

# Saudi Board Application for Medical Graduate

## *Submission Regulations & Guidelines*



Saudi Commission for Health Specialties  
Department of Medical Education & Postgraduate Studies

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**Important Notice:**

*Any amendments on this document shall be considered effective from the date the revised electronic version is published on the Commission’s website, unless a different implementation date has been agreed upon.*



## Preface

The Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCFHS) continues to improve their residents' board programmes and the related processes. The SCFHS also wishes to use a fair process of selection, so the rules and guidelines are being made available to all candidates who wish to apply for their choice of specialist programme. This booklet contains all the information needed to enable a candidate to present a comprehensive submission of his or her achievements that will then be used in the selection process for a place in a Saudi Board Residency Programme.

There is information listing the admission requirements and the process used, for the twenty-five residency training programmes offered. Particular attention is drawn to how the proportions of the total score are derived: Saudi Medical Licensing Exam result, the Bachelor GPA and Academic Achievement score. The Academic Achievement process is fully explained in the section explaining the submission guidelines, and should be read carefully.

Finally, there is a comprehensive description of the Saudi Medical Licensing Exam, including its objectives, eligibility, general rules, format, passing score and validity. Again particular attention is drawn to the Test Blueprint and example questions as these will assist all potential candidates prepare themselves for the examination.

Considerable time and effort has been spent to ensure an exam of the highest quality; but the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties also welcomes constructive feedback to improve still further these important assessment instruments.

**Professor Abdulaziz Al Saigh**  
Secretary General  
Saudi Commission for Health Specialties





## Saudi Board Training Programmes

### Admission Requirements

1. Bachelor's degree in medicine from one of the Saudi universities or an equivalent recognized university.
2. Completion of internship year.
3. Be medically fit, of good conduct and behaviour.
4. Pass the Saudi Medical Licensing Exam held by the SCFHS or its equivalent.
5. Pass the personal interview, if any.
6. Provide CPR certificate (BLS), and the medical malpractice insurance document in the class required by the system according to the professional category set by the SCFHS.
7. Provide an approval letter from work (if any) stating no objection for you to join the specialization training programme fulltime for the entire training period.
8. Applicant's and/or sponsor's signed agreement or pledge to pay in full the training, examination and certification fees.

**NB:** The Scientific Councils retain the right to add conditions or other requirements if it deems it appropriate after the approval by the Executive Board and Trustees.

### Admission Process

1. All the required admission forms and certificates should be submitted electronically to the Department of Medical Education & Postgraduate Studies at the Commission for review and assessment.
2. Candidates' names will be listed in a descending order based on their speciality preference and total score based on the following predefined criteria set by the Executive Council:
  - a. 50% allocated to the exam to practice the profession (SMLE).
  - b. 30% allocated to the cumulative rate during the bachelor phase (GPA).
  - c. 20% allocated to academic achievements.
3. Preliminary acceptance letters will be issued by the Commission to all shortlisted applicants.
4. Candidates who are issued preliminary acceptance letters are requested to apply to any of the accredited training centres to obtain a training position.
5. Once candidates secure their training post they are required to register as residents in the Commission before they can commence their residency training programme.
6. Any candidate who withdraws after been shortlisted will be immediately replaced by a candidate in the waiting list prior to the start of the training programme.
7. The admission process, preliminary (Commission) and final (Training Centre), is conducted using a matching system.
8. The starting and ending date of the admission process will be announced by the Commission as fixed dates.
9. The preliminary acceptance letter is valid only for the stated year and cannot be used for another year.

**NB:** Applicants from a previous postgraduate training programme can apply for an advanced training position in a Saudi Board Residency Programme. The Scientific Councils have the right to accept them into a higher residency level after a thorough review of their previous scientific programme content, and evaluation of their theoretical and practical performance. Each case will be presented individually to the

council who will then decide the suitable level at which the candidate can join the programme and/or be exempted from attending the specialty's Part 1 Exam. If the Scientific Council recommends equating more than 50% of the Saudi Board Programme period, it needs the Executive Council's approval.

