



AMERICAN  
COLLEGE *of*  
CARDIOLOGY®

# Stepping Into the Ring with Step 1

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MD Candidate // Class of 2021

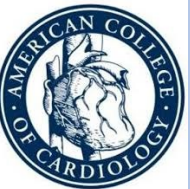
University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson

# Disclosures & Funding

I am currently a fourth-year medical student and have no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.

The advice in this presentation is a combination of many resources and insights. This worked for me, but adjustments may be needed to fit your Step 1 goals and learning style, and there are certainly other strategies that may work as well or even better for you!

In February 2020, the National Board of Medical Examiners announced the USMLE Step 1 exam would transition to a pass/fail scoring format rather than the three-digit score, with this change occurring no earlier than January 2022. Details including changes to the minimum passing score or specific implementation, particularly given the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the timeline, were not available as of July 2020.



# USMLE Step 1

”Measure understanding of important basic science concepts and ability to apply it to medicine”

National Mean and Minimum Passing USMLE Step 1 Scores, by Year

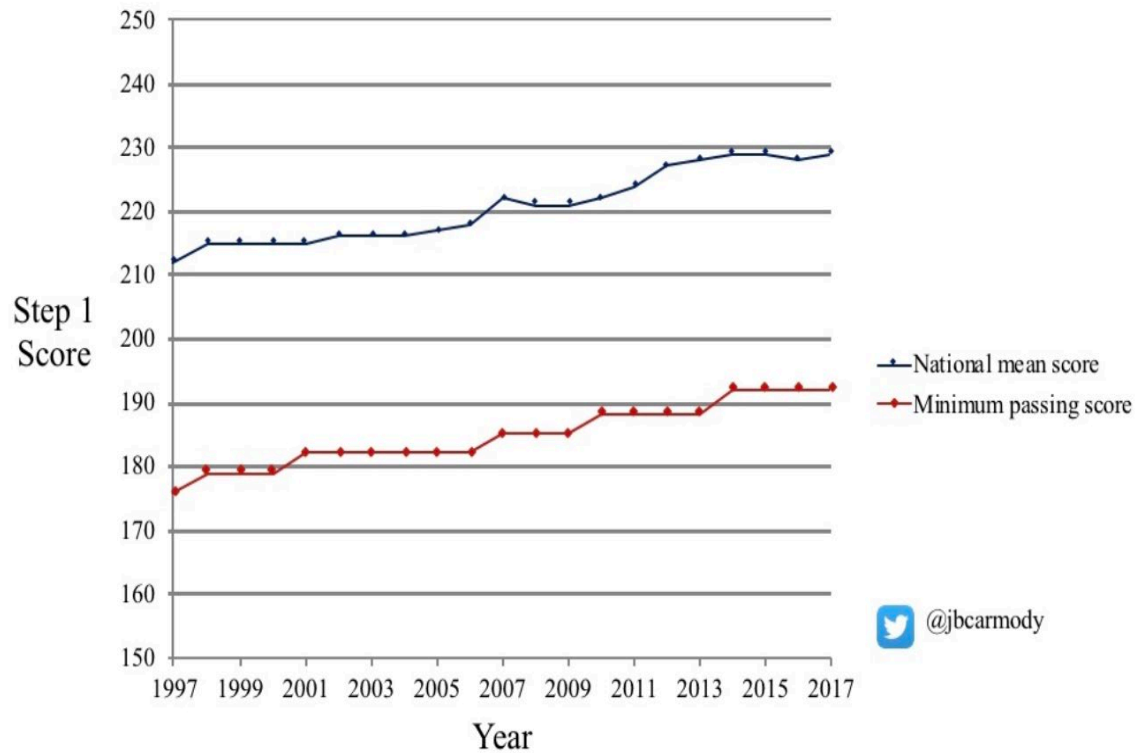
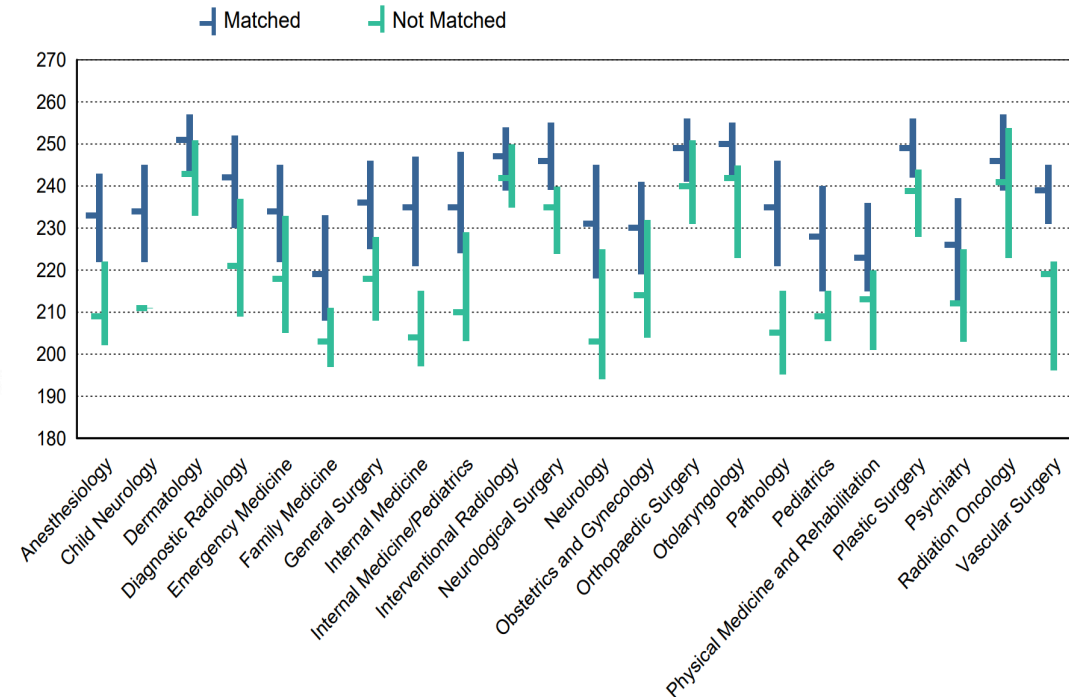


Chart 6

USMLE Step 1 Scores of U.S. Allopathic Seniors by Preferred Specialty and Match Status



Source: NRMP Data Warehouse

2018 NRMP Data<sup>1</sup>

Minimum passing score: 194

Average score to match: 233 (SD 17.5)



# USMLE Step 1

Figure 1

All Specialties  
Percentage of Programs Citing Each Factor And Mean Importance Rating<sup>1</sup> for Each Factor in Selecting Applicants to Interview  
(N=1,233)

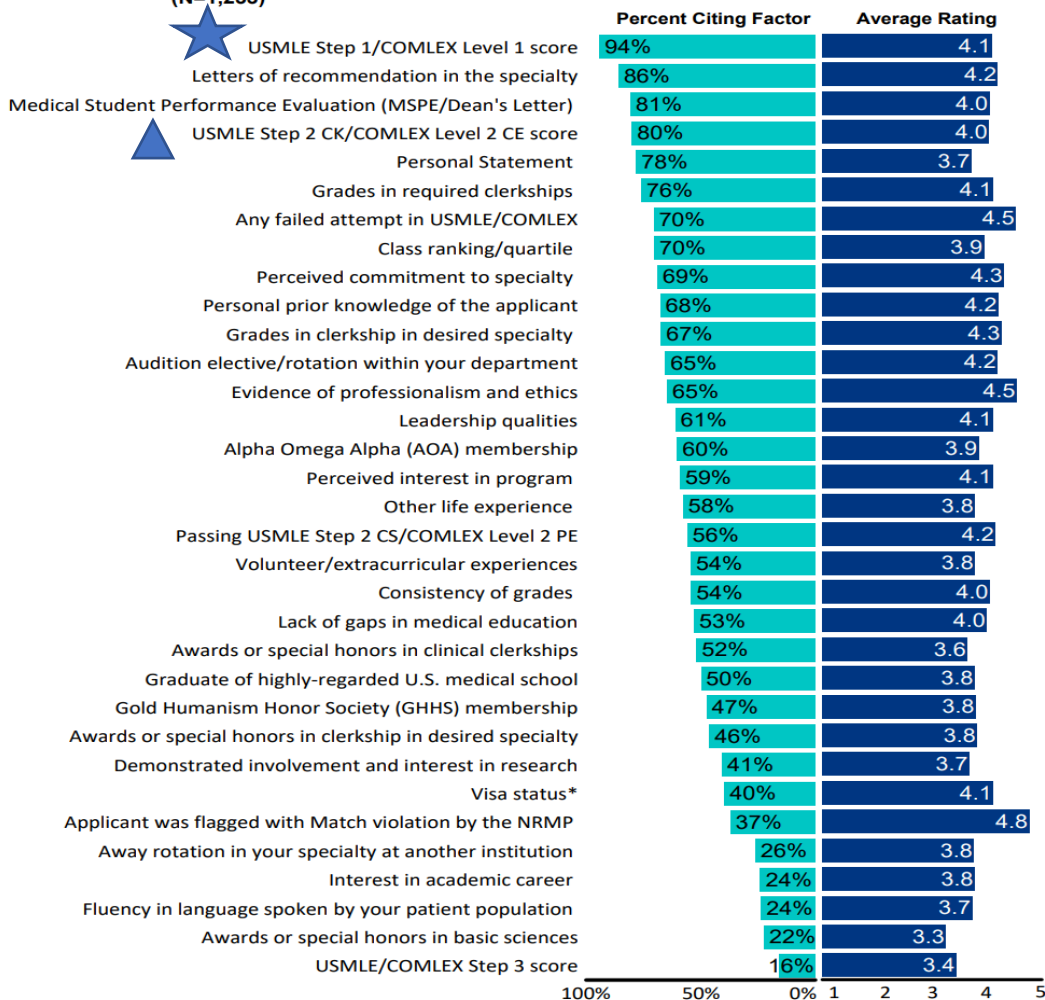
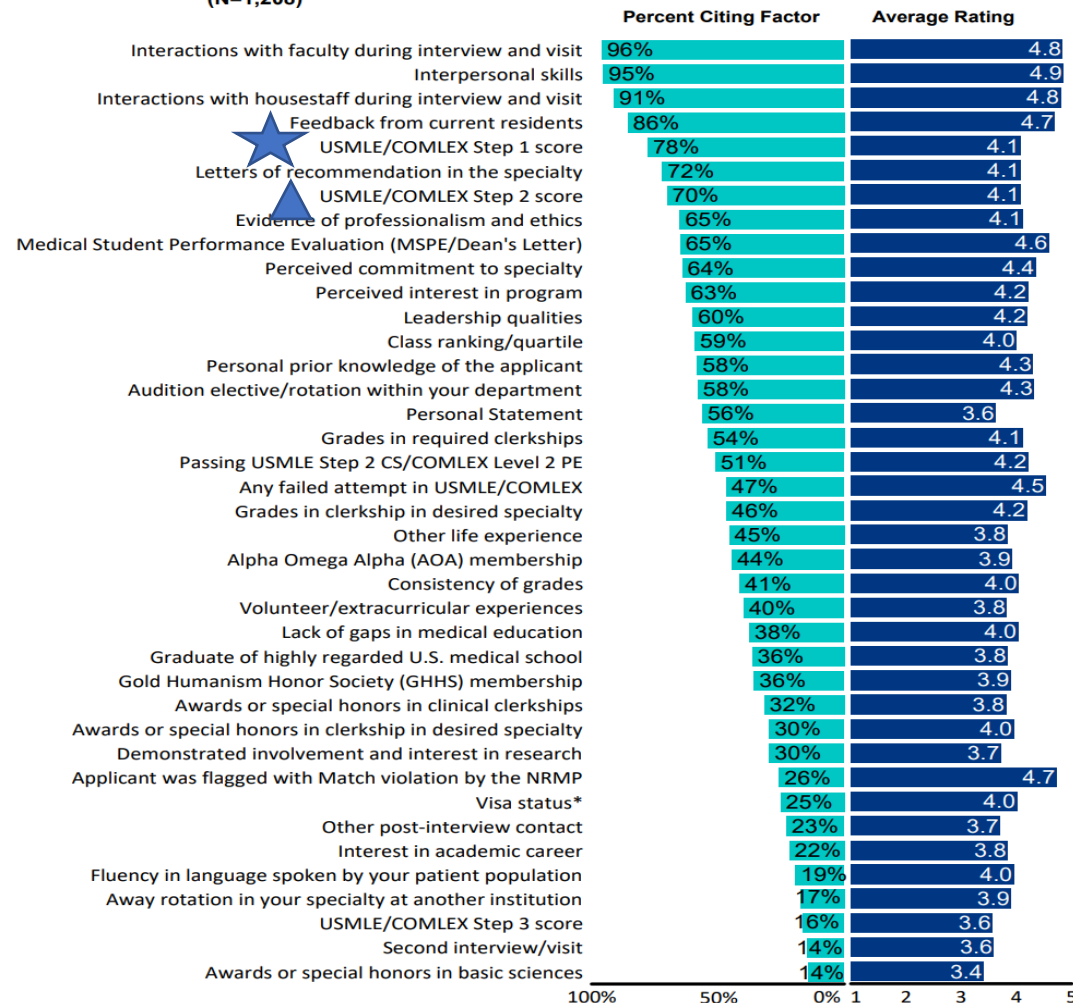


