

USMLE Step 1 Questionnaire N = 69

1. What was the most important factor in deciding on which date to take USMLE Step 1?
 - a. I scheduled the exam to not conflict with a personal event or vacation. **21.7%**
 - b. I scheduled the exam around a career related event. **2.9%**
 - c. I scheduled the exam to allow time for study and review. **75.4%**
 - d. I scheduled the exam early to "get it over with" and minimize stress. **13.0%**

2. When did you start studying for boards?
 - a. <1 month before **30.4%**
 - b. 2 months before **60.9%**
 - c. 3 months before **1.4%**
 - d. <3 months before **7.2%**
 - e. Unanswered **< 0.0%**

3. I utilized a boards review book in my preparation.
 - a. True **98.6%**
 - b. False **0.0%**
 - c. Unanswered **1.4%**

4. If you answered yes to question #3, which book or books did you study from?
 - a. Kaplan books (**25 students**)
 - b. First Aid for Boards (**60 students**)
 - c. Board Review Series- (Pathology, Physiology, Biochemistry) (**12 students**)
 - d. Step-Up (**5 students**)
 - e. NMS Review (**3 students**)
 - f. **Other responses:** NBME Review questions book, pharm flash cards, costanzo's physiology, embryo and neurology high-yield board review series, costanzo's pathology/pathophysiology, Other board review books, LWW/BRS Pathology, i went to the Kaplan review course in Kansas City and they supplied review books that went along with the lectures we had, pre-test question books, Medical Micro/Immuno, High Yield Anatomy, High Yield Neuroanatomy, Lippincott Biochem Review, BRS Pharmacology, Robbins Review of Pathology, BRS Embryology, web-based questions, clinical vignettes (Hi Yield Series), Underground Clinical Vignettes, Appleton and Lange Review, Other board review books that had been required texts throughout the first two years, Lippincott (?) practice exam book--15 sets of 50 questions--I did 7 in one day to simulate boards, Kaplan Qbank (questions only), Kaplan Organ systems books, High Yield books--Pharm, Biostats, Behavior, Psych, Embryology, Anatomy, Neurology, Stars Neuro Review, Robbins Q and A, pharm roadmap book

5. If you answered yes to question #3, which book/books was/were most helpful and why?
 - a. First Aid
 - i. is key in that it has everything you need to memorize, but it doesn't help you really grasp and understand the concepts
 - ii. loved the high yield facts at the end of the book! I used those the day before the exam and it helped me on a few questions!
 - iii. -- good neumonics, great review because conscise and high-yield
 - iv. decent memory aids
 - v. covers all subjects in readable short manner.
 - vi. It was very clear, concise, and easy to rip through in a short amount of time.
 - vii. because it hit on the high points of the different topics without including overwhelming amounts of information. It was truly a "review" book.
 - viii. ...very condensed for quick study, but not good for a sole study guide
 - ix. It created a framework for what I needed to know and the details that I did not remember or did not understand could be filled in.
 - x. - helped focus studying and provided a good template on which to consolidate notes from other resources.
 - xi. first-aid tended to simplify things almost too much. The question book was good for practice.
 - xii. excellent outline, and I just supplemented from it as necessary.
 - xiii. First Aid b/c it was easy to follow and to the point
 - xiv. good overview of important topics. It also pointed out the most high yield info for board questions. For sections I thought were too vague, I referred back to class notes.
 - xv. most topics, except pathology- kaplan book was more helpful

