



المجلس الطلابي الحضرمي  
Hadramout Student Association  
جامعة الفيصل - Alfaisal University



مؤسسة حضرموت  
Hadramout Foundation  
تنمية بشرية - Human Development

# A Comprehensive Guide for Yemeni Medical Students

**Navigating the US Medical Residency Application Process**

**HADRAMOUT STUDENT ASSOCIATION**

**ALFAISAL UNIVERSITY  
RIYADH, KINGDOM OF SAUDIA ARABIA**

**THIS GUIDE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE EFORTS  
OF:**

Yahya Bawahab  
Abdullah BinSaeedu  
Ahmed BaTheeb  
Abdulrahman Baqtayyan  
Mohammed Bokir  
Faroq Binyamani  
Yaser Baalwai

**Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.**

**[hsa.alfaisal1@gmail.com](mailto:hsa.alfaisal1@gmail.com)**

# **A Comprehensive Guide for Yemeni Medical Students: Navigating the US Medical Residency Application Process**

## **Introduction:**

Welcome to a transformative journey! This comprehensive guide will be your trusted companion as you navigate the path to applying for US medical residencies. Securing a residency position in the United States is more than just a milestone – it opens doors to exceptional medical training, advanced specialization, and diverse clinical experiences that will propel your career to new heights.

Please note that this guide is based on experience and the information available at the time of its publication. However, the application process is dynamic, and updates or changes may occur. Therefore, we strongly advise applicants to regularly check for updates from the USMLE, ECFMG, and other relevant authorities. Staying informed will ensure that you have the most accurate and up-to-date information to guide you on your journey to a US medical residency.

When it comes to preparing for the exams, it's important to recognize that everyone has their own unique learning styles and preferences. What may work well for one person may not be as effective for another. That's why it's highly recommended to conduct thorough research on the internet and explore different study methods and resources. This will help you discover what suits you best and aligns with your preferred learning style. However, it's crucial to strike a balance and avoid overwhelming yourself with too many resources. We wish you the best of luck as you embark on this exciting and rewarding pursuit of a US medical residency!

# ECFMG Certification



The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certification is a mandatory requirement for international medical graduates (IMGs) seeking to pursue residency training in the USA. ECFMG certification is needed to apply for the US residency match and it verifies that IMGs have met specific educational and clinical standards necessary for practicing medicine in the US healthcare system.

To be eligible for ECFMG certification, IMGs must meet the following requirements:

- 1- **Medical Degree:** IMGs must possess a medical degree from a medical school listed in the [World Directory of Medical Schools \(WDOMS\)](#), and they must be licensed to practice medicine in the country where they graduated.
- 2- **USMLE Exams:** IMGs must pass Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE).
- 3- **English Language Proficiency:** IMGs must demonstrate proficiency in English by passing an OET exam.

To begin your path towards obtaining the ECFMG certification, the first thing you need is an ECFMG ID. In the upcoming section about registering for USMLE Step 1, you will learn about the process of getting your ECFMG ID.

# USMLE Step 1

The USMLE Step 1 exam is a critical component of the residency application process, assessing your foundational knowledge of basic medical sciences. Here's an in-depth look at what you need to know about Step 1:

## **Registration:**

1. Create an ECFMG ID:
  - Go to the [ECFMG website](#).
  - Click on "Create an ECFMG ID".
  - Fill in your personal details accurately, ensuring they match your passport or government ID.
  
2. After receiving your USMLE ID, log in to the ECFMG IWA site.
3. Pay the Registration Fee: Pay the \$135 fee for ID verification and to obtain Form 186. After payment, you will receive Form 186.
  
4. Go to the NotaryCam site: Complete the required information and upload a copy of Form 186. Wait for an email from NotaryCam to schedule an online interview. Participate in the online interview with NotaryCam to verify your identity. NotaryCam will then send your documents to ECFMG for final processing.
  
5. Pay Registration Fees:
  - Pay the registration fees, which currently stand at \$1000 for the exam.
  - Additionally, there is a \$195 International Test Center fee.
  
6. Receive Scheduling Permit:
  - After payment, you'll receive a scheduling permit via email.
  - This permit includes your eligibility period dates and available testing locations.
  
7. Schedule Exam:
  - Use the information provided in the scheduling permit.
  - Log in to the Prometric website.
  - Select your preferred exam date and testing center using the scheduling permit details.

