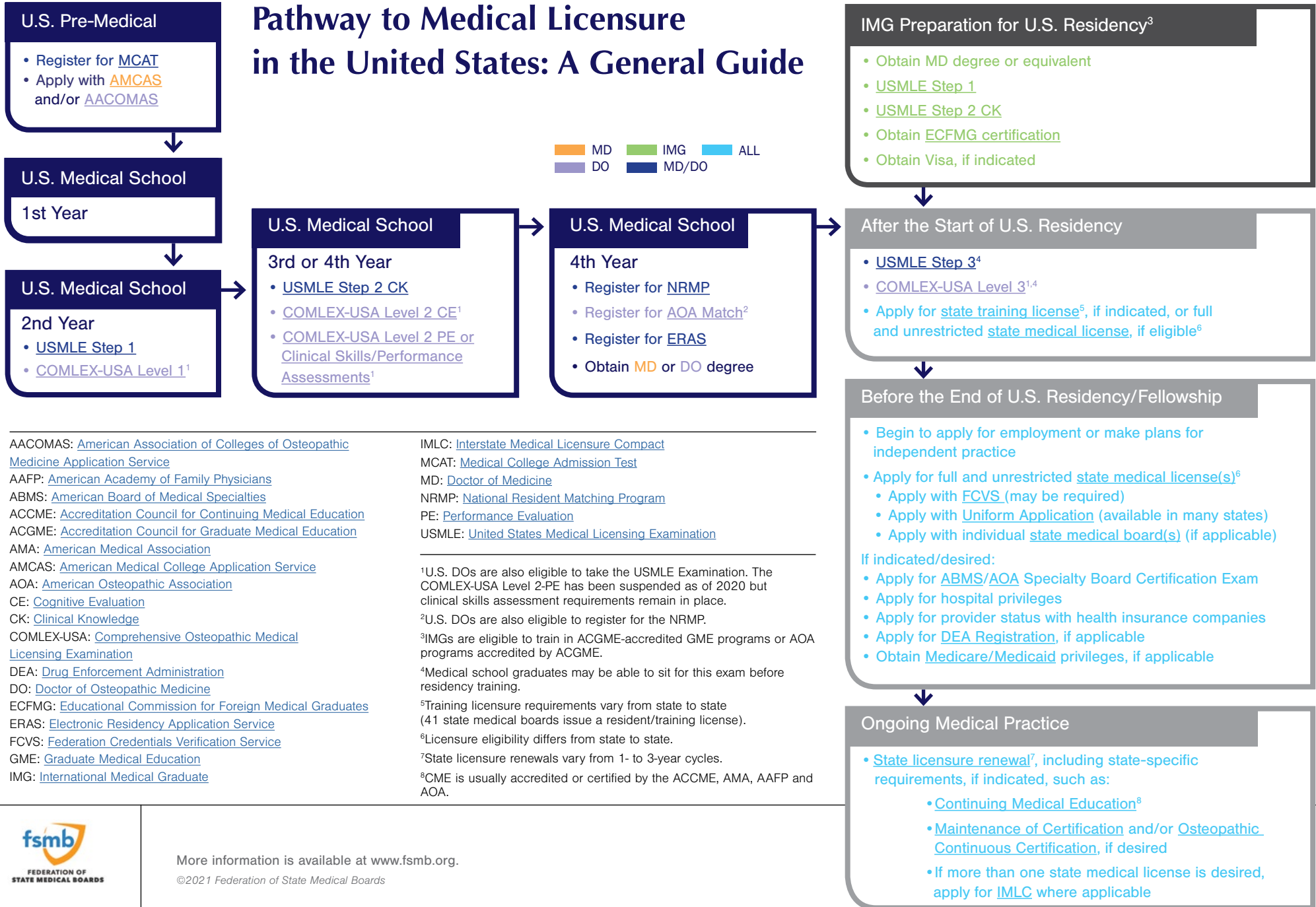


# Pathway to Medical Licensure in the United States: A General Guide



MD IMG ALL  
DO MD/DO

AACOMAS: [American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service](#)  
 AAFP: [American Academy of Family Physicians](#)  
 ABMS: [American Board of Medical Specialties](#)  
 ACCME: [Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education](#)  
 ACGME: [Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education](#)  
 AMA: [American Medical Association](#)  
 AMCAS: [American Medical College Application Service](#)  
 AOA: [American Osteopathic Association](#)  
 CE: [Cognitive Evaluation](#)  
 CK: [Clinical Knowledge](#)  
 COMLEX-USA: [Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination](#)  
 DEA: [Drug Enforcement Administration](#)  
 DO: [Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine](#)  
 ECFMG: [Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates](#)  
 ERAS: [Electronic Residency Application Service](#)  
 FCVS: [Federation Credentials Verification Service](#)  
 GME: [Graduate Medical Education](#)  
 IMG: [International Medical Graduate](#)

IMLC: [Interstate Medical Licensure Compact](#)  
 MCAT: [Medical College Admission Test](#)  
 MD: [Doctor of Medicine](#)  
 NRMP: [National Resident Matching Program](#)  
 PE: [Performance Evaluation](#)  
 USMLE: [United States Medical Licensing Examination](#)

<sup>1</sup>U.S. DOs are also eligible to take the USMLE Examination. The COMLEX-USA Level 2-PE has been suspended as of 2020 but clinical skills assessment requirements remain in place.  
<sup>2</sup>U.S. DOs are also eligible to register for the NRMP.  
<sup>3</sup>IMGs are eligible to train in ACGME-accredited GME programs or AOA programs accredited by ACGME.  
<sup>4</sup>Medical school graduates may be able to sit for this exam before residency training.  
<sup>5</sup>Training licensure requirements vary from state to state (41 state medical boards issue a resident/training license).  
<sup>6</sup>Licensure eligibility differs from state to state.  
<sup>7</sup>State licensure renewals vary from 1- to 3-year cycles.  
<sup>8</sup>CME is usually accredited or certified by the ACCME, AMA, AAFP and AOA.



