



Steps to Becoming a Doctor in the US:

Explore your Journey
from High School
to Residency, and
Beyond



St. George's University
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Grenada, West Indies

Steps to Becoming a Doctor in the US:

Explore your Journey from High School to Residency, and Beyond

The journey to becoming a practicing doctor in the US does not finish upon getting accepted to medical school, or even upon graduation. **Understanding why the US could be an attractive market for you to consider practicing medicine in, and the key steps of the complete journey to becoming a doctor in the US can help you make informed decisions starting from now.**

St. George's University (SGU) supports aspiring doctors like you to pave a pathway to the future you dream about.

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Reasons to consider the US as a destination for practicing medicine.

The first stage in the process of selecting a medical school is to **determine which country you want to practice** medicine in after graduation. Having clarity on where you want to practice could help you have a better understanding of how you can achieve this goal, and which medical school could support you on your journey.

It is normal to be excited about your time in medical school and to think about where your study destination might be for the next few years. But it is also important to **think about your future as a practicing doctor and your life and career in your chosen destination.**

For the ninth year in a row, SGU is the largest provider of new doctors to the US healthcare system*. Read on to see how the US could be an attractive destination for doctors.

Doctors in the US can have access to:



A well-established healthcare system.



A patient population from diverse cultures and backgrounds.



Job opportunities available across the country, due to a shortage of doctors leading to high demand.



A variety of medical cases and conditions, and access to multiple specialties, as the US is home to some of the world's leading hospitals and medical centers.



A culture of continuing medical education, with opportunities for doctors to attend conferences and other professional development events.



Modern technologies and treatments, with many breakthroughs and discoveries originating in the US.



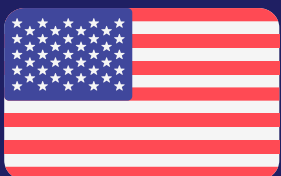
Recreational opportunities for doctors and their families across large cities and towns.



A stable political and economic environment.



A network of hospitals that run both clinical rotation programs and post-graduate programs, which may allow medical graduates the chance to practice in a hospital they did their training in.



If the US sounds like somewhere you would like to practice medicine, read on to learn about the steps you will need to take to get there.

* 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 June 2023.



Step 01. Graduate from high school.

This will help you choose a medical school that can support your career goal in the US.

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. Having this end goal in mind will ensure that the decisions you make now are paving a pathway that could lead you to your future goal.

It is normal to be excited about your time in medical school and to think about where your study destination might be for the next few years. But it is also exciting to think about your future as a practicing doctor and your future life and career in your chosen destination. If you decide you are looking to practice medicine in the US, choosing a medical school based on its **ability to support your career goal the US** is key, as not all medical schools are equipped to support students looking towards this goal due to certain **accreditations and recognitions**.

Step 02. Complete a science-focused undergraduate degree program or preclinical pathway.

Upon graduation from high school, aspiring doctors can explore 2 routes to further their progression to a career in medicine.

Route A Complete a science-focused undergraduate degree program.

For students looking to apply directly to SGU's four-year MD Program, a bachelor's degree with a strong science background is necessary.

This is required as evidence that the applicant has a strong foundation in the sciences and has the educational knowledge to further specialize in medicine.

Route B Complete a preclinical pathway.

Students that do not want to complete an undergraduate program can complete a preclinical pathway with SGU.

Depending on the strength of a student's credentials, the MD pathway could be 1, 2, or 3 years, with a focus on preclinical sciences, social sciences, and humanities, preparing students for the four-year MD Program.

Students on SGU's five- or six-year MD Pathways or four-year MD Program can complete the first part of their studies in the UK, thanks to SGU's partnership with Northumbria University, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK.

SGU is associated with the Ramaiah Group of Institutions and provides an option for students on the five-year MD Pathway to complete the first year of the pathway in Bengaluru, India.

Step 03. Consider a Medical Degree (MD) Program at a medical school accredited by a World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) recognized accreditor.

International medical schools have accreditation to ensure **high-quality academic standards and outcomes**. For a student to apply for US residency, their international medical school's accreditor should be recognized by the following organizations:



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 accreditor, the **Grenada Medical and Dental Council (GMDC)**, is recognized by WFME.

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.



Step 04. Gain Acceptance to a Medical Degree (MD) Program at a medical school accredited by a World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) recognized accreditor.

Route

A

Students who have completed a science-focused undergraduate degree program.

The student will apply to SGU and go through the admission process for the four-year MD Program.

Route

B

Students who have completed a preclinical pathway do not need to apply for the four-year MD Program.

After satisfying all criteria for progression, including passing the Preclinical Sciences Comprehensive Examination (PCSCE), students who have completed an SGU MD Pathway will automatically promote to the four-year MD Program.

**DID YOU?
KNOW**

International students* applying to SGU are exempt from completing the MCAT.

*International students are non-US students who do not have a US passport.



SPOT LIGHT ON

SGU's Admission Process for the MD Program and MD Pathways.