### List of Saudi Board Medical Residency Programmes

Internal Medicine	Ophthalmology
General Surgery	Obstetrics and Gynaecology
General Paediatrics	Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Medical imaging (Radiology)	Orthopaedic Surgery
Dermatology	Paediatric Surgery
Anaesthesiology	Otolaryngology and Head and Neck surgery
Urology	Paediatric Neurology
Family Medicine	Emergency Medicine
Neurology	Community Medicine
Forensic Medicine	Neurosurgery
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	Cardiac Surgery
Psychiatry	Pathology
Adult Critical Care	

## Saudi Medical Licensing Exam

### I. Introduction

Based on the decision made by the board of trustees, No (7/A/36) dated 13/06/1436, graduation from Medical Colleges confers the right of the graduates to practice in the internship year. To practice thereafter, they must have a Saudi medical license granted by obtaining a passing score in the Saudi Medical Licensing Exam; passing this exam is also a requirement for admission into any postgraduate residency programme.

### II. Objectives

- a. Determine sufficient competence of those seeking a license for independent practice after the internship year.
- b. Used for the Saudi Board programme admission process to assess the readiness of the graduate to proceed to resident training.
- c. Determine the suitability of a candidate to be trained as a future specialist-consultant capable of practice in his/her specialty at the very highest competency level.
- d. Determine that all accredited Medical Colleges are graduating candidates who meet the minimum standards for safe practice<sup>1</sup>.
- e. Evaluate the standards achieved by the Medical Colleges in which a candidate received their primary medical degree.
- f. Screen the candidates applying to a specialty using only norm referenced standards<sup>2</sup> as a means for selection.
- g. Benchmark Saudi graduates with international standards.

### III. Eligibility

- a. Recognized primary degree from an accredited Medical College<sup>3</sup>.
- b. Commenced training in the internship year.
- c. Completions of an application form for the relevant exam and pay the exam fee.

### IV. General Rules

- a. The Saudi Medical Licensing Examination will be available throughout the year as computer-based tests at centres prescribed by the SCFHS.
- b. All eligible candidates may take a Saudi Licensing Examination FOUR (4) times in one year to pass the exam.
- c. SCFHS classification and registration rules and regulations shall apply to candidates who fail the licensing exam for two years after their graduation date.
- d. After passing the examination, each candidate is eligible for two further attempts to improve their mark for the purpose of attaining a better score for residency selection.

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<sup>1</sup> Minimum standards for safe practice shall be determined by a framework of competencies issued by the Saudi Deans' Committee with periodic revision. The reports of these examinations shall remain private and confidential unless the SCFHS decides otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> Norm referenced standards are those that yield an estimate of the position of the tested individual in a predefined population.

<sup>3</sup> Only from a Ministry of Education accredited school in the medical sciences.

## V. Examination Format

- a. The format shall be at least one hundred and fifty A-type SBA multiple-choice questions<sup>1</sup>, single best answer of four options.
- b. The exam shall contain K1 cognitive level questions (recall and comprehension) and K2, usually delivered as questions with scenarios (interpretation, analysis, decision making, reasoning and problem solving).
- c. The exam will have questions from the basic medical sciences, including anatomy, physiology, pathology, microbiology, pharmacology, behavioural science and biochemistry. These questions are related to the basic science underpinning medical practice and will represent up to 20% of the exam.
- d. The duration of the paper with 150 questions shall be no more than three hours.

## VI. Passing Score

- a. The cut score for the SMLE is 50%.
- b. In the event that there has been an aberrant result, the Department of Medical Education and Postgraduate Studies of the SCFHS shall be asked to resolve the issue.
- c. Each training centre may set their own selection requirements and standards for recruiting residents into their residency training programme according to the results obtained in the licensing examination.
- d. Examination results will be printed for each individual candidate with a section score report as feedback.

## VII. Validity

- a. A passing grade allows a candidate to practice as a general practitioner
- b. A passing grade allows a candidate to apply for Saudi Board residency programmes within five years of the passing date, after which time the licensing examination must be taken again and the above rules are re-applied.
- c. After passing the examination each candidate is eligible for two further attempts to improve their mark for the purpose of attaining a better score for residency selection.

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<sup>1</sup> SBA, single best answer multiple-choice question.