- xvi. very nice right before you take the test b/c it hits major points
 - xvii. concise, and had a lot of great mneumonics for remembering details.
 - xviii. to the point. If you know everything in that book you will do fine on the exam.
 - xix. Most if not all the info in this was adequate. Most of the questions on step one were on topics that you cant really study for. It seemed to me that you need to really use your powers of deduction to figure out the answer. All of the topics that need to be learned though can be found in this book.
 - xx. by far!!! and the website online that goes with it.
 - xxi. It was truly a "review" book.
- b. Kaplan books
- i. are useful only if you take the course.
 - ii. was extremely helpful and definitely led to increasing my score. Down side is that there was a lot to read and go over.
 - iii. nice for questions and for material that I needed more explanation/clarification, but too extensive for overall studying. First Aid was definitely very helpful!!
 - iv. First Aid was good for things I felt I only needed to brush up on. Kaplan was good for the things I had completely forgotten.
 - v. a little long. first aid, right to the point, but a little too brief to use alone
 - vi. Kaplan review books are absolutely worthless. I wasted so much time going too far in depth with these books and learned after taking the test, that these books were way too simplistic anyway.
 - vii. Kaplan review books were intensive and there was a lot of information
 - viii. seemed to be the most helpful because there were lectures that went along with them
 - ix. Kaplan books are useful only if you take the course.
 - x. The Kaplan self study was extremely helpful and definitely led to increasing my score. Down side is that there was a lot to read and go over
- c. The BRS books
- i. were more detailed and thorough. I didn't have much time to review Step up but it is organized by systems, which is good for an alternative approach.
 - ii. BRS Pathology was excellent!
 - iii. especially BRS Pathology, BRS Physiology, and Medical Micro/Immuno b/c these were high yield topics on my (and I believe many others) Step I exam. First Aid is a must but must be supplemented for it to be worthwhile.
 - iv. Board review series and maybe Kaplan, the First aid was a good short review the last few days before the test. BRS is good at reviewing the main points and adds enough detail to help understand, not just memorize. Kaplan books were the same, didn't cover quite as much but had lots of uncommon stuff that they like to put on the boards.
- d. Microbiology made ridiculously simple--fun ways to remember micro
- e. Robbins Q and A
- f. Step Up
- i. -- organ-based
 - ii. step up-good system based review
- g. costanzo's phys and pathophys -- important topics to understand and well-organized, concise
- h. LWW/BRS Pathology - comprehensive review
- i. LWW/BRS Micro/Pharm flashcards - repetitive review
- j. appelton and lange was a bit too easy in some sections - unlike the real test/q-bank style.

6. I participated in an off campus boards review course.

- a. True **14.5%**
- b. False **85.5%**

7. If yes to #6, which course/courses did you participate in?

- a. 58 Unanswered Responses
- b. Kaplan (**10 students**)

8. If you answered yes to question #6, what was the duration of course?

- a. 90 hours **1.4%**
- b. 3 weeks **2.9%**
- c. 18 days **2.9%**
- d. self-study videos and books **1.4%**
- e. web based, (personal preference) **1.4%**
- f. 4 weeks **1.4%**
- g. *Unanswered* **84.1%**

9. If you answered yes to question #6, rate the course.
- a. Not useful **0.0%**
 - b. Slightly useful **0.0%**
 - c. Useful **7.2%**
 - d. Extremely useful **7.2%**
10. If you answered yes to question #6, you would recommend this course to someone else.
- a. True **15.9%**
 - b. False **0.0%**
 - c. *Unanswered* **84.1%**
11. I used practice exams/question bank in my preparation.
- a. True **98.6%**
 - b. False **1.4%**
 - c. *Unanswered* **0.0%**
12. If you answered yes to question #11, which did you use?
- a. 3 Unanswered Responses
 - b. Kaplan Q bank (**55 students**)
 - c. McGraw-Hill USMLEasy (**10 students**)
 - d. NBME Comprehensive Basic Exam 1 and 2 (**6 students**)
 - e. USMLE websites (**3 students**)
 - f. Appleton and Lange - not as good as q-bank (**2 students**)
 - g. Robbins Review of Pathology book
13. If you answered yes to question #11, which practice exams/question banks were most useful and why?
- a. 15 Unanswered Responses
 - b. Kaplan
 - i. they have been around for the longest time, and seem to have better written questions and answers.
 - ii. helped prepare for board style questions and content
 - iii. the format was the same as for the boards and explanations to questions were also helpful study tools.
 - iv. good test simulation
 - v. focused what i didn't know, some questions were frustratingly inane/difficult, but otherwise a helpful endeavour-mind you, i did about 1700 practice questions just out of q bank
 - vi. questions similar to USMLE format and level of difficulty
 - vii. It helped me realize which subjects I was still weak on and which I was OK with. Too bad I didn't use it more...there were still lots of unanswered questions that I just ran out of time and couldn't practice with!!!
 - viii. gives good feedback to know what areas to focus on the last week of studying.
 - ix. was probably the best as it was multidisciplinary.
 - x. were hard, but very similar to the actual test. I had less anxiety since it looked the same.
 - c. USMLEasy
 - i. was also used, however this was the first year they put these questions up for students, so im sure there were a few wrong answers. Format was good though.
 - ii. was moderately helpful.
 - iii. was not worth it for free, and would definitely not be worth it for the 100 bucks they charge now. The questions were not close to USMLE style and many were at a completely wrong level of detail.
 - d. NBME
 - i. -most helpful to take both exams and review with another student--2 weeks before and then 1 week before for the 2nd one
 - ii. practice test that you had to pay for were the ABSOLUTELY MOST HELPFUL
 - iii. tests were more like the real test
 - iv. the ones you have to pay for. The freeby is worthless, too easy.
 - e. None and all -> not applicable, really. The Q-bank questions were filled with buzzwords, often multiple. However, the actual Step 1 format was very vague, very laboratory-based, basic presentation in the vignettes for those who were skilled like a good intern, not a 2nd year test.
 - f. All - Kaplan is good to get an idea of topics you're not proficient in, NBME good for what the real test questions would be structured like, Robbins good for path review and path/pathophys makes up the bulk of Step I (at least mine was)
 - g. Appleton and lange book was key for me. I got a good appreciation for what the test entailed and what to study for. The questions were fairly comparable and were equally as difficult.

