



May 8, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As promised in our last communication, we have been working to improve testing capacity and the examinee experience for USMLE and have several updates to provide.

Status of Prometric testing

Testing resumed in some locations last Friday in accordance with state and local guidelines (for more information on Prometric's new policies visit their website at [prometric.com/covid-19-update/social-distancing-policies](https://www.prometric.com/covid-19-update/social-distancing-policies)). Hundreds of examinees successfully tested, but the overall examinee experience is not meeting our expectations. We continue to exert pressure on Prometric to rectify all issues in a timely manner. We are working daily with Prometric and they have dedicated resources to both resumption of USMLE testing and addressing the examinee experience.

One step we are taking to alleviate pressure on examinees is to extend the USMLE eligibility period to June 2021 to allow students a full academic year to complete their assessment.

We know there were a small but distressing number of instances since May 1st where examinees traveled to test centers only to find them closed. We remain disappointed with Prometric's failure to fulfill its obligations to your students and to the USMLE program. We have been in constant communication with Prometric, including with their CEO, about the harm that their failures are causing, and we have escalated our pressure on them to fulfill their obligations. Please know that on behalf of your students, we will pursue all available contractual remedies with Prometric. Any students who have suffered direct out of pocket monetary losses due to Prometric's lack of communication or miscommunication regarding test center closures should make a written claim directly with Prometric [prometric.com/contact-us](https://www.prometric.com/contact-us). If the matter is not handled appropriately, NBME will step in to assist.

Alternate delivery of USMLE Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 3

In collaboration with the medical schools, we have already identified several options for proctored testing outside of Prometric centers. We are expecting to begin testing at some medical school campuses this month. USMLE is committed to offering a broader distribution of testing at medical schools – we are working through technological challenges in order to do so. While this solution will not completely address the testing backlog, it will provide additional USMLE-specified slots within Prometric's overall capacity, which is increasing. The pilot schools are being considered based on geographic locations and a willingness to serve as a regional testing site. We are not able to scale this solution to all schools, and therefore we plan to deliver other solutions as well. We will ramp-up testing as we institute new systems and processes.

We continue to aggressively explore remote proctoring and expect to have progress to report on the timeline for that project in the next week.

We recognize the burden reduced testing capacity places on schools and examinees. As we move forward with solutions to alleviate this burden, we must also evaluate the fairness of any test administration method. We need to ensure that our test administration models allow all test takers to reliably and validly demonstrate their skills and maximize, to the extent possible, fairness, access, security, and reliability. Increasing capacity by deploying exam administrations to schools may create differential geographic access. Similarly, with respect to remote proctoring, we recognize that not all schools or individuals have equal access to high-speed internet, a computer that meets the technology requirements for remote proctoring, or dedicated space in which to take the test.

Given these issues of fairness and bias, we will continue to work with organizations in the medical education and the medical regulatory community to identify temporary changes to policy and requirements such as relaxing requirements for promotion, graduation, or licensing decisions. NBME is committed to continuing our focus on delivering safe testing and fair test results for students.

Step 2CS

After careful consideration, we do not believe we can resume the exam in its current format without unacceptable infection risk to examinees and staff, so we do not anticipate being able to resume Step 2CS testing in June or July and once operational do not expect to be at full capacity until the end of the year. We have therefore, identified a potential solution - an assessment more akin to telehealth, with examinees and patients interacting via a web browser. While we have had to accelerate changes to Step 2CS due to COVID-19, this new direction is consistent with options we were already exploring as we adapt this test to reflect the emergency at hand and the evolution in medical education and health care. We are currently assessing the viability of this solution, which due to significant retooling of content and delivery presents significant feasibility challenges, but will diminish anxiety, travel time and costs for examinees as they will not have to travel to the six test centers. We will update you on our progress on a regular basis.

We are in direct communication with many of your schools and have participated in a variety of meetings including the AAMC's Council of Deans and Medical Education Senior Leaders and are always willing to send representatives to provide updates. In addition, we have been in contact with the AAMCs - OSR leadership and have a townhall scheduled with the OSR for May 19th.

We value the continued involvement of the schools - please know that we are doing everything we can to address the challenges of our new environment quickly.

Sincerely,



Peter J. Katsufraakis, MD, MBA
President and CEO

