

University of Queensland/Ochsner Clinical School

USMLE Step 1 Study Plan for MD: 2017

Introduction

In order to be licensed in the United States, physicians must pass the United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE). The exam is divided into four distinct parts: the Step 1 Exam; and the Step 2 Exam, consisting of the Clinical Skills and Clinical Knowledge Exams, and the Step 3 Exam. The Step 1 Exam is a multiple-choice exam typically taken after the first two years of medical school, before the beginning of Phase 2. The Step 2 Clinical Skills Exam is an objective, structured clinical exam given at several sites across the United States. The Clinical Knowledge Exam is a clinically focused multiple-choice exam. The two parts of the Step 2 Exam should be taken no later than May of a medical student's fourth year of school. The Step 3 exam must be taken during the internship year.

The USMLE website is an important reference that students should refer to regularly (www.usmle.org). Another very important resource is Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates website (www.ecfm.org) which will direct you appropriately as a University of Queensland student.

The University of Queensland (UQ) and the Ochsner Clinical School have developed this study plan with the input of prior students who were successful on the Step 1 examination in an effort to support you in the successful completion of this important milestone. The Step 1 Exam is the most difficult of the three components of USMLE licensing process. Preparation for this exam should begin from the first day you begin your studies at UQ. **It is impossible to do well on the Step 1 Exam if you wait to begin your preparations one or two months before the test.**

Successful students from prior years have emphasized the relevance of the UQ curriculum to Step 1 study. In fact, data from classes ahead of you show clearly that scores on the clinical science courses correlate directly with step 1 scores. Striving for a high score in these courses will help with your step 1 study. Align your study plan with your UQ curriculum during the first two years. Classroom work will help solidify and clarify topics that you are reviewing in the USMLE resources.

Study Resources

Resources listed below are divided into essential resources, which you must completely master, and secondary resources, which include those books that are excellent resources in order to learn more in those areas in which you may be somewhat weaker. You should also be aware that textbooks are very expensive and occasionally not readily available in Australia; you may wish to consider purchasing these in the US where practical. The Book Depository (www.bookdepository.com) is a good site to obtain references and texts while in Australia, and many good texts are available electronically through the UQ library. (http://guides.library.uq.edu.au/medicine/clinical_science)

UQ will provide First Aid for USMLE Step 1 and Becker eCoach (consisting of the eBook and QBank) for a 24-month subscription in your first year. A six-month subscription to the UWorld QBank will be available for you beginning in June of your second year.

Essential text resources:

First Aid for USMLE Step 1 - this is the **key text** that most effectively covers all areas tested

BRS Physiology

Rapid Review Pathology (Goljan)

Rapid Review Biochemistry (or Lippincott's Biochemistry – much more detailed)

Clinical Microbiology Made Ridiculously Simple

Essential question bank resources:

UWorld (6 month subscription)

Becker eBook

Becker QBank

USMLE Rx Qbank (optional)

Video Lectures:

Pathoma

Doctors in Training (DiT)

USMLE Rx

Sketchy Micro is a subscription resource that many students have found to be useful.

Secondary resources: (you may need to copy and paste the URLs into a browser)

USMLE Step 1 Secrets <https://www-clinicalkey-com-au.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/#!/browse/book/3-s2.0-C20100662018>

Firecracker <http://www.firecracker.me/product/firecracker-md>

Guyton and Hall Textbook of Medical Physiology <https://www-clinicalkey-com-au.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/#!/browse/book/3-s2.0-C20120065131>

Robbins Basic Pathology (9e) <https://www-clinicalkey-com-au.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/#!/browse/book/3-s2.0-C20090630105>

The Big Picture: Gross Anatomy

<http://accessmedicine.mhmedical.com.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/book.aspx?bookid=381>

Neuroanatomy: An Illustrated Colour Text (5e) <https://www-clinicalkey-com-au.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/#!/browse/book/3-s2.0-C20120032024>

The Developing Human (10e) <https://www-clinicalkey-com-au.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/#!/browse/book/3-s2.0-C20130098490>

Medical Pharmacology at a Glance (8e)

http://search.library.uq.edu.au/61UQ:61UQ_All:61UQ_ALMA51164962390003131

Review of Medical Microbiology and Immunology (13e)

<http://accessmedicine.mhmedical.com.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/book.aspx?bookid=1023>

A Primer of Clinical Psychiatry (2e) <https://www-clinicalkey-com-au.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/#!/browse/book/3-s2.0-C20120012112>

Timeline for Study

Year 1

During Year 1 at UQ, your study plan should coordinate USMLE study using First Aid for Step 1 and the Becker eBook with the particular topic you are studying that week. The Becker QBank should be used intermittently to help assess your grasp of the material. Attend and actively participate in all your case-based learning tutorials.

Dr Lionel Raymon's four live first-year Becker tutorials will correlate those components of your UQ curriculum with systematic study of those areas particularly pertinent to the Step 1 exam. Many students find that it is helpful to join a study group to aid with your case-based learning (CBL) and preparation for the step 1 exam.

