



St. George's University  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Grenada, West Indies

## Want to become a Doctor in the US?:

Questions to Ask to  
Choose the Right  
Medical School



# Want to become a Doctor in the US?:

## Questions to Ask to Choose the Right Medical School

The first stage in the process of selecting a medical school is to determine which country you want to practice medicine in directly after graduation. If the country you want to practice medicine in is the United States of America (US), here are a series of questions and areas you should research.

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## 1. How can I practice medicine in the US?

To practice medicine in the US, graduates must first secure a residency position through the “Match” program. The “**Match**” is the process in which medical school students **secure a post-graduate residency placement** that will provide medical graduates with the **hands-on clinical training** they need to **begin practicing as licensed doctors in the US**. The “Match” is completed using the National Resident Matching Program’s (NRMP) Main Residency Match. This software places medical students into US residency programs based on a variety of criteria.



## 2. What is residency and what are the requirements to obtain a residency in the US?

Upon completing an MD program, **graduates must go through post-graduate training—better known as residency**. It is when students can finally put everything they’ve learned into practice. At the point of residency application, students will need to consider **what area they wish to specialize in**, as this will determine which residency programs they will apply to. Residency is where students are immersed in **fast-paced, hands-on training**, working with actual patients under the supervision and guidance of a licensed physician.

**It is important to consider your eligibility to obtain a residency in the US and if you are permitted to participate in the “Match”.**

Requirements to apply for a US residency are:



The applicant must graduate from a medical school whose accreditor is recognized by the **World Federation of Medical Education (WFME)**.



The applicant is verified by the **Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG)** as having completed the necessary requirements for ECFMG certification.



The applicant has passed their **United States Medical Licensing Examinations (USMLE)** Step 1 and 2.



The application is supported by evidence of **academic and clinical experience**, including a **personal statement and relevant letters of recommendation** from medical professionals and Faculty.



### 3. How will the medical school support me in obtaining the requirements to be successful in the Residency Match Program?



#### Accreditation

International medical schools have accreditation to ensure **high-quality academic standards and outcomes**. The school itself must be **accredited**, and its accreditor must also be **recognized by WFME** for its graduates to be **certified by the ECFMG** and to apply for a US residency. In addition to ensuring educational outcomes, there are multiple reasons why accreditation and recognition matter:

- Access to **clinical rotations**
- Access to taking **USMLE Step exams**
- Participation in the **US National Residency Matching Program (NRMP)**
- Pursuit of **US licensure**

SGU's School of Medicine accreditor, the **Grenada Medical and Dental Council (GMDC)**, is recognized by WFME.



#### USMLE Support

The **USMLE is a three-step examination** administered by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME). Doctors with an MD degree are required to **pass these exams to practice medicine in the US**.

The USMLE Step exams are some of the most important exams a medical student will take. It is critical that a medical school can help students with exam preparation and tutoring to support student success on their journey to becoming a doctor.

SGU's **Office of Career Guidance (OCG)** is a dedicated office that helps **students prepare for USMLEs and to apply for residency**. SGU's faculty members and advisors conduct hundreds of workshops a week to assist students with their USMLE prep. SGU exams are also modeled after USMLE Step 1, exposing students to the material from day one.



#### Clinical Network Opportunities

Medical students typically complete their clinical rotations—also called clerkships—during the third and fourth years of their Doctor of Medicine (MD) programs. **Participating in clinical rotations gives students critical first-hand experience in working with patients** under the direct supervision of a faculty member, fellow, or resident.

The specifics of each student's experience will vary across different medical schools. Assessing the level of exposure to several areas of practice, and multiple healthcare systems, is a good benchmark to consider when preparing to obtain a residency placement. This encourages students to **explore their medical interests and begin determining what their area of expertise could be as a physician**.

SGU provides medical students with a diverse range of clinical opportunities through a network of **75+ affiliated hospitals and health centers** across the US and UK.<sup>1</sup>





#### 4. Does the medical school have the required accreditation to enable me to obtain a US residency?

Accreditation is a process by which a medical school undergoes **extensive external evaluations by experts** to ensure high educational standards are achieved.

