



## Overview of COMLEX-USA

The American Medical Association adopted policy in November 2018 to promote equal acceptance of the USMLE and COMLEX-USA for all US residency programs. The AMA is working with stakeholder organizations to educate residency program directors on how to interpret and use COMLEX-USA scores and promote higher utilization of COMLEX-USA for residency program matches in light of the single accreditation system for graduate medical education.

### Examination Series Sequence

The Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the United States, COMLEX-USA, is a three-level, national standardized examination series used by all medical licensing authorities to make licensing decisions for osteopathic physicians. COMLEX-USA is designed to assess the osteopathic medical knowledge, knowledge fluency, and clinical skills considered essential for osteopathic generalist physicians to practice osteopathic medicine. The foundation of COMLEX-USA is based on the osteopathic philosophy of whole-person health care, underlying structure-function relationships and the interdependence of body systems, self-healing and self-regulatory mechanisms, and the full scope of the osteopathic approach to patient care, including osteopathic manipulative medicine.

- The primary and intended use of COMLEX-USA supports the NBOME mission of protecting the public.
- COMLEX-USA is also a graduation requirement for attaining a DO degree from colleges of osteopathic medicine in the United States, and for entry into and promotion within graduate medical education (residency) training programs.

### Secondary Uses

- COMLEX-USA scores are also used for student promotion and graduation from a college of osteopathic medicine, by residency program directors to screen and rank residency applicants, and in resident promotion and assessment.
- To promote responsible use of COMLEX-USA scores, the NBOME recommends residency and fellowship program directors develop a strong understanding of what the COMLEX-USA examinations measure, how standards are set, what the scores mean, and how COMLEX-USA scores correlate to performance in residency.
- The NBOME website includes a score conversion tool capable of converting an applicant's 3-digit COMLEX-USA score to a percentile rank. This number may be used to compare an applicant's scores against those of his or her peers within a testing cycle. To access the percentile score converter tool, go to the NBOME website ([www.nbome.org](http://www.nbome.org)) or [click here](#).

The COMLEX-USA examination series follows a progressive sequence broken into three levels. Osteopathic medical students take the exams in sequence, passing each level before advancing to the next. Level 2-CE and Level 2-PE can be taken in either order.

### Level 1

A one-day computer-based assessment that integrates the foundational biomedical sciences and osteopathic principles with clinical knowledge and other physician competencies relevant to addressing clinical presentations and promoting health in supervised clinical practice settings.

Candidates for the Level 1 examination must meet the following prerequisites:

- Completion of the first year of study at an accredited COM
- Attestation by the COM that the candidate is in good academic and professional standing

### **Level 2 – Cognitive Evaluation (CE)**

A one-day computer-based assessment that integrates application of knowledge in clinical and foundational biomedical sciences and osteopathic principles with other physician competencies related to the clinical care of patients and promoting health in supervised clinical settings. These competency domains include application of osteopathic medical knowledge, osteopathic patient care and osteopathic principles and practice, communication, systems-based practice, practice-based learning and improvement, professionalism and ethics.

Candidates for the Level 2-CE examination must meet the following prerequisites:

- Passing of COMLEX-USA Level 1
- Completion of the second year of study at an accredited COM
- Attestation by the COM that the candidate is in good academic and professional standing

### **LEVEL 2 – Performance Evaluation (PE)**

An assessment of fundamental clinical skills evaluated through 12 encounters with standardized patients. Candidates assess problem-centered and health-promotion-centered patient presentations. Each candidate must personally perform the clinical skills with standardized patients as appropriate in a timely, efficient, safe, and effective manner. The examination augments the Level 2-Cognitive Evaluation (Level 2-CE) through an assessment of six fundamental clinical skills for osteopathic medical practice within two scored examination domains: the Humanistic Domain and the Biomedical/Biomechanical Domain.

#### **Fundamental Clinical Skills Assessed Humanistic Domain**

- Physician-patient Communication
- Interpersonal skills
- Professionalism

#### **Biomedical/Biomechanical Domain**

- Medical history-taking and physical examination skills
- Osteopathic principles and osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT)
- Documentation skills (including synthesis of clinical findings, integrated differential diagnosis, and formulation of a diagnostic and treatment plan)

**Candidates for the Level 2-PE examination must meet the following prerequisites:**

- Passing of COMLEX-USA Level 1
- Completion of the second year of study at an accredited COM
- Attestation by the COM that the candidate is in good academic and professional standing

### **Scoring**

COMLEX-USA examinations use a criterion-referenced standard setting methodology. The minimum passing score for COMLEX-USA Level 1 or Level 2-CE is 400, with a mean score between 500 and 550. Passing Levels 1 and 2 means a candidate has demonstrated competence to enter into supervised clinical practice settings, enter graduate medical education, and prepare for lifelong learning.

### **From the NBOME:**

- **Information for Graduate Medical Education Programs:** <https://www.nbome.org/graduate-medical-education-programs/>
- **Enhancing COMLEX-USA:** <https://www.nbome.org/exams-assessments/comlex-usa/enhancing-comlex-usa/>