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**VIII. Test Blueprint for Saudi Medical Licensing Exam**

SECTION	Item Count	Basic Medical Science	Clinical Presentation	Diagnosis	Investigation	Management	Prevention
Anaesthesia and Critical Care	5						
Community Medicine	8						
Emergency Medicine	10						
Family Medicine	10						
Internal Medicine	24						
Surgery	24						
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	19						
Paediatrics	24						
Psychiatry	8						
ENT	5						
Ophthalmology	5						
Dermatology	5						
Research	3						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>						

**Suggested Reference Books**

Medicine	Kumar P and Clark M (2012). Clinical Medicine. 7th ed. Edinburgh: Elsevier Saunders.
General Surgery	Becker J, Stucchi A (2005). Essentials of Surgery. Saunders, Elsevier, Churchill Livingstone, UK.
Community Medicine	Bonita R, Beaglehole R, Kjellstrom T (2007). Basic Epidemiology. World Health Organisation. 2nd edition. World Health Organisation.
Research Methodology & Biostatistics	Olsen B, Laake P, Benestad H. (2007). Research Methodology in the Medical and Biological Sciences. Academic Press, New York, USA.
Medical Radiology	Rockall AG, Hatrick A, Armstrong P, Wastie M (2013). Diagnostic Imaging, 7th Edition. Wiley-Blackwell, UK.
Obstetrics and Gynecology	Oats J., Abraham S (2010). Llewellyn-Jones Fundamentals of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 9th edition, Elsevier
Primary Health Care	Simon C, Van Dorp F, Everitt H (2014). Oxford Handbook of General Practice, Fourth Edition, OUP Oxford.
Orthopaedics	Solomon L, Apley GA (2005). Concise System of Orthopaedics and Fractures, Third Edition, Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.

Psychiatry	Stead L, Kaufman M, Yanofski J (2011). First Aid for the Psychiatry Clerkship, Third Edition, McGraw-Hill Medical.
Otolaryngology	Becker W, Naumann H, Pfaltz C (1994). Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases: A Pocket Reference, 2nd Edition, Thieme.
Ophthalmology	Richard A Harper (2010). Basic Ophthalmology for Medical Students and Primary Care Residents, 9th Edition, American Academy of Ophthalmology.
Dermatology	Mackie RM (2003). Clinical Dermatology: An Oxford Core Text, Fifth Edition, OUP Oxford.
Paediatrics	Lissauer T and Clayden G (2011). Illustrated Textbook of Paediatrics; 4th Edition. Elsevier, Mosby, UK
Critical Care	Paul L Marino. The ICU Book (2013). Wolters Kluwer, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins
Emergency Medicine	Judith E. Tintinalli, J. Stephan Stapczynski, O. John Ma (2010). Tintinalli's Emergency Medicine: A Comprehensive Study Guide, Seventh Edition. The American College of Emergency Physicians
Anaesthesia	Patrick J. Sullivan (Editor) (2013). Ottawa Anesthesia Primer. Echo Book Publishing.

## IX. Example Questions

### SMLE questions testing higher cognition

Q1

A 35 year-old car driver crashed into a concrete block without a safety belt on. Thirty minutes after and on the way by ambulance to the hospital he begins to become breathless. On administration of 100% oxygen there is not much improvement in this condition. On arrival at the Emergency Department he has lost consciousness and appears cyanosed with markedly distended jugular veins.

Blood pressure	80/40 mmHg
Heart rate	120/min
Respiratory rate	34/min
Temperature	36.6°C
Oxygen saturation	60% on room air

What immediate action should be taken?

- A. Intubation and 100% oxygen
- B. Rapid infusion of crystalloid
- C. Needle decompression
- D. IV 0.2 mg adrenaline

Q2

A mother is running after her child as he runs into the road. Almost as she reaches the road a car comes by and she must stop suddenly to avoid being hit by the car. As she stops, she falls forwards and is unable to get up and has to be carried by stretcher into an ambulance. On admission to the Emergency Department her right knee is swollen and twice its normal size.

What structure of the knee is most likely to have been injured?

- A. Lateral collateral ligament
- B. Infra patella ligament
- C. Anterior cruciate
- D. Medial meniscus

Q3

A fifteen year-old boy is very concerned that he may be developing the same disease as his father who died aged 37 years old of colon cancer. The boy has noticed he has developed unexpected episodes of diarrhoea and lower abdominal pain. These patients also develop other comorbidities.

Which of the following would be a typical example?

- A. Astrocytoma
- B. Osteosarcoma
- C. Retinoblastoma
- D. Duodenal carcinoma

Q4

A 26 year-old man presented to the Outpatient Department with the history of frequent chest pain for one month. The pain is associated with exercise and relieved by rest. Both his parents have elevated serum cholesterol and serum LDL levels. On examination, there is no clubbing or palmar erythema. Xanthomas are present on the elbows and knees and have been there since he was eleven years old (see lab results).