## Definition

**AACOMAS** – The [American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service](#) is a centralized application service for colleges of osteopathic medicine in the United States through the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine®.

**AMCAS®** – The [American Medical College Application Service®](#), a program of the Association of American Medical Colleges, is a centralized application processing service that is only available to applicants to first-year entering classes at participating allopathic (MD) U.S. medical schools.

**COMLEX-USA** – The [Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination](#) (COMLEX-USA) is a multi-part assessment given by the [National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners](#) (NBOME) to students and graduates of osteopathic medical education programs accredited by the American Osteopathic Association's Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation. The NBOME eligibility criterion requires COMLEX Level 1 to be taken after successful completion of the 1st academic year of an osteopathic medical school program. Level 2 Cognitive and clinical skills/performance assessment requirements cannot be taken until after successful completion of the 2nd academic year and passing Level 1. The COMLEX-USA Level 3 is usually taken during residency training and after successful completion of Levels 1-2, though in certain circumstances Level 3 may be taken by osteopathic medical school graduates prior to beginning residency training.

**ECFMG®** – The [Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates](#) (ECFMG) provides a certification program for international medical graduates (IMGs) to assess their readiness prior to entering into ACGME-accredited residency or fellowship training programs in the United States.

**ERAS®** – The [Electronic Residency Application Service](#) (ERAS®) was developed by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to allow medical school students and graduates to apply electronically for residency positions in accredited U.S. programs of graduate medical education.

**FCVS** – The [Federation Credentials Verification Service](#), a service of the [Federation of State Medical Boards](#), establishes a permanent, lifetime repository of primary-source verified core credentials (medical education, postgraduate training, examination history, board action history, board certification and identity) for physicians and physician assistants. This repository can be forwarded, at the applicant's request, to nearly any state medical board, hospital, health care facility or other entity.

**IMLC** – The [Interstate Medical Licensure Compact](#) offers a new, voluntary expedited pathway to licensure for qualified physicians who wish to practice in multiple states. While making it easier for physicians to obtain licenses to practice in multiple states, the Compact strengthens public protection by enhancing the ability of states to share investigative and disciplinary information. The Compact is being implemented in a growing

number of states, with others expected to adopt it soon.

**MCAT®** – The [Medical College Admission Test®](#) is a standardized, multiple-choice examination designed to assess the examinee's problem solving, critical thinking, knowledge of science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine. A new version of the test is expected in 2015.

**MOC®** – The [American Board of Medical Specialties](#) (ABMS) assists 24 approved medical specialty boards in the development and use of standards in the ongoing evaluation and certification of physicians. In 2000, the 24 Member Boards of ABMS agreed to evolve their recertification programs to one of continuous professional development – [ABMS Maintenance of Certification®](#) (ABMS MOC®). In 2006, all Member Specialty Boards received approval of their ABMS MOC programs, which have 8-10 year renewal cycles.

**NRMP®** – The [National Resident Matching Program](#) provides a uniform date of appointment to positions in graduate medical education (GME). It provides an impartial venue for matching applicants' and programs' preferences for each other consistently.

**OCC** – The [American Osteopathic Association](#) (AOA) Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists consists of 18 specialty-certifying boards. Effective in 2013, each AOA specialty certifying board requires an [Osteopathic Continuous Certification](#) (OCC) process for all doctors of osteopathic medicine

(DOs) with time-limited certifications. OCC runs on a 6-10 year cycle depending upon the specific specialty board.

**UA** – The [Uniform Application](#), a service of the [Federation of State Medical Boards](#), is a Web-based application that standardizes, simplifies and streamlines the licensure application process for MDs, DOs and Residents. Applicants fill out the online UA once and then use it whenever they apply for a license in another state for the rest of their careers. The UA is a standard licensure application form that serves as the core of a state's license application without replacing unique state-level requirements, which are collected and submitted via a state-specific addendum.

**USMLE®** – The [United States Medical Licensing Examination®](#) (USMLE®) is a jointly sponsored program of the [Federation of State Medical Boards](#) and the [National Board of Medical Examiners®](#). The USMLE is open to students/graduates of accredited medical school programs issuing the MD or DO degree and to students/graduates of international medical schools eligible for certification by the ECFMG. In general, Step 1 is usually taken at the end of the 2nd academic year of medical school; Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) is generally taken before the end of the 3rd academic year. Most examinees take Step 3 within the first 18 months of residency training, though under certain circumstances some IMGs and U.S. medical school graduates may take Step 3 prior to beginning residency training.