Figure 2

All Specialties  
Percentage of Programs Citing Each Factor And Mean Importance Rating<sup>1</sup> for Each Factor in Ranking Applicants  
(N=1,208)



2018 NRMP Program Director Survey<sup>2</sup> Response Rate 29.3%



# Critical Components of Match

Summary from University of Michigan Website<sup>3</sup>

Class A Criteria: Step 1, Step 2, clerkship grades

Step 1 Passing-215: Low

215-230: OK to good

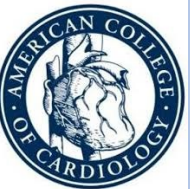
230-245: Good

245-255: Very good

250+: Excellent

Class B Criteria: Interview

Class C Criteria: Research, extracurriculars, leadership, personal statement, LORs, MSPE

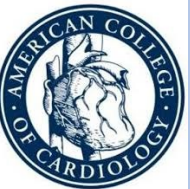


# Resources

Core resources: “UFAP” Uworld, First Aid, Pathoma

Additional dedicated study period resources: Dr. Goljan audio lectures

Optional longitudinal resources/Q banks: Anki, Kaplan, Amboss, Firecracker, Boards and Beyond [...] Sketchy, Picmonic, Osmosis. **Do NOT try to use all of these! Less is more. Which you choose, if any, is dependent on whether your school provides any of these and your learning style.**



# Study Guide

Amalgam from: "DermGuy" youtube videos (no longer posted), Reddit, advisors, peers.

Think of this as a job with 8-10 hours of pure work most days.

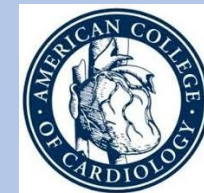
Study by organ system, with day 1 being reading through First Aid chapter, distilling your own "master notes" into a notebook, and listening to relevant Goljan lectures. Days 2 and 3 are going through Uworld on that topic. I preferred doing sets of 40 questions, untimed, on tutor mode.

Pros: focus learning and mastering one system at a time, periodically revisit your "master notes" and never look at First Aid again\*.

Cons: this is dedicated study, so any way you slice it if you're doing it right, it is going to be tiring.

Reddit Search: "Step 1 Score Calculator" & "Step 1 Score Correlation"

	# of Q's (with all subject boxes checked)
UWorld Q Bank c. 2018	
Systems	
Allergy & Immunology	39
Biostatistics and Epidemiology	58
Cardiovascular	314
Dermatology	66
ENT	15
Endocrine, Diabetes & Metabolism	187
Female Reproductive System & Breast	65
Gastrointestinal & Nutrition	228
General Principles	75
Hematology & Oncology	224
Infectious Diseases	173
Male Reproductive System	24
Miscellaneous (Multisystem)	31
Nervous System	299
Ophthalmology	12
Poisoning & Environmental Exposure	7
Pregnancy, Childbirth & Puerperium	28
Psychiatric/Behavioral & Substance Abuse	132
Pulmonary & Critical Care	189
Renal, Urinary Systems & Electrolytes	148
Rheumatology/Orthopedics & Sports	126
Social Sciences (Ethics/Legal/Professional)	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>2485</b>

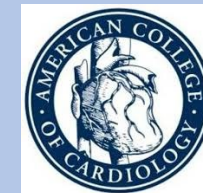




# Study Guide

Every day: eat nutritious food, sleep well, take breaks, stay connected with friends/family, exercise and go outside.