### **Exam Structure:**

- Step 1 is a comprehensive one-day examination administered by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) and the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB).
- The exam consists of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) divided into seven blocks, with up to 40 questions per block.
- Subjects covered include anatomy, biochemistry, genetics, pathology, pharmacology, physiology, behavioral sciences, immunology, microbiology, and more.
- The total duration of the exam is eight hours.

### **Exam Preparation:**

1. Begin your Step 1 preparation early in your medical school journey. Instead of cramming everything just for the exams, focus on studying and learning the material for the long run.
2. During your third-year blocks, consider using resources like First Aid and Pathoma to familiarize yourself with the necessary information and aid in memorization. These resources provide summaries of key concepts for the exam. When using First Aid, it is important to write neat and organized notes that can be revisited multiple times.
3. Officially start your Step 1 preparation during the summer vacation after your third year. This will give you dedicated time to focus on studying for the exam.
4. First Aid is considered the number one resource for Step 1 preparation. It serves as a comprehensive review book that summarizes everything you need to know for the exam. However, it is important to note that First Aid is more useful for memorization rather than deep understanding. To make the most of First Aid, start with systems rather than subjects and be careful not to overwhelm yourself with excessive note-taking. Keep your notes neat and organized for easy review.
5. UWorld is another crucial resource for Step 1 preparation. It is recommended to start using UWorld after completing at least one pass of First Aid. Solve one block of UWorld questions per day and take notes. The tables and diagrams provided by UWorld can be very helpful. Consider creating a word document with high-yield points or things you may forget for quick reference.
6. Depending on your preferences and study style, you may also find additional resources such as AMBOSS, Pathoma, Boards and Beyond, and Sketchy beneficial. Explore these resources to see which ones align with your learning style and complement your understanding of the material. Additionally, if spaced repetition works well for you, consider using Anki as a study tool.
7. Throughout your preparation, it is advisable to take NBMEs (National Board of Medical Examiners) and self-assessments to gauge your progress and identify areas for improvement. These practice exams help you become familiar with the format and content of the Step 1 exam. Rather than solely focusing on your score, aim for improvement as you progress through your preparation. Use each assessment as an opportunity to identify weak areas and target them for further study.

# **USMLE Step 2 CK**

## **USMLE Step 2 CK**

After successfully completing Step 1, the next milestone in your journey towards residency is the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) exam. Here's an in-depth exploration of what you need to know about Step 2 CK:

### **Exam Overview:**

- Step 2 CK evaluates your clinical knowledge and ability to apply medical concepts in a clinical setting.
- The exam is a one-day, computer-based test administered by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) and the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB).
- It consists of eight 60-minute blocks, with up to 40 multiple-choice questions per block. The total duration of the exam is nine hours.

### **Content Coverage:**

- Step 2 CK covers various medical specialties, including internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, psychiatry, preventive medicine, and more.
- Questions focus on patient management, diagnostic reasoning, treatment strategies, and clinical decision-making.

### **Preparation and Registration:**

- The best time to take this exam is during the internship year as you have enough time to prepare for it.
- Registering for the exam is similar to STEP 1.
- For studying, you can use resources like UWORLD, AMBOSS, ANKI. It's usually take 4-6 months to be ready for the exam.

### **Dedicated Study Period:**

1. Complete 2 full passes of UWorld Question Bank
2. Focus extra review on weaker areas identified
3. Take practice tests under timed conditions weekly
4. Review all incorrect questions thoroughly
5. Analyze what caused incorrect answers - content gaps, misunderstanding questions, approach
6. Additionally, if spaced repetition works well for you, consider using Anki as a study tool.

### **Final Weeks Before Exam**

1. Spend 1.5-2 weeks reviewing worst subjects like ethics, biostatistics intensely
2. Take more full-length practice tests
3. Give extra focus to areas still missed on Qbanks
4. Light content review of frequently missed concepts

### **Cost and Scheduling:**

- The fee for Step 2 CK is \$1000, with an additional international test delivery surcharge if taking the exam outside the US/Canada (\$220 for Middle East).
- Schedule your exam well in advance to secure your preferred testing date and location.
- Obtain a scheduling permit from the USMLE program, which allows you to schedule and take the exam.