14. The first two years of medical school adequately covered major boards topics (1 is strongly disagree and 8 is strongly agree).

1	1.4%
2	0.0%
3	2.9%
4	7.2%
5	18.8%
6	49.3%
7	21.7%
8	1.4%

15. I utilized on campus resources (videos, lectures) during my preparation.

a. True	56.5%
b. False	43.5%

16. Before I took the exam, I felt like I had prepared well for boards (1 is strongly disagree and 8 is strongly agree).

1	1.4%
2	1.4%
3	4.3%
4	4.3%
5	24.6%
6	34.8%
7	23.2%
8	7.2%

17. After I had taken the exam, I felt like I had prepared well for boards (1 is strongly disagree and 8 is strongly agree).

1	2.9%
2	2.9%
3	13.0%
4	20.3%
5	27.5%
6	14.5%
7	15.9%
8	2.9%

18. I scored _____ my expectations.

Extremely below	14.5%
Slightly below	36.2%
Right at	7.5%
Slightly above	20.3%
Extremely above	4.3%

Please include additional comments/suggestions for upcoming classes and the University in regards to boards preparation

When reviewing for Step 1, I felt that I had to review and learn new Biochemistry material (e.g. Vitamins) more so than other subjects.

I know a bunch of people failed boards but I don't think it has anything to do with the curriculum over the first two years. I think the people that failed did not take their preparation seriously. If I were to talk to the M2's about step 1 I would tell them that if you have a system to methodically prepare for the exam you will pass and probably do much better. I also think that 4-5 weeks is the optimum time for intense preparation. Less than that is not enough and more than that will wear you down. I liked the Kaplan course b/c they covered all of the areas we would be responsible for on the exam and I did not have to come up with my own plan to do that. I also felt that they went beyond the minimum for what we needed to know which I appreciated and it was also a nice way to consolidate and review what I had learned the previous two years.

work with all your heart

areas I felt weak in and had to more or less teach myself because the topics weren't covered well during classes (or else I completely missed it/didn't retain a thing):

nutrition, especially vitamins and their uses in physiology and deficiency states

genetic disorders, especially the storage disorders, other named diseases (ex. Tay-Sachs, etc)--so many were new names to me

Dr. Booth's micro review was great--thank you!

In general, I had heard path, phys/pathophys, and pharm were most important, and I agree they're very important, but all areas were covered, so you can't overlook any part of the first 2 years.

Do a lot of practice questions. I felt like I gained a lot more in the last couple of weeks of studying when I was only doing questions than in the previous 5 or 6 weeks of "normal" studying.

Practice questions, practice questions, practice questions. Especially clinical type questions. Boards is no longer "buzzword" oriented. Two, three, and four step questions are the norm so more knowledge is necessary as is time management while taking the exam. Practice questions are also (for me anyway) the only way to know if one truly understands a concept. Also, I personally had a lot of molecular biology type questions and these are not stressed in most review books.

In studying for boards, I came across numerous topics in First Aid that seemed to be more high yield than what was learned throughout the first couple of years. I would recommend that course directors make more emphasis on USMLE high yield topics, not just what they personally feel is important. Testing on more important concepts and not just minutia would also help.

For upcoming classes I would recommend buying review books at the very beginning of 2nd year and using them to study for exams as well. Being familiar with the books before using them the month before boards was very helpful. I would also suggest using Q bank throughout the year...it was difficult to find the time to, but in retrospect I wish I had done more.

