

**VCU**

NBME Shelf Exam Scoring and Remediation Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose

The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine uses NBME Shelf Examinations to assess student performance in required core clerkships within the curriculum. These exams are designed to provide the institution with an effective evaluation tool and performance data that can be used for national comparison. To ensure consistent utilization of NBME Shelf Examinations and the application of student results on grading within each clerkship, the VCU School of Medicine has developed the following procedures.

Stakeholders

The faculty, staff, and students of the VCU School of Medicine are responsible for knowing this standard operating procedure, its contents, and provisions.

Definitions

CA: Clerkship Administrator

CC: Curriculum Council.

CD: Clerkship Director, Assistant Director, and/or Co-Director.

Clinical Medicine Enrichment (CME) Course: Remediation Course for NBME Shelf Examinations. Students with two (2) unremediated shelf exams will be automatically enrolled into this course. The length of the course will be four (4), six (6), or eight (8) weeks, and will be based on the length of the clerkship for which the student was originally scheduled following their second (2nd) shelf exam failure.

LCME: Liaison Committee on Medical Education. The group with authority to accredit medical education programs leading to the MD degree in the United States and Canada.

NBME: The National Board of Medical Examiners.

OME: Office of Medical Education.

PAC: Promotion and Advancement Committee.

SADMESA: Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs.

Shelf Exam: NBME Subject Examination is an exam used to assess clinical knowledge at the completion of an M3 clerkship.

**VCU**

School of Medicine

VCU SOM: Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

Responsibilities

Students:

CC: The CC is responsible for establishing the passing threshold for all NBME Shelf Exams.

OME: The OME will provide CD's and CA's with identified days for remediation at the Testing Center for the Academic Year.

CD's: CD's are responsible for ensuring all clerkship materials, including the syllabus, include the currently established passing threshold for NBME Shelf Exams.

CD's and CA's: Clerkship leaders will coordinate remediation exam administrations with students and the Testing Center utilizing existing shelf administration dates and identified remediation dates. The OME and Clerkship leadership will coordinate additional shelf administration dates for students enrolled in the CME course, or have outstanding shelf exams at the conclusion of the M3 year.

Procedures

Establishing a Passing Threshold

- The CC will utilize a review of national trends and currently available data to establish a minimum passing threshold for NBME Shelf Exams in the clerkship phase
 - The passing threshold will be reviewed at least every three (3) years, but may be reviewed for possible revision sooner at the request of the SADMESA or the Curriculum Council

Passing Threshold Parameters

Scoring

- To ensure consistency across the clerkships, the minimum passing threshold for shelf exams will be set using a percentile for the yearly academic norm.
 - This academic year percentile score will be used to determine the equated percent correct score for each clerkship's shelf exam
 - This score will remain in effect as the minimum passing score for the entirety of the academic year
- For all remediation attempts the passing threshold will be the same as the original attempt

Unexcused Absences

- Students who arrive late for a scheduled shelf exam may begin the exam
 - Students who begin the shelf exam late will only have the time remaining from the originally scheduled time to complete their shelf exam

- No extended time will be allotted for completion
 - Once a student begins an examination, the final score will be recorded as an exam attempt
- Students who miss a shelf exam due to an unexcused absence will receive a grade of zero (0) for the exam and have this recorded as their original attempt

Failure to Meet Minimum Thresholds

- Students will have no more than two (2) total attempts (the original attempt and one (1) remediation attempt) to achieve the minimum passing threshold on a shelf exam
- After the initial attempt and pending the remediation attempt, a grade of incomplete will be recorded for the student's clerkship grade
- Students who do not achieve the minimum passing threshold after two (2) attempts will receive a failure of the clerkship and must retake the entire clerkship
- Students who require a remediation attempt to achieve the minimum passing threshold will be unable to achieve a grade of 'Honors' in the clerkship, regardless of their final overall numeric grade earned

Scheduling a Remediation or Make up NBME Shelf Exam

Remediation Exams

- Students who need to schedule a remediation NBME Shelf Exam must meet with the Clerkship Director and ACDME
 - The ACDME will select a designated date for the remediation
 - NBME Shelf remediations will be scheduled by the Clerkship Administrator in coordination with the Testing Center
- There is no set timeline for remediating a failed shelf exam, however a learner cannot proceed in the clinical curriculum with two unremediated shelf exam failures
 - In the event that a student has 2 unremediated shelf exams, they will be enrolled in the Clinical Medicine Enrichment (CME) course during which they must remediate all outstanding shelf examinations
 - Deviations to the length of the CME course will be limited to students who have compelling and extraordinary circumstances
 - These must be reviewed and approved by the PAC
 - Rendered decisions by the PAC are final and are not appealable
 - Failure to remediate all outstanding shelf exams during the CME course will require a student to take a leave of absence
- A learner cannot proceed to clinical activities in the M4 year until all shelf exams have been successfully remediated

Make Up Exams

- Students who have an excused absence that causes them to miss a scheduled NBME Shelf Exam may schedule a date to make up the exam
 - All make up exams must occur within two (2) weeks of the students return from their excused absence or the first available testing date as determined by the ADCME
 - A minimum of 48 hours (2 business days) notice is needed between the approval of an excused absence and a scheduled make-up exam date to accommodate the ordering of the NBME exam
 - Students who need to schedule a make-up NBME Shelf Exam must meet with the Clerkship Director for their current rotation to ensure they are not scheduling their make-up exam during a required educational session
 - Clerkship Directors may require the student to complete an alternative or additional clinical experience in place of any educational session missed by the student to make up an exam.
- Students who do not make-up an exam within the required timeframe or who fail to take the make up exam on the scheduled date will have the scheduled exam count as their first attempt on the exam and will be unable to achieve honors in the clerkship unless they receive an additional excused absence for the date
 - In instances where a make-up exam is not completed within the designated timeframe or a scheduled make-up exam date is missed, the student will be referred to the Promotion and Advancement Committee for review and action in alignment with the Student Promotion and Advancement Committee Policy

Related Policies

Student Promotion and Advancement Committee Policy

Student Appeal Procedures for Promotion and Advancement Committee Decisions Policy

Review Cycle and Revision History

The policy is reviewed and may be revised by the Curriculum Council as necessary, but at least every three years.

Current Approved Version: 03.27.2025

Previously Approved Versions: 03.23.2023

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

LCME Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the MD Degree:

- LCME Standard 9, Element 8