### **Scoring:**

- Step 2 CK is scored on a scale of 1 to 300, with a passing score currently set at 214.
- Aim for a competitive score to strengthen your residency application.
- Research the average scores for your desired specialty to gauge competitiveness.

### **Preparation Strategies:**

- Focus on developing clinical reasoning skills and applying medical knowledge in patient care scenarios.
- Review common clinical presentations, diagnostic algorithms, and treatment guidelines across different specialties.
- Practice time management and decision-making under pressure, simulating exam conditions.
- Seek feedback from clinical supervisors, attendings, and peers to identify areas for improvement.



# **Occupational English Test**

## **(OET)**

For international medical graduates (IMGs), proficiency in English is crucial for success in the US residency application process. The Occupational English Test (OET) is a specialized English language proficiency exam designed specifically for healthcare professionals. Here's an in-depth look at what you need to know about the OET exam:

### **Exam Structure:**

- The OET Medicine exam consists of four components: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.
- Each component assesses different language skills relevant to medical practice, including understanding spoken and written English, writing clinical notes and letters, and communicating effectively with patients and colleagues.

### **Content Coverage:**

- The listening component evaluates your ability to understand spoken English in healthcare contexts, such as patient consultations and healthcare team discussions.
- The reading component assesses your comprehension of medical texts, including patient case notes, medical journals, and clinical guidelines.
- The writing component requires you to produce accurate and concise clinical notes, letters, and reports based on patient information provided in case scenarios.
- The speaking component evaluates your ability to communicate clearly and effectively in English, including taking patient histories, explaining treatment plans, and participating in healthcare discussions.

### **Scoring and Passing Requirements:**

- Each component of the OET exam is scored on a scale from A (highest) to E (lowest).
- To pass the OET Medicine exam, you must achieve a minimum score of 350 (equivalent to grade B) in Reading, listening and speaking and a minimum score of 300 in writing.
- A score of 350 equates to at least 30 marks out of 42 in each component.

## **Preparation:**

- Familiarize yourself with the format and content of the OET exam by reviewing official practice materials and sample questions.
- Develop your English language skills through regular practice in listening, reading, writing, and speaking.
- Consider enrolling in OET preparation courses or workshops to receive targeted instruction and feedback from experienced instructors.
- Practice communicating in English within medical contexts, such as role-playing patient interactions and discussing clinical cases with colleagues.

## **Important Links/points:**

- **Writing:**
  - OET Writing: Step 1 | [SELECTING RELEVANT CASE NOTES with Jay!](#)
  - OET Writing: Step 2 | [HOW TO ORGANISE YOUR CASE NOTES with Jay!](#)
  - OET Writing: Step 3 | [HOW TO TRANSFORM CASE NOTES with Jay!](#)
  - [Benchmark service for writing correction](#)
- **Speaking:**
  - Phrases for OET speaking: [Communication criteria B Incorporating the Patient's Perspective](#)
  - Example OET medicine speaking test: [Sample Test](#)
- **Reading/Listening:**
  - [OET Listening Sample Tests](#)
  - [OET Reading Sample Tests](#)
- **OET Full book for samples and tips:**
  - OET Future Land Full Book Final Edition December 2018.pdf

## **Scheduling and Administration:**

- The OET Medicine exam is administered multiple times throughout the year at authorized test centers worldwide.
- Visit the [official OET website](#) to view available test dates, locations, and registration deadlines.
- Register for the exam well in advance to secure your preferred testing date and location.

# **USMLE STEP 3**

Step 3 is not required for the match process, and most people take it in their first year of residency. However, there are two reasons to take it before the match. First, some program directors advise students to take STEP 3 before applying for the match to increase their chances. Second, those seeking an H-1B visa must have their STEP 3 results ready by the match day so that they can begin the H-1B process right away. It must be taken in the U.S, and it consists of multiple-choice questions (MCQs), and computer-based case simulations.

## **Exam Structure:**

The exam is a two-day examination:

- 1 The first day of testing includes 232 multiple-choice items divided into 6 blocks of 38-39 items; 60 minutes are allotted for completion of each block of test items. There are approximately 7 hours in the test session on the first day, including 45 minutes of break time. The style of questions is similar to STEP 1 questions with a special focus on biostatistics.
- 2 The second day consists of approximately 9 hours. This day of testing includes a 5-minute optional tutorial followed by 180 multiple-choice items divided into 6 blocks of 30 items; 45 minutes are allotted for completion of each block of test items. The second day also includes a 7-minute CCS tutorial. This is followed by 13 case simulations, each of which is allotted a maximum of 10 or 20 minutes of real time. A minimum of 45 minutes is available for break time. The style of questions is similar to STEP 2 questions.