An international medical school's accreditor should be recognized by the following organizations to ensure students can apply for US residency:

### WFME

#### World Federation of Medical Education

Allows qualified students to take the USMLE exams that enable students access US clinical rotations, allows participation in the NRMP, and the opportunity to apply for licensure to practice in the US

### NCFMEA

#### US National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation

This recognition declares that the standards used by the international medical school's accrediting body are comparable to the standards set by Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) body that accredits US medical schools

### ECFMG

#### Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates

Each student who graduates from an International Medical School must be "ECFMG Certified" to participate in the US National Residency Match Program

**SGU's School of Medicine has been **continuously accredited for decades** and provides a reliable path for graduates to pursue residency and licensure in the US.**

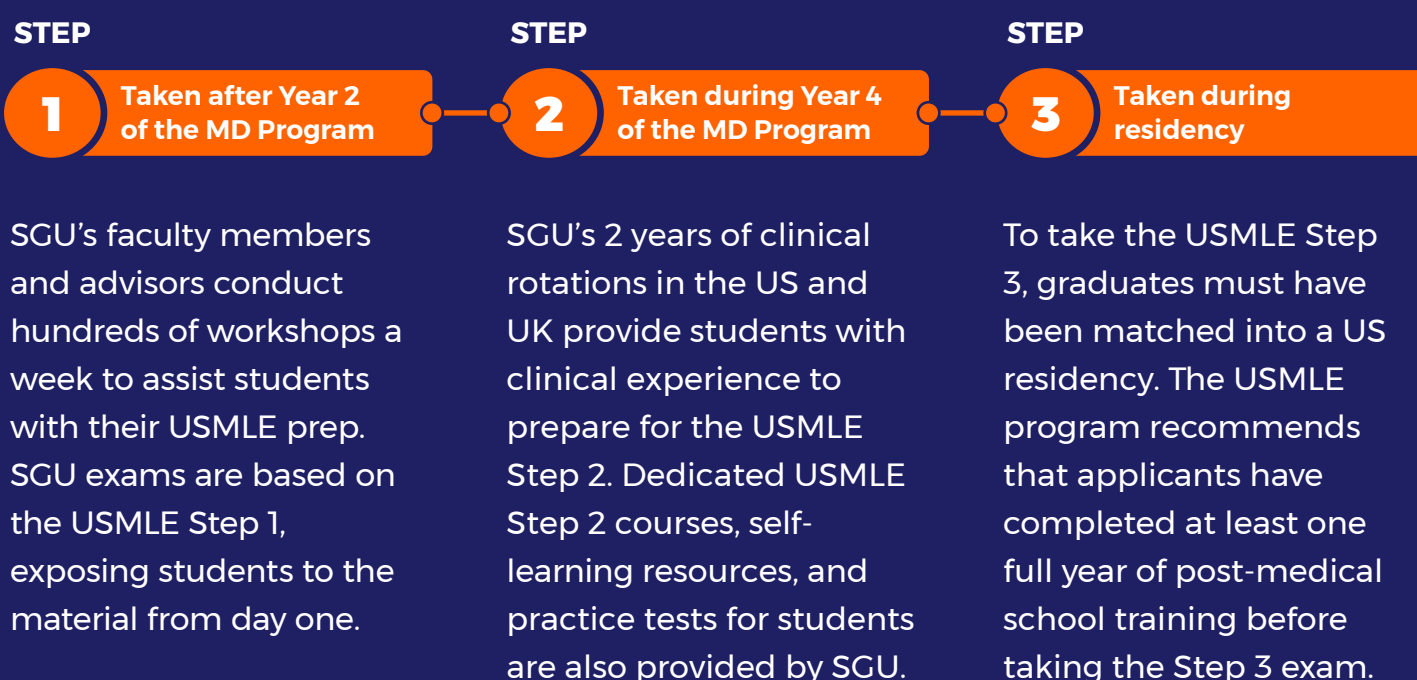
**SGU is also recognized and/or approved by the:**

- New York State Education Department
- New Jersey State Board of Medical Examiners
- Georgia Composite Medical Board
- Medical Board of California
- Florida Commission on Independent Education

## 5. What is the purpose of the United States Medical Licensing Exams (USMLEs), and how can the medical school help me prepare for them?

