Assessment System: NBME Subject Exam Remediation

Rationale

Students at the Brody School of Medicine are assessed using NBME Subject Exams (commonly referred to as 'Shelf Exams') in both the foundational and clinical phases of the curriculum. The Executive Curriculum Committee has set the equated percent score threshold required to successfully pass a NBME Subject Exam at the 12th centile of the national average for the Block 4 exams, and the 6th centile based on quarter averages for the clinical years. Other courses use the subject exams for formative and summative assessment as stipulated in the course syllabi. Any student who fails an NBME subject exam is expected to retake that NBME subject exam in order to successfully remediate the relevant content. All Brody students will be subject to the following process and parameters regarding NBME Subject Exam remediation attempts.

Scope

The Standard Operating Procedure applies to all medical students at the Brody School of Medicine. It outlines the requirements for remediation of NBME Subject Exams in both the foundational and clinical phases of the curriculum. Additionally, procedures for scheduling dates for administration of remediation attempts are outlined. The SOP also establishes expectations to key stakeholders for required timeframes for remediating examinations, and consequences for failing to comply with these expectations. This SOP affects students, staff, faculty members, and course/clerkship directors of the Brody School of Medicine who administer or participate in the leadership and grading of courses and clerkships that administer NBME Subject Examinations.

Definitions

**BSOM:** Brody School of Medicine  
**OME:** Office of Medical Education  
**Testing Administrator:** Office of Medical Education Staff member who is responsible for the proctoring and administration of all institutional and NBME Shelf Exams  
**CD:** Course or Clerkship Director  
**NBME:** National Board of Medical Examiners  
**Subject Exam:** National exam developed by the NBME; commonly referred to as a “Shelf” or “Shelf Exam”  
**Foundational Years/Phase:** The first 20 months of the BSOM curriculum  
**Clinical Years/Phase:** Comprised of the clinical clerkships and include third and fourth years of the BSOM curriculum
ECC: Executive Curriculum Committee

Procedures for Implementation and Review

Minimum Passing Thresholds for NBME Subject Exams: The Executive Curriculum Committee (ECC) has set the minimum thresholds required to be considered a successful, passing attempt on a Subject Exam.

- **Foundational Phase- Microbiology and Block 4**: Learners must achieve a minimum equated percent score of 12th centile based on the national average for the specific exam.
  - To provide uniformity the clerkship NBME Subject Exam score is converted to a percentile based on the specific quarter of the year in which the clerkship was taken.
  - A Learners’ quarter will be determined as follows:
    - Clerkships taken in Cohort 1 and 2 are based on Quarter 1
    - Clerkships taken in Cohort 3 are based on Quarter 2
    - Clerkships taken in Cohort 4 and 5 are based on Quarter 3
    - Clerkships taken in Cohort 6 are based on Quarter 4
  - Off-cycle learners will comply with the grading scale based on the cohort number in which they completed the clerkship.
  - Due to variances in national norms from year to year, the ECC may adjust the passing score such that an earlier cohort is not held to a higher standard than a later cohort. (ie the ECC may choose to set the passing score for quarter 3 at the 5th centile to avoid requiring a higher grade than quarter 4)

Failure to Meet Minimum Thresholds

- The ECC has established a standard approach for failure to meet the minimum thresholds required to be considered a successful, passing attempt on a Subject Exam.
- **Foundational Phase**: Learners who fail to reach an equated percentile score of the 12th centile based on national norms for an exam will comply with the following:
  - The learner must remediate by re-taking the exam and achieving the minimum threshold required to pass
  - The impact on the grade will be delineated in the syllabus for Blocks 1-3.
  - Learners in Block 4 must remediate exams prior to sitting for the USMLE Step 1 examination.
  - In Block 4, achievement of the 12th centile nationally is required to pass the Systems Capstone Course. Learners who do not successfully pass the NBME exams after 3 attempts will be required to repeat Block 4.
• **Clinical Phase:** Learners who fail to reach an equated percentile score of the 6th centile based on the specific quarter for an exam will comply with the following:
  o The learner must remediate by re-taking the exam and achieving the minimum threshold required to pass within three total attempts.
  o A learner who remediates an exam will be unable to achieve a letter grade of ‘A’ or ‘Honors’ in the clerkship, regardless of their final overall numeric grade. If their final score falls into the range of an ‘A’ or ‘Honors’, the CD will lower their final letter grade to a ‘B’ and their final numeric grade to the highest possible ‘B’.
    ▪ Subsequent attempts beyond a first remediation attempt will not result in a further reduction of a letter grade beyond the reduction to a ‘B’.
  o A learner will have no more than 3 total attempts (the original attempt and 2 remediation attempts) to achieve the minimum passing threshold. Learners who do not achieve this after three attempts will receive a failure of the clerkship and must retake the entire clerkship.
  o 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. Details described in Academic Achievement Policy.
  o In the case of 2 concurrent failed shelf exams, a learner will have until the 2nd Friday after the end of the clerkship to remediate a failed shelf exam (the end of the 2-week elective in the case of 6-week clerkships or 2 weeks into the next clerkship in the case of 8-week clerkships) before it is considered ‘unremediated’.
  o A learner cannot proceed to a clinical rotation or elective in the M4 year until all requirements of the M3 year, including remediations, have been successfully completed.