Submit your application, including:

- Academic transcripts (or awards, if applicable)
- Academic references
- Personal statement
- English exam result (required for any prospective student whose country is not considered English-speaking as per UKVI*).
- Passport copy

After application, the SGU admission process is comprised of three stages:

1. Initial review
2. Interview
3. Final review and admission decision

*Approved English-speaking countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada**, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States of America.

** International students (non-Canadian citizens) who graduated from a Canadian university will require proof of language skills.



“ My main motivation for applying was that I was keen to practice medicine in the United States at some point and saw that SGU would give me that opportunity. ”

Ish Saxena, MD
SGU 2013 UK Graduate

Step 05. Complete 2 years of Basic Sciences.

The first two years of SGU's four-year MD Program at SGU are on-campus learning experiences referred to as the 'Basic Sciences'. This stage involves training and instruction using an integrated organ systems-based curriculum. Lectures throughout the Basic Sciences are complemented by small-group discussion cases and assessments through interactive multiple-choice question sessions.



Step 06. Pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 exam.

At the end of Basic Sciences, the **USMLE Step 1 tests students on the material they're expected to learn during those first two years of medical school.**

The USMLE Step 1 is the first exam of three phases and **all doctors will need to pass all three to obtain licensure to practice medicine in the US.**

SPOTLIGHT ON

USMLE Step 1

- An eight-hour exam comprised of multiple-choice questions.
- Assesses whether students understand and can apply important science concepts to the practice of medicine.
- As of January 2022, a change to the passing standard for the USMLE Step 1 was enacted, shifting to a pass/fail scoring system.
- Passing this exam on the first attempt is critically important because it demonstrates a medical student's mastery of basic science knowledge and the ability to solve problems through the application of those principles.
- Only students who have passed the USMLE Step 1 will be able to progress to clinical rotations in the US.
- Students at SGU complete the USMLE Step 1 during term time to enable them to move directly to clinical rotations after completing Basic Sciences.

Academic Advisors at SGU are on hand to assist students with their USMLE prep and SGU exams are also modeled after USMLE Step 1, exposing students to the material from day one. SGU offers its students USMLE prep question banks, some of which are built into the course curriculum.

DID YOU KNOW

SGU has a 94% USMLE Step 1 pass rate for international first-time test takers over the last three years.*

* 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.



Step 07. Complete 2 years of clinical rotations.

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

Students at SGU are eligible to be promoted to the clinical years if they have:

- ✓ Passed all Basic Sciences coursework.
- ✓ Met the requirements as per the Clinical Transition Course.
- ✓ Passed the USMLE Step 1 (a prerequisite for placement in hospitals in the United States).

During clinical rotations, the knowledge acquired in the Basic Sciences serves as a basis for the facts and concepts necessary to understand the practice of modern medicine. In the hospital, **students are involved in the care of patients and develop diagnostic decision-making, history, physical examination, and test interpretation skills.** Students learn to communicate with patients and their families, as well as other healthcare workers and are expected to grow into their roles as professionals.

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.

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 as well as clinical performance and potential that Residency Program Directors could find valuable.

Students at SGU complete the first part of their clinical rotations in **42 weeks** and cover:



Internal Medicine
(12 weeks)



Surgery
(12 weeks)



Pediatrics
(6 weeks)



**Obstetrics/
Gynecology**
(6 weeks)



Psychiatry
(6 weeks)

For the final year of the MD Program, students tend to complete electives in the specialty they want to obtain a US residency in and will complete 38 Weeks of Sub-internships and Electives in:



Family Medicine
(4-6 weeks)



Subinternship
Internal Medicine, Surgery, Pediatrics, Obstetrics/Gynecology, or Psychiatry
(4 weeks)



Medicine Elective
(4 weeks)



Additional Electives
(24-26 weeks)

**DID
YOU?
KNOW**

SGU has over 1,500 clinical faculty members across 75+ affiliated hospitals and health centers in the US and UK.
Scan to find out more.



“ The exposure I had during my clinical placements in New York City and California really helped shape my mindset, and I applied the principles from my learning in my day-to-day work. ”

Nathan Kwablah, MD, MBA
SGU 2011 Graduate



Step 08. Pass the USMLE Step 2 exam.

Students take the USMLE Step 2 after 42 weeks of Core Rotations, and after the NBME National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) Exams, which are taken at the end of each Core Rotation.

SPOT LIGHT ON

USMLE Step 2

Students must pass the USMLE Steps 1 and 2 to be eligible for the National Residency Match Program (NRMP).

Students must pass USMLE Step 2 to be eligible for Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) Certification and a US residency.

DID YOU? KNOW

SGU has a **92% USMLE Step 2 pass rate** for international first-time test takers over the last three years.*

*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.



“ I think my education at SGU gave me a great advantage throughout the residency application process. All SGU courses are taught in English and are based on the USMLE syllabus. This helped me get good grades. ”

Kansho Abiko, MD
SGU 1988 Graduate



Step 09. Participate in the “Match” and obtain a US residency.

The “Match” is the process in which medical school students secure a postgraