STATEMENT ON FINALIZING THE TIMELINE FOR USMLE SCORE REPORTING

After the 2019 Invitational Conference on USMLE Scoring, the USMLE and its co-sponsors, the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) and the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME), announced that USMLE Step 1 score reporting will change to pass/fail “no earlier than January 1, 2022.” On July 16th, 2020 USMLE clarified that “all scores for Step 1 exams taken prior to the date of the policy change will continue to be reported using the three-digit numeric score on all USMLE transcripts.”

As the premiere organization for physician-scientist students and trainees, we commend the USMLE, NBME, and FSMB for this clarification. The uncertainty about whether or not Step 1 exam scores could be retroactively altered led to an undue burden on all medical students considering whether to take additional time outside of the standard four-year clinical curriculum to pursue intensive research training. Clarifying this timeline can help students considering physician-scientist training to make fully informed decisions for their careers.

However, the current USMLE Score Reporting policy regarding Step 1 still only states that pass/fail score reporting will convert to pass/fail “no earlier than January 2022.” Without a specific, finalized date for when score reporting will change, it is unclear to medical students who are considering dedicated research training time what exam date will lead them to be part of the three-digit numeric or the pass/fail score groups. This is especially significant for students who attend a school that requires completion of Step 1 after dedicated research training.

In line with the Invitational Conference on USMLE Scoring (InCUS) goal to improve the health and wellness of students and physicians in training, especially during UME-GME transition, we are asking that USMLE, FSMB, NBME, and the Coalition for Physician Accountability:

1. Finalize the specific transition date for Step 1 scoring to convert to pass/fail
2. Define this transition date no later than the end of 2020 so that medical students can make informed decisions about pursuing intensive research experiences during their training

We recognize that the current pandemic represents a unique situation that may make it difficult to finalize January 2022 as the specific transition date. We are thankful for your consideration of our concerns and for the steadfast leadership of the USMLE/co-sponsor organizations in these extraordinary times.

Sincerely,

American Physician Scientist Association Executive Council and Committees
American Physician Scientist Association Board of Directors
References

1. [https://www.usmle.org/announcements/?ContentId=290](https://www.usmle.org/announcements/?ContentId=290)
2. [https://covid.usmle.org/announcements/usmle-score-reporting-policy-updates](https://covid.usmle.org/announcements/usmle-score-reporting-policy-updates)
3. [https://www.usmle.org/pdfs/incus/InCUS_summary_report.pdf](https://www.usmle.org/pdfs/incus/InCUS_summary_report.pdf)