Day	Subject		
1	Cardio Day 1	19	NBME Form 15 and review answers
2	Cardio Day 2	20	Micro/Immun, Day 1
3	Cardio Day 3	21	Micro/Immun, Day 2
4	Pulm Day 1	22	Micro/Immun, Day 3
5	Pulm Day 2	23	MSK & Derm Day 1
6	Pulm Day 3	24	MSK & Derm Day 2
7	1/2 Day off, 1/2 day GI Day 1	25	MSK half day off
8	GI Day 2	26	Catch up (Derm, MSK, Micro notes, misc) - free time if you're caught up
9	GI Day 3	27	Catch up (Derm, MSK, Micro notes, misc) - free time if you're caught up
10	Renal Day 1	28	Hem/Onc Day 1
11	Renal Day 2	29	Hem/Onc Day 2
12	Renal Day 3	30	Hem/Onc Day 3
13	Stats, Public Health, Psychiatry Day 1	31	Read master notes. NBME Form 18.
14	Stats, Public Health, Psychiatry Day 2	32	Review NBME Form 18 answers -> short day
15	Stats, Public Health, Psychiatry Day 3	33	NS Day 1
16	Biochem Day 1	34	NS Day 2
17	Biochem Day 2	35	NS Day 3
18	Catch up on everything - free time if you're caught up	36	Endo/Repro Day 1
		37	Endo/Repro Day 2
		38	Endo/Repro Day 3
		39	UWorld 2 & Review answers
		40	Finish master notes...this is a free day if you stay on top of everything
		41	NBME 120 & review it
		42	NBME 16 & Review
		43	Pharm chapter -> master notes
		44	UWSA #1 & review it
		45	Review old NBMEs (Forms 19 & 15) *our school made us take these earlier in our curriculum*
		46	Can do NBME 17, I planned to but felt I was running out of steam so took the day off
		47	Read through 1/2 of master notes, take your time to digest it. Mine was ~90 notebook pages.
		48	Finish reading through master notes & go through First Aid's "Rapid Review" section. This should make you feel very confident, as it is the core information tested on Step 1 and from my experience ~85% of the questions on my test was this content. Pack your snacks and drinks, have omega 3s with dinner, try to get good sleep.
		49	Step 1 Exam!!! Wake @ 5:30, have coffee and re-read First Aid's "Rapid Review" section





# Study Guide for DO Students

Zach Manna of ACC Med Student Leadership Group did a 100 day study plan for dual-prep for Step 1 and COMLEX Level 1 beginning January 2<sup>nd</sup> incorporating Uworld, annotating in First Aid & Pathoma (not "master notes"), Boards & Beyond, Sketchy micro & path videos, Goljan audio. Given taking COMLEX Level 1 shortly after USMLE Step 1, he added 35 Combank questions (untimed, tutor mode, covering any previous topics up to that point) per day at the ~1/3<sup>rd</sup> point of this study period. Zach took Step 1 two days before COMLEX Level 1, but said that it seems typical to take Level 1 anywhere between two and seven days after.

Zach's Days per block (14 break days were scattered in this period, with 3 of the break days just before Step 1): GI (11), Immuno/Path/Pharm (7), Heme-Onc (12), MSK/Derm (7), Endo (7), Repro (10), Psych (6), Pulm (6), Neuro (10), Renal (7), Cardio (9), Anatomy+Embryology (5), Biochem (8).

**I know this is not an exhaustive description of Zach's study guide and will defer to him and/or other DO members to share more details on their experience in dual preparing for USMLE Step 1 & COMLEX Level 1!**



# Test Day

- If you see a Q with a huge stem, quickly look at the last line for their question and glance at the choices to give you context. Otherwise you may have to re-read the whole question.
- Highlight salient parts of the questions as you go. Questions can become a blur, so highlighting can help you focus, identify key features, and save time when reviewing marked questions.
- Mark questions as needed and try to finish each block with ~5 minutes to revisit
- Take 5-10 minute breaks between each block
- Do not dwell on questions you're unsure about or on questions that bother you after a block is over, just continue and do your best. Focus on how much you DO know, which will be a ton!



# Final Thoughts

Everyone is different, so don't force yourself to do this plan exactly.

Anki is a love/hate thing and a lot of extra work. Had I done it, maybe I could have scored 5-10 points higher on Step 1 but would have felt overworked and unhappy. I personally would choose to use energy on Q banks than on flashcards since they are more reflective of the test.

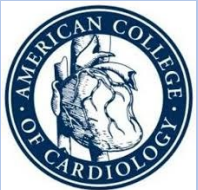
If you do Kaplan x1, Uworld x2, NBME practice tests, the free 120, and the questions in your curriculum, you will have done ~10,000 questions. The test is 280 questions.

Step 1 is 2.8% of all the questions you have already done. Let that sink in.

**You are ready and you will do great!**

There is more to your pre-clerkship medical school experience than Step 1, so explore what interests you and get involved in research, leadership, activities & community outreach. A stellar Step 1 score with no personalization or interesting experiences is not holistically impressive, so set realistic goals and have fun discovering your path!

Feel free to email me with questions or comments: [AJM@email.arizona.edu](mailto:AJM@email.arizona.edu)



# References

- 1) National Resident Matching Program. “Charting Outcomes in the Match: U.S. Allopathic Seniors 2<sup>nd</sup> edition”. 2018.
- 2) National Resident Matching Program. “Results of the 2018 NRMP Program Director Survey” 2018.
- 3) Critical Components in the Match. University of Michigan.  
<https://medstudents.medicine.umich.edu/student-support/match/critical-components-match>