The USMLE is a three-step examination administered by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME). Doctors with an MD degree are required to pass these exams to practice medicine in the US.

It's important to look at a school's published statistics relating to pass rates for the USMLE. Assessing how international students perform on these exams is a strong indicator of the quality of the curriculum and support being offered.



SGU has a  
**94%**

USMLE Step 1 pass rate for international first-time test takers over the last three years.<sup>1</sup>

SGU has a  
**92%**

USMLE Step 2 pass rate for international first-time test takers over the last three years.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Average of 2019, 2020, 2021 scores. First-time pass rate is defined as the number of students passing USMLE Step 1 on their first attempt divided by the total number of students taking USMLE Step 1 for the first time. International students are non-US students.

<sup>2</sup> Average of academic years 2019, 2020, 2021 scores. First-time pass rate is defined as the number of students passing USMLE Step 2 CK on their first attempt divided by the total number of students taking USMLE Step 2 CK for the first time. International students are non-US students.





## 6. What clinical rotations does the medical school provide and how do they affect my ability to practice medicine in the US?

Clinical rotations are **hospital-based experiences** that students undergo during the final two years of medical school. Clinical rotations give students **hands-on practical experience**, allowing them to **interact with patients** and **practice medicine under the supervision** of experienced doctors.

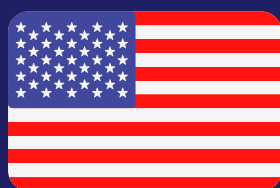
Clinical rotations in the intended country of practice are crucial for medical students as they provide practical experience that prepares them for **post-graduate positions available in that country**. These rotations offer valuable insights **into the country's medical system** and provide **networking opportunities** with doctors and program directors at hospitals where students may seek post-graduate positions.

In addition to the core rotations of Internal Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Psychiatry, and Pediatrics, students at SGU can select from a variety of electives in specialties such as Emergency Medicine, Radiology, Anesthesiology, Pathology, and Urology.



“ When I took Step 1, for me it felt like taking another St. George's test, I felt very, very prepared. ”

**Ryan Kruse, MD**  
Graduation Date: 2013



Students at SGU can complete clinical rotations in **75+ hospitals and health systems** in the US and UK<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [sgu.edu/hospitals](http://sgu.edu/hospitals)

## 7. What are letters of recommendation and why are they important?

It is essential for students to **build strong relationships** with clinical faculty and staff and to perform well during their studies and clinical rotations to secure positive letters of recommendation. These letters are a crucial part of the residency application process as they can **influence the decision of the Residency Program Director** to accept a graduate.

There are **over 1,500 clinical faculty members across SGU's clinical network**, helping students thrive in the modern medical world. SGU provides support to students to obtain letters of recommendation, with access to online educational resources, **assistance in identifying and approaching potential recommenders**, and guidance on how to request and follow up. SGU faculty members can additionally provide information on a student's academic performance and potential that Residency Program Directors could find valuable.



“Every rotation is an audition toward residency training. The work that every student does is noticed by his or her peers, the residents, and the faculty, who want to get the best residents they can into their program.”

**Robert Grant, MD, MSc, FACS**

Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Studies at SGU





## 8. Is having a second degree along with the Medical Degree (MD) beneficial in obtaining a residency placement?

Holding a second degree could **strengthen a student's academic profile**, which a Residency Director would assess when filling Residency program places.

SGU offers students a **four-year MD Program** and **five-, six-, or seven-year Medical Degree Pathways** based on academic background and performance.

International students pursuing SGU's 5-, 6-, or 7-Year MD Pathways may be eligible to earn a **Bachelor of Science (BMedSci)** while pursuing their MD. After completing the MD program, the student would graduate with **both an MD and a BMedSci**.