Year 2

During Year 2, you will steadily intensify your study preparations for the Step 1 exam that you will sit at the end of the year. Your review of USMLE topics should again be coordinated on a weekly basis with those topics covered in your Year 2 Clinical Science curriculum. Coordinate your UQ study with First Aid for USMLE Step 1, Becker eBook, the Becker QBank, and UWorld QBank.

The Step 1 exam is about eight hours long and requires prolonged mental and physical concentration. For this reason, you should train for this endurance event by also sitting for 3 eight-hour simulated exams from the UWorld questions. These 3 eight-hour exams should be performed under test-like conditions during the six to eight weeks prior to your test date. Consider making a list of "stupid mistakes" which you have found that you consistently make and bring this with you to the exam site to review up until the start of the exam.

Dr. Lionel Raymon's four live second-year Becker tutorials are correlated with the curriculum and are very important to attend. They will also be valuable in test-taking strategies.

Scheduling the USMLE Step 1 Exam

The University of Queensland [Program Rules for the Doctor of Medicine \(Ochsner\)](#) Program state that students enrolled in the UQ Ochsner MD program from 2017 must attempt the USMLE Step 1 examination before commencing Phase 2 of the program. Students enrolled before 2017 are also strongly encouraged to sit Step 1 prior to commencing Phase 2. A passing score on Step 1 is required to enter the Match in your fourth year. Successful completion of the Step 1 exam is also required to participate in research at OCS, to do an external rotation during your fourth year, and to serve as an officer in OMSA.

As Step 1 is not offered during the first two weeks of January, this means taking the exam prior to December 31st so that you can be settled in New Orleans for the week of mandatory orientation events that take place prior to the start of Rotation 1.

You should plan your schedule so that you can sit for the exam in the US, as scheduling the exam in Australia can be difficult due to the very limited places available. Ensure that your home environment for study is: 1) without a lot of distractions; 2) conducive to studying; and 3) near your chosen Prometrics testing center.

You need to have completed the basic medical science component of the medical school curriculum (Phase 1) by the start date of the examination eligibility period you select. The eligibility period that you qualify for in 2017 is the November to January period. This eligibility period will not be confirmed until the second half of the year, so you must regularly check the ECFMG website after mid-August and begin your application process when the

period becomes available. The Ochsner Partnership Advisor will provide more information to you at this time. If you select an eligibility period that begins before you have completed Year 2 coursework, the Faculty will not approve your application and you will suffer significant delays in your application.

ECFMG Certification

All details about the ECFMG certification process are available in the [2017 Information Booklet](#). You must read the booklet before starting the certification process. The first step of ECFMG certification is registering for a USMLE/ECFMG Identification Number, which can be done using ECFMG's Interactive Web Applications (IWA).

Secondly, you must verify your identity using a Certification of Identification Form (Form 186), which is again available through the IWA. It is important to note that you can only complete this form once the eligible test periods are opened. This date is not set, but is generally around mid-September of your second year. The Ochsner Partnership Advisor will arrange a mass signing of your Form 186 to ensure ECFMG receive your form as quickly as possible and there are no delays in processing. Further information on the IWA and verification of identity is available here: <https://iwa2.ecfm.org/gradoverview.asp>.

March-July of Year 2

No later than March of your second year, you should begin the Becker QBank. When doing the question banks, you should be sure that you understand the rationale for all of the correct and incorrect answers.

The [UWorld QBank is your best question bank resource](#), as it has many questions that are extremely similar and in some cases identical to those found on the real Step 1 exam. You should begin using the UWorld Qbank no later than July. There are approximately 2000 questions in this question bank.

Students have found that Firecracker was also very helpful as a flashcard type of resource. USMLERx is a good question bank to review as a backup to the Becker and UWorld question banks. A question-intensive study plan results in better performance than more passive study plans based on reading texts or viewing videos once you have mastered the basic concepts.

You should do questions in these question banks that relate to the topics that are covered in class and review the [First Aid for USMLE Step 1](#) textbook on a weekly basis. You should plan to review the Becker QBank at least once and UWorld question bank twice, concentrating on questions you missed the second time.

July-November of Year 2

In July, a formal practice NBME Step 1 exam will be organized by the Faculty to help you determine those areas on which to focus your study and to set a baseline from which you will continue to improve. Passing this practice exam is a reachable goal, and prior successful students who attempted to obtain a passing score have done very well on step 1. In September/October another practice NBME Step 1 exam will be administered to help you gauge your progress towards the exam and further refine your study preparations. In November you will be provided with a final NBME exam to take in your own time for use in the lead up to your actual exam.

The NBME practice exams correlate most closely with the final score on the real Step 1 exam. Do not rely on other types of practice exams as indicators of your projected Step 1 score. You should use the results of your practice exams as a guide for topics for future study. You should take at least five practice NBME exams under exam conditions with the last one being about two weeks prior to sitting for the exam. One week prior to the exam you

should also utilize the free 120 USMLE tutorial test questions which their service offers (<http://www.usmle.org/practice-materials>).