## **Study Tips:**

1. The exam needs about 4-6 weeks of dedicated study, and the shorter the period between STEP 2 and STEP 3, the better because you can remember most of the concepts as they are very similar.
2. Use UWorld STEP 3 to prepare for the MCQs. Solve as many questions as possible (70% is sufficient). Nevertheless, try to answer all biostatistics and microbiology questions.
3. CCScases.com is the main resource for CCS cases. Avoid using UWorld for CCS cases because it is not very useful. The website allows you to list the highest yield cases first, and it would be enough to solve the top 100 to 120 cases. Familiarize yourself with the cases multiple times until you master them. Start the cases early in your preparation so you can get familiar with the software which is exactly the same as on the real exam.

Each CCS case is a dynamic interactive simulation of a patient-care situation designed to evaluate your approach to clinical management, including diagnosis, treatment, and monitoring in a variety of patient care situations and settings over varying periods of simulated time. As simulated time passes, a patient's condition may change based on the course of the underlying medical condition(s) or your management, or both. Patients may present with acute problems to be managed within a few minutes of simulated time or with chronic problems to be managed over several months of simulated time.

4. Revise STEP 1 content quickly, especially pharmacology (drugs' mechanism of action and side effects), microbiology, and biostatistics.
5. Register for the exam one month at least before the intended date for the exam. Apply through this [link](#).

# **Research Experience**

Having research experience is not mandatory to match but it plays integral roles for international medical graduates (IMGs) aiming to pursue residency training in the United States. Research experience offers IMGs the opportunity to engage in scholarly activities, contribute to medical knowledge, and demonstrate their commitment to academic medicine. Here's an in-depth exploration of research for IMGs.

## **Types of Research:**

- **Basic Science Research:** Involves laboratory-based studies focusing on fundamental biological mechanisms.
- **Clinical Research:** Involves patient-oriented studies, including clinical trials, epidemiological investigations, and outcomes research.
- **Translational Research:** Bridges the gap between basic science discoveries and their application in clinical settings.

## **Benefits of Research:**

- **Enhances Critical Thinking Skills:** Engaging in research cultivates analytical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and evidence-based decision-making skills.
- **Demonstrates Academic Potential:** Research publications, presentations, and abstracts showcase an IMG's academic achievements and intellectual curiosity.
- **Strengthens Residency Application:** Research experience can differentiate IMGs from their peers, especially in competitive specialties where academic achievements are highly valued.

## **Opportunities for Research:**

- **Academic Institutions:** Collaborate with faculty members, researchers, and academic departments at medical schools or affiliated hospitals.
- **Research Fellowships:** Participate in structured research programs, fellowships, or summer research opportunities offered by renowned institutions.
- **Online Resources:** Access virtual research opportunities, databases, and academic journals to explore research topics of interest.

## **Strategies for Success:**

- **Identify Your Interests:** Choose research topics aligned with your career goals, clinical interests, and academic passions.
- **Seek Mentorship:** Find mentors, advisors, or research supervisors who can provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities.
- **Publish and Present:** Aim to publish research findings in peer-reviewed journals and present at conferences, symposiums, or poster sessions to enhance visibility and recognition.

# **US Clinical Experience**

US clinical experience (USCE) provides IMGs with firsthand exposure to the US healthcare system, patient care practices, and medical culture. Here's an in-depth exploration of USCE:

## **Types of USCE:**

- Electives/Clerkships: Formal clinical rotations or clerkships undertaken at US medical institutions under the supervision of attending physicians.
- Observerships: Shadowing experiences that allow IMGs to observe clinical interactions, procedures, and healthcare delivery in various specialties.
- Externships: Hands-on clinical experiences that provide IMGs with limited direct patient care responsibilities, often in community-based settings.
- Tele-rotations: Virtual clinical rotations conducted remotely, offering IMGs opportunities to engage in telemedicine and virtual patient encounters.