## 9. How many students from the medical school have been successful in obtaining a residency placement?

Securing a residency placement is arguably the single most important step toward becoming a doctor, so it is important to **evaluate NRMP match data** for each medical school. A medical school's residency placements can tell you a lot about **how well the program can prepare you for a specific career path**.

For the past nine years, SGU has been the **largest provider of doctors into first-year US residencies**, with over **980 US residencies placed in 2023**.<sup>1</sup>

SGU has a  
**89%**

US residency placement  
rate for international  
graduates over the last  
three years<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As the medical school graduating the largest number of students per year, SGU places the largest number of graduates into residency programs each year, based on internal SGU graduate/expected graduate and residency placement data as of April 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Average of 2020, 2021, 2022 residency placement rate. International graduates are non-US graduates. Residency placement rate is defined as the total number of students who obtained a US residency divided by the total number of students who applied to a US residency program in a given year as of May 2022.

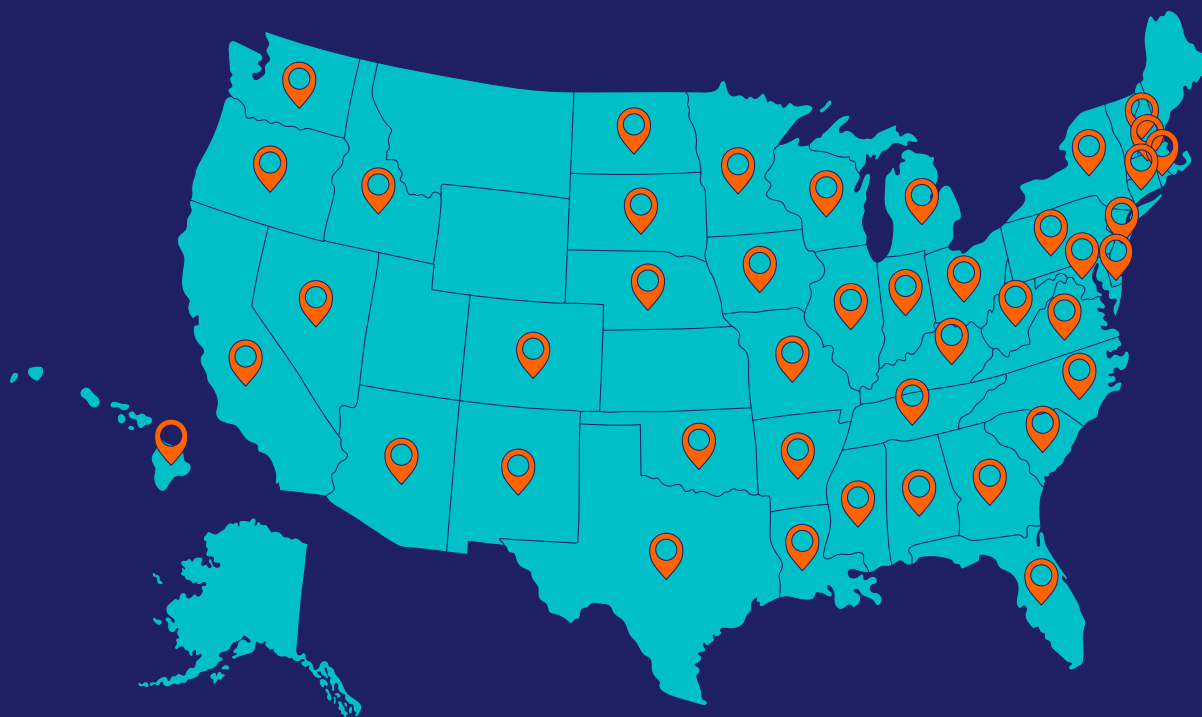


## 10. Where have students from the medical school obtained a US residency?

It's important to note that the **specific placement (i.e., state, hospital, or specialty)** that medical students obtain through the US Residency match program can vary widely based on many factors, such as **personal preferences, qualifications, geographic location, and the availability** of residency programs. In 2023, SGU students and graduates matched into residences in 21 specialties across 46 US states.