• **Differentiation Phase:** Learners must pass the Emergency Medicine NBME Subject exam with at least the 6th centile.
  o Learners who fail the EM shelf exam have 8 weeks or until the first Friday of block 13A, whichever is sooner, to sit for their first retake (second take) of the exam.
  o Learners requiring a second retake (third take) have until the second Friday of block 13A to do so.

**Scheduling a Remediation NBME Subject Exam**

• Learners who are required to remediate an exam are responsible for scheduling their remediation attempt with the Testing Administrator in the Office of Medical Education.
  o **Foundational Phase:** NBME failures in the M1 year must be remediated in the summer between the M1 and M2 year. NBME Subject exams in Block 4 must be remediated within 4 weeks of the end of Block 4.
  o **Clinical Phase:** Learners must remediate their M3 exam before progressing to the M4 year. M4 exams must be remediated before graduation.
The learner contacts the testing administrator to identify day and time slots available for exam retakes.

As a component of the LIPPMR form completion, learners must identify two-three potential dates and times to retake their exam.

Learners should communicate with the Clerkship Director of the clerkship in which they are enrolled during the retake to ensure they are not scheduling their remediation exam date during a required experience.

Clerkship Directors may require the learner to complete an alternative or additional clinical experience in place of any clinical or didactic experiences missed by the learner in order to remediate the exam.

Once a general testing time frame is identified, the testing administrator will determine the date for the learner’s remediation exam based on the currently approved testing times offered by the Office of Medical Education.

- The currently approved testing days and times can be found by contacting the testing administrator in the Office of Medical Education.
- The approved testing times are subject to change based on testing room and proctor availability.

Once a date has been determined, the testing administrator will notify the following individuals via email of the required remediation date: The Office of Medical Education Dean(s), the Office of Student Affairs, and the learner making up the exam.

- Once a remediation date has been scheduled the date may not be moved without an excused absence greater than 72 business hours in advance of the exam.
- The learner may request to move a remediation exam only once the entire year if communicated greater than 72 business hours in advance. If the request is granted, the remediation attempt must occur within two weeks.

The testing administrator will contact the Office of Student Affairs to have the exam ordered after determining the remediation date.

- A minimum of 48 hours (2 business days) notice is needed between scheduling a remediation date and the administration of the remediation attempt to accommodate the ordering of the NBME exam.

Responsibilities

There are several key stakeholders involved in the testing process. Listed below are each key stakeholder, along with their expected responsibilities and time frame for completion.

**Testing Administrator**

- Responsible for working with learners to schedule a remediation exam that follows the established timeframes in this SOP, and the currently approved testing schedule within OME
- Responsible for communicating with OSA to ensure an exam is ordered and notifying all vested parties regarding the scheduled remediation date
Office of Student Affairs
- Responsible for contacting the NBME to order an examination

Course/Clerkship Director
- The course/clerkship director of the failed subject exam is responsible for communicating with the learner regarding the need to remediate the exam.
- The clerkship director is responsible for communicating with the medical learner who must remediate an exam and needs to schedule a remediation attempt to ensure the learner understands any missed work or required clinical experiences, as well as the requirements for making up these missed, required elements of a course/clerkship

Medical Student
- Responsible for contacting the testing administrator in OME to schedule a date for a remediation attempt
- Learners must communicate with the Course/Clerkship Director to ensure the scheduled remediation exam date does not conflict with educational sessions or clinical experiences
  - For Clerkships, it is the responsibility of the learner to work with the Clerkship Director to make up any missed experiences required by the CD
- Learners must remediate any failed exam within the required timeframe listed below:
  - Foundational Phase:
    - Courses in Blocks 1-3 must be remediated in the summer following the M1 year.
    - Courses in Block 4 must be remediated within 4 weeks of the end of Block 4 courses, and prior to sitting for USMLE Step 1. Failure to comply will result in remediation of Block 4.
  - Clinical Phase:
    - Learners should work with their current Clerkship Director to ensure they are not scheduling their remediation exam date during a required clinical experience.
      - Clerkship Directors may require the learner to complete an alternative or additional clinical experience in place of any clinical experiences missed by the learner to make up an exam.
    - A learner cannot proceed in the clinical curriculum with two unremediated shelf exam failures.
    - In the case of 2 concurrent shelf failures, a learner will have until the 2nd Friday after the end of the clerkship to remediate the failed shelf exam (the end of the 2-week elective in the case of 6-week clerkships or 2 weeks into the next clerkship in the case of 8-week clerkships) before it is considered ‘unremediated’.
  - Differentiation Phase
    - Learners who fail the EM shelf exam have 8 weeks or until the first Friday of block 13A, whichever is sooner, to sit for their first retake (second take) of the exam.
    - Learners requiring a second retake (third take) have until the second Friday of block 13A to do so.
Procedures for Implementation and Review

This procedure is reviewed and approved by the Curriculum Committees, including the Executive Curriculum Committee, M1 Curriculum Committee, and M2 Curriculum Committee, and Clinical Curriculum Committee every three years.

This procedure is disseminated by the Office of Medical Education to learners and teaching faculty/administration.

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

LCME Standard 9, Element 8
LCME Standard 3, Element 5