## **Opportunities for USCE:**

- Visiting Student Programs: Participate in visiting student programs offered by US medical schools, which allow IMGs to enroll in elective rotations for credit.
- Clinical Externship Companies: Explore opportunities offered by clinical externship companies that facilitate placements in US hospitals and clinical settings.
- It's important to note that medical students generally have better odds of securing electives/clerkships compared to graduates, who typically find placements in observerships or externships. Understanding this distinction is crucial for prospective applicants to strategically plan their USCE opportunities with greater foresight and efficiency. While tele-rotations offer some benefits, they often carry lower clinical value and result in weaker letter of recommendation, making them a less favorable option and best reserved as a last resort.

## **Strategies for Success:**

- Research Program Requirements: Understand the eligibility criteria, application deadlines, and prerequisites for USCE programs, including visa requirements for international participants.
- Secure Strong Recommendations: Establish positive relationships with supervising physicians, preceptors, or mentors who can provide meaningful letters of recommendation.
- Document Experiences: Maintain detailed records of clinical experiences, procedures observed, and patient interactions to document USCE on residency applications and CVs.

# **Electronic Residency Application Service**

The Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) is a vital platform for international medical graduates (IMGs) seeking residency positions in the United States. Understanding how to effectively utilize the ERAS application system is essential for submitting competitive residency applications. Here's a comprehensive guide to help you navigate the ERAS application process:

ERAS is a centralized application system used by residency programs to receive, review, and select candidates for residency positions. It streamlines the application process, allowing IMGs to submit their applications, supporting documents, and letters of recommendation electronically.

## Key Components of the ERAS Application

1. **Personal Information:** Enter your personal details, contact information, and demographic data accurately.
2. **Academic History:** Provide comprehensive information about your medical education, including details of your medical school, degree earned, and dates of attendance.
3. **USMLE Scores:** Input your USMLE examination scores, including Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK), to demonstrate your medical knowledge and proficiency.
4. **Clinical Experience:** Document your clinical experiences, including rotations, clerkships, observerships, and volunteer work, to highlight your hands-on patient care experience.
5. **Research Activities:** List any research projects, publications, presentations, or scholarly activities you have undertaken to showcase your academic achievements and contributions to medical knowledge.
6. **Personal Statement:** Craft a compelling personal statement that reflects your career aspirations, motivations for pursuing residency training, and fit with the specialty and program to which you are applying.
7. **Letters of Recommendation:** Request letters of recommendation from faculty members, attending physicians, or supervisors who can attest to your clinical skills, professionalism, and readiness for residency training.

## **Tips for Using the ERAS Application System**

1. **Start Early:** Begin preparing your ERAS application well in advance of the application cycle opening to ensure ample time for gathering documents, soliciting letters of recommendation, and reviewing your application.
2. **Review Program Requirements:** Familiarize yourself with the specific requirements and preferences of the residency programs to which you are applying, including USMLE score thresholds, visa policies, and program-specific application components.
3. **Proofread Carefully:** Thoroughly review all sections of your ERAS application for accuracy, completeness, and consistency. Typos, errors, or inconsistencies could detract from the professionalism of your application.
4. **Seek Feedback:** Solicit feedback on your personal statement, CV, and application materials from mentors, advisors, or trusted colleagues to ensure they effectively convey your strengths and qualifications.
5. **Submit Strategically:** Strategically submit your ERAS application to programs that align with your career goals, preferences, and likelihood of receiving interviews. Consider applying broadly while targeting programs that offer the best fit for your professional aspirations.

#### **Tailoring Your Applications to Programs: Researching Residency Programs**

1. **Residency Explorer:** Explore the Residency Explorer website, a valuable resource that provides detailed information about residency programs, including program characteristics, requirements, and applicant data. This interactive tool allows you to filter programs based on various parameters and compare programs side by side.
2. **FREIDA Database:** Utilize the FREIDA (Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database Access) database to research residency programs based on specialty, location, program size, and other criteria.
3. **Program Websites:** Visit the websites of individual residency programs to learn about their mission, curriculum, faculty, facilities, and resident experiences. Note that the program webpage mostly is the updated and more reliable sources for data.
4. **Consult Recent Graduates:** Reach out to recent graduates or current residents from Yemen or similar backgrounds who have successfully matched into residency programs in the US. They can provide valuable insights and advice on program selection and application strategies.

**Good Luck**

**Hadramout Student Association  
Alfaisal University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**