The second year final exams typically occur during the second week of November in Brisbane. You will be spending October and the beginning of November studying for your final exams for the second year curriculum and will have little time to study for USMLE. Plan accordingly. Avoid deferring your end-of-semester exams, as this will limit your opportunity to study for the Step 1 Exam.

November

You should begin intense preparation following final exams in November by completing the Becker and UWorld question banks. If you have already completed them, you should begin your second review of the UWorld question bank, being absolutely sure of the rationale for answers to the questions. Consider accessing one of the other question banks for fresh questions if necessary. You should be spending about eight hours a day studying. In the last two weeks of study, you should be answering about 150-200 questions per day as you ready yourself for the testing conditions on exam day.

You should take your third NBME practice exam after your final UQ exams. We will offer an intensive week-long Becker review course led by Dr. Lionel Raymon from the 29th November – 3rd December (10am – 5pm US EST daily). Once your NBME practice exam scores are ≥ 200 (USMLE Step1 equivalent), you should be confident that you will achieve a passing score. If your practice exam scores do not reach this level, reach out to your Society Head for advice BEFORE taking Step 1. Do not take the exam until you are ready to achieve a passing score.

One week prior to the exam, consider taking a shorter practice exam at the Prometrics testing center where you intend to take the exam. This Prometrics practice exam will familiarize you with the site, the testing conditions, and the identification requirements at the site. This preparation will help remove surprises about the testing conditions during the real exam so that you can focus your full attention on the exam and not be distracted by other events.

General advice

Successful students from prior classes have emphasized the importance of being honest with yourself regarding strengths and weaknesses. Work very hard on your weaknesses. Repetition is essential. Reflect on why you're struggling. Are you having trouble with recall questions? Make flash cards. Are you having trouble with problem-solving? Re-read First Aid or watch Pathoma, DiT or Kaplan to figure out why.

Beware internet forums like the student-doctor network and USMLE forum. While there might be an answer there, information is often inaccurate.

Be sure to incorporate exercise and good nutrition into your lifestyle during your study preparations. Relax the day prior to the exam and don't try cramming and getting yourself stressed just prior to the exam. Get plenty of rest two to three days prior to the exam. Have a plan for nutrition and fluids during the exam that you have developed from your eight-hour practice exams. Think positively! You have put in the hard work and now it is time to show off! When you leave the exam, celebrate! Your Step 1 exam is over!

Please contact Dr. G Dodd Denton (gddenton@ochsner.org) or Dr. Leo Seoane (lseoane@ochsner.org) should you need advice or have any questions. This study plan will be updated as new information becomes available.

Timeline Summary 2017

Year 1 Students 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate your Clinical Science study with First Aid and the Becker eBook Assess your progress with scattered questions from Becker Attend Dr Lionel Raymon's tutorials (Sat 25th March, Sun 28th May, Sat 19th August, Sun 22nd October 2017)

Year 2 Students 2017		
Month	Action	Cost
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4th March: Welcome to Becker Webinar 26th March: 1st Becker Integrated Cases 	Nil
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27th May: 2nd Becker Integrated Cases 	Nil
Early June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UWorld Subscriptions are distributed 	Nil
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st NBME Exam – 22nd July 2017 	Nil
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20th August: 3rd Becker Integrated Cases 	Nil
Before September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register with ECFMG through IWA (allow a minimum of 5 business days to process your request). Arrange your US-sized passport photos (these are a different size to standard Australian photos) – remember that these photos are uploaded to ECFMG and may be used to identify you to programs in the future, so look neat and respectable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of the passport photos will vary depending on the supplier. The easiest place to get the photos is your local chemist.
Mid - September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate your Form 186, ensuring you apply for the correct exam period (November – January), and pay the exam fee. Print your form and bring it to the pre-arranged signing day (you will only receive a day's notice of the signing day) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USMLE Step 1 costs approximately \$605. Check the NBME website for more details.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd NBME Exam – 16th September 	Nil
Mid – October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ochsner Partnership Advisor will receive a request from ECFMG to verify your eligibility to sit the exam. Any students who apply for the incorrect testing period (e.g. October – December) will be rejected and have an approximate 3 week delay in their application. 	Nil
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21st October: 4th and final Becker Integrated Cases 	Nil
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final NBME voucher distributed – date to be confirmed 29th November – 3rd December (3pm – 10pm US ET daily): Becker Intensive Integrated Cases 	Nil
By end of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit the USMLE Step 1 before starting Phase 2. 	Nil

The Final Push

8 weeks before exam date	Take a practice NBME exam
6 weeks before exam date	Take a practice NBME exam
5 weeks before exam date	Take an 8 hour simulated exam
4 weeks before exam date	Take a practice NBME exam
3 weeks before exam date	Take an 8 hour simulated exam
2 weeks before exam date	Take a practice NBME exam
1 week before exam date	Take an 8 hour simulated exam
5 days before exam date	Take the 150 question USMLE tutorial Consider going to your Prometrics site for a practice exam

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