Test	Result	Normal Values
Total Cholesterol	9.8	<5.1 mmol/L
Triglycerides	2.8	<2.16 mmol/L
HDL	1.5	0.8–1.8 mmol/L
LDL (cholesterol)	7.9	<4.0 mmol/L

Which of the following familial conditions is this most likely to be?

- A. Apoprotein CII deficiency
- B. Hypercholesterolaemia
- C. Hyperchylomicronemia
- D. Hypertriglyceridemia



Q5

A nine year-old boy with sickle cell disease has become increasingly tired but now says he is having right hypochondrial pain after meals. He has had multiple blood transfusions.

What should be the first investigation?

- A. CT abdomen
- B. Ultrasound
- C. Plain X-ray
- D. MRI scan

**SMLE questions testing simple recall of memorised fact**

Q1

Which of the following is most likely to cause muscle weakness in children?

- A. Hypokalaemia
- B. Iron overload
- C. Hyponatremia
- D. Severe anaemia

Q2

Which of the following is most typical of pericarditis?

- A. ST elevation and PR depression
- B. Widening of QRS complex
- C. Absent T waves
- D. Atrial flutter

Q3

Which of the following is indicative of respiratory alkalosis?

	<b>pH</b>	<b>PaCO<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>HCO<sub>3</sub></b>
A.	↓	↑	↑
B.	↑	↓	↓
C.	↓	↑	↓
D.	↑	↓	↑

Q4

Which of the following is the physiological cause of iron loss?

- A. Menorrhagia
- B. Peptic ulcer
- C. Haematuria
- D. Pregnancy

Q5

A three year-old child is found to have a microcytic anaemia. Haemoglobin electrophoresis demonstrated increased concentration of haemoglobin A2.

What is the most likely diagnosis?

- A. Iron deficiency
- B. G6PD deficiency
- C. Sickle cell anaemia
- D. B- thalassemia trait

## Academic Achievements Submission Guidelines

### Submission Guidelines

- Every applicant should use the electronic admission system to submit their information about his/her academic achievements and any other significant activities **during his/her undergraduate studies and beyond**, with evidence/proof (e.g. Certificates, Diplomas, etc.) for each provided. **NB:** All evidence/proof submitted will be evaluated and marked out of 20.
- Any submission lacking evidence/proof will not be counted and will be marked as “zero”.
- The Academic Achievement Evaluation decision is final and any official appeal should be filed electronically over the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCFHS) admission system as per the approved process.
- In case of an appeal, an administrative fee will be requested and a re-evaluation will be performed by a different evaluator. Take note that the decision taken after the re-evaluation is final, with no further appeal allowed.
- The electronic admission system will be available on the SCFHS website during the admission period which should be used to complete all the required attachments; **NO hard copy will be accepted.**
- Once the application is submitted electronically, no further amendments can be incorporated. Therefore, information should be checked and rechecked before submission.
- The electronic admission system will open and close at specific dates and **NO** application will be accepted after midnight of the closing date.

### Evaluation Process

An evaluation team will review every applicant's submission and evaluate it based on the following components:

#### 1. Research activity

- a. Did you ever submit a research proposal?  
NO   
YES  Upload scanned evidence/proof
- b. Was the research published?  
NO   
YES  Upload scanned evidence/proof

#### ➤ Submission Criteria

- Any research or research proposal submitted has to be published, or authenticated by an authority (Department, College, Hospital/Research Centre, etc.).
- The same research article or abstract can be used for both questions, a & b.
- Multiple authors can share the same research.
- If the applicant's name was not given as the main investigator of the research submitted, then a letter from the main investigator stating the extent of the applicant's contribution to the research will be required in order to consider it as his/her research submission. However, if the same research was published it will **NOT** be considered as a publication for the applicant.
- Any scientific journal publication will be accepted. Please bear in mind that an oral presentation at a conference will **NOT** be considered as a publication, even if the presentation was published in proceedings of the conference in an international indexed journal.

- A poster presentation at a conference will **NOT** be considered as a publication, even if the presentation was published in proceedings of the conference in an international indexed journal.
- An article submission confirmation email from a journal will **NOT** be accepted nor considered as a publication, whereas an email from the journal confirming that the article has been accepted for publication will be considered.