Be sure to do the practice questions on the USMLE website. A few are on the actual exam and it is helpful to see the exact format. Those questions are a little easier than the real test.

Maybe a boards review made by the instructors of each section (i.e. Heme/Onc, MS/Rheum). Like what Dr. Booth does.

There was a lot of biochem that I felt like I did not learn previously and mostly got from the Kaplan review books. By reading the review books you could tell that there were certain areas the USMLE likes to test on (and were confirmed by taking it) that would have been nice to cover in class. I thought that medical school gave me a good base to get going on when studying for boards however.

Start studying/reviewing early in the year, don't wait until after school to begin. I started in October and went over antibiotics/pharm/path/micro and it was very helpful - so I took boards after 2.5 weeks of studying post-M2 year. Generally speaking, I would utilize more time with First Aid and Q bank, than I did attending lectures for Kaplan. But, it all depends on how someone learns best. If they are an audio learner, the lectures would be great. Don't spend the whole summer studying. Get 3 or 4 good weeks in and enjoy the only summer you'll ever have again!!

Get Henrichs old Biochem review- all you need for the boards. Dr. Booth covers everything you need for the Micro part. Learn your drugs during 2nd year, don't fall into the sucker trap of memorizing the review two days before your exams. This will save you a tremendous amount of time when studying for boards.

Pharmacology needs to be taught different. It needs to be focused more on diseases than drugs. For example, the antibiotics need to be geared toward different illnesses-like meningitis or pneumonia. Also, the mini-quizzes should be continued throughout the whole year as they keep students studying and not just cramming right before the test.

Biochemistry needs to cover more of the stuff on the boards. I felt the metabolic disorders were not covered very well. I felt I had to learn those disorders for the first time for the boards whereas I think we should only have to review things rather than learn new things.

I also think that core directors should also look in First aid to see what is in it and make sure it is covered in some way during the course.

It would be helpful to have a lecture 2nd yr. to deal with clinical signs of vitamin deficiencies (Ricketts, the Vitamin B's, etc.)

Pharmacology must be overhauled at UNMC. No one I knew felt prepared in Pharm.

Dr. Booth's review session was very helpful and appreciated. If anything can be done to organize a pharmacology review session or people to make a packet, anything would be helpful. That was the subject that I felt was lacking in boards prep during the regular lectures during the school year.

Boards are so difficult to prepare for because the questions take you one step farther than the knowledge you possess. We covered almost all of the basics in the first two years; I think it would be nearly impossible to go into everything in the detail to which it is tested on USMLE.

Keep up with Dr. Booth's review and make sure we work hard the first two years to get ready.

I felt unprepared for renal. Even though we were taught it 3 different times, I don't think any one teacher was very good.

Reading Robbins throughout 2nd year really helped me to retain more information. I could even remember some of the pictures in the book when studying for boards, which was useful.

UNMC does not allow enough time nor emphasizes board exam topic areas specifically--use First Aid to figure out these areas and make sure to know them. It can be overlooked!

Boards were really hard...I have no suggestions other than to memorize Robbins and practice medicine for 15 years first so that the Pharm is easier.

Kaplan is by far the best, use the web course, or just the books. First Aid is essential. Don't get too many books, you won't have time to look at everything.

Board topics hit hard on my exam:

Genetic Diseases, DM, Alcoholism, Micro

- 1) Pharm needs to be modified to hit a few more "boards favorite" drugs and fewer "top 200" drugs. I realize this is difficult with a joint pharmacy/medical curriculum
- 2) More boards focus and less esoteric research focus, especially in M1 cellular processes and physiology. There were NO "DNA replication questions on my boards, and with a biochem requirement for admission now, that time in the curriculum could be put to better use.
- 3) Oncology/hematology M2 core fragmented and disorganized, left me unprepared for boards
- 4) renal path seems to be a boards favorite, and while taught well, was taught fast and I was unable to relearn for boards.

More on campus review sessions with faculty. These were very helpful.

UNMC, and medical schools in general, seem to teach well for covering the topics. However, there is a disparity between the medical curriculum vs. Step 1. Step 1 is highly geared towards medical presentation with lab values, however, that is not necessarily how we were taught. I wish there was a happy medium between the national reviewers at the USMLE organization and medical education in the didactic years. I firmly and unwaveringly stand behind this point, and I have had this notion seconded by many colleagues.