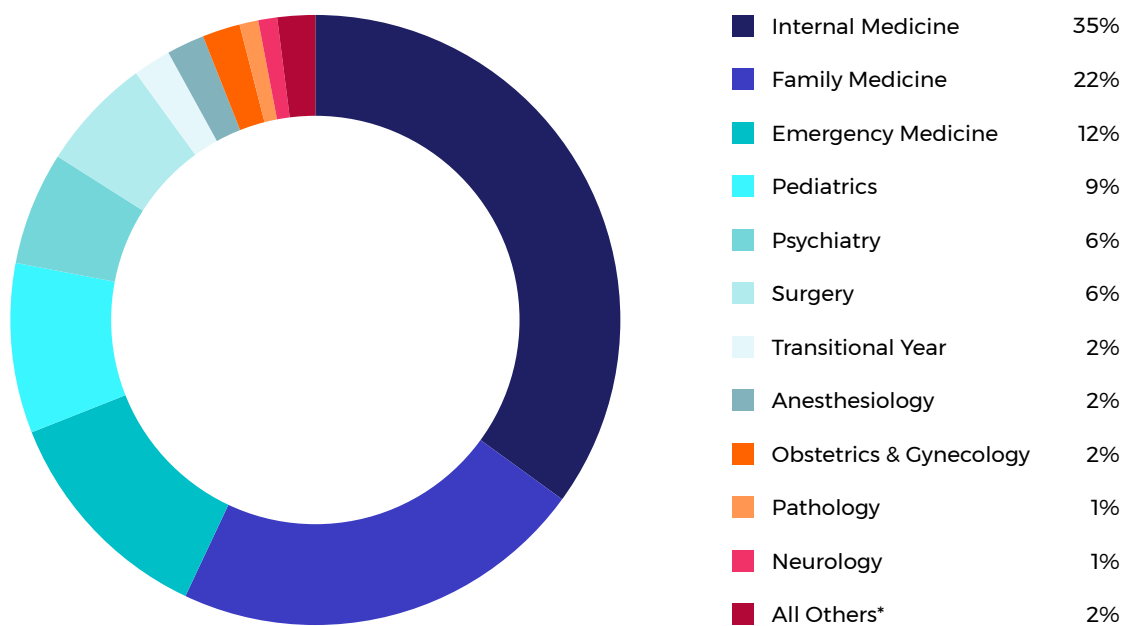
## 2023 MATCH BY STATE

Students and graduates secured residencies in 46 states





# 2023 RESIDENCY PLACEMENTS BY SPECIALTIES



\*All others includes Internal Medicine/Pediatrics, Internal Medicine/Emergency Medicine, Orthopaedic Surgery, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (P), Urology, Child Neurology (N), Diagnostic, Radiology, Internship, Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, Neurological Surgery, Vascular Surgery (GS)

## 11. How strong is the school’s alumni network, and do graduates from the medical school work in post-graduate positions in the US?

The size of the alumni of a medical school can be an **indicator of a school’s history of** producing graduates who contribute to the medical profession and can have a **positive impact on the medical community.**

Additionally, a strong alumni network is invaluable to medical students as they can benefit from the **support, guidance, and opportunities** provided, further helping them succeed in their studies and progress in their careers. Alumni can **mentor current students** and assist recent graduates in **expanding their professional networks** by providing career advice and networking opportunities in the US. Furthermore, alumni can provide **established contacts** to students seeking residency and career opportunities, which can help them secure future employment.

SGU has over **20,000 School of Medicine graduates** in the US and around the world who are part of a strong alumni network.<sup>1</sup>

SGU is the **largest provider of new doctors to the US healthcare system<sup>2</sup>,** and graduates have practiced at all **US News and World Report Top 20 US Hospitals.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Based on the number of students who have completed the Doctor of Medicine program from 1981-2022.  
<sup>2</sup> According to FSMB physician licensure data, 2021.  
<sup>3</sup> According to US News and World Report, 2022-2023.





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