitute an endorsement of a specific program or examination.