## 2. Health related courses or workshops

- a. Did you attend/participate in any health related workshops/courses? e.g. BLS<sup>1</sup>, ATLS<sup>2</sup>, ACLS<sup>3</sup>, PALS<sup>4</sup>, FDM<sup>5</sup>, FCCS<sup>6</sup>, APLS<sup>7</sup>, X-Ray reading, review course, Ultrasounds courses, communications skill, ECG<sup>8</sup> interpretation, BOS<sup>9</sup>, ALSO<sup>10</sup>, etc.

NO

YES  Upload scanned evidence /proof

### ➤ Submission Criteria

- Courses and workshops accredited by Saudi Heart Association, American Heart Association, or any other recognized bodies are accepted.
- Courses mentioned above are only examples, but the list does not cover all the possibilities.
- Course or workshop should always involve active participation by the registrant.
- If the workshop is considered soft skills, for example, communication skills, professionalism, scientific review courses, submitting a scientific article or applying for a research grant and does not involve active participation, it may still be considered for evaluation.
- A Master's degree is counted as one course or workshop.
- Entry exam certificates, for example for USMLE<sup>11</sup>, MCCEE<sup>12</sup>, MRCP<sup>13</sup>, are **NOT** considered for evaluation purposes.
- A maximum of two (2) courses/workshops are allowed.
- Courses/workshops should also have CME points awarded by either the SCFHS and/or another recognized accreditation body.
- Applicant must have the course/workshop certificate of completion/attendance; receipt of registration is **NOT** accepted.
- Language courses are **NOT** considered.

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<sup>1</sup> Basic life support

<sup>2</sup> Advanced trauma life support

<sup>3</sup> Advanced cardiac life support

<sup>4</sup> Paediatric advanced life support

<sup>5</sup> Fundamental disaster management

<sup>6</sup> Fundamental critical care support

<sup>7</sup> Advanced paediatric life support

<sup>8</sup> Electrocardiogram

<sup>9</sup> Base of support

<sup>10</sup> Advanced life support in obstetrics

<sup>11</sup> Unites States Medical Licensing Examination

<sup>12</sup> Medical Council of Canadian Evaluating Exam

<sup>13</sup> Membership of Royal Colleges of Physicians

### 3. Extracurricular activities

Breast cancer campaign, smoking cessation program, Hajj Health helpers, disease awareness day, health education media programs, etc. are a few examples of extracurricular activities that will be considered for evaluation of application.

a. Did you attend/participate in any health related social/community activities?

NO

YES  Upload scanned evidence /proof

#### ➤ Submission Criteria

- The applicant should have actively participated in these activities. Active participation includes, taking a role as a presenter, provider, instructor or organizer but **NOT** as an attendee only.
- Extracurricular activity has to have a **health-related** subject that targets the community's needs.
- The target group should be the general public, and **NOT** healthcare providers or medical students.
- A maximum of two (2) activities are required.

### 4. Awards received

a. Did you receive an appreciation letter or certificate?

NO

YES  Upload scanned evidence /proof

b. Did you receive a scientific/academic award?

NO

YES  Upload scanned evidence /proof

#### ➤ Submission Criteria

- Appreciation letters are not accepted from individuals but may be accepted from a recognized body or institution, such as a college, university or NGO<sup>1</sup>.
- Recommendations/Reference letters are **NOT** accepted.
- Cash/cheques, prizes, etc. are some examples of what the accepted as **awards** could be.
- Any prizes or awards justified by obtaining a specific GPA are **NOT** accepted.
- Awards must be for an outstanding performance/contribution in a specific academic/health field, e.g. best student/participant, scientific achievement or research, etc.

### 5. Conference attendance

a. Did you attend any conference?

NO

YES  Upload scanned evidence /proof

b. Did you participate as presenter at any conference?

NO

YES  Upload scanned evidence /proof

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<sup>1</sup> Non-governmental organization

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➤ **Submission Criteria**

- Local and international conferences or symposia are accepted.
- If the conference/symposium is local, it should be recognized and approved by the SCFHS.
- Oral presentations, podium presentations, moderated abstract sessions and poster presentations are counted as presentations.
- Only one conference/symposium attendance may be submitted.
- If you attend a conference and give a presentation in the same conference it will be counted as both, conference attendance and presentation (please provide evidence for both)
- The conference/symposium has to be in a health-related field.

*It is important that you provide evidence that can be verified, any false/fake evidence may prejudice your application and can in certain circumstances **disqualify** you from seeking any further training post.*

**I certify that my answers above are true and accurate**

Signature: ..... Dated: MM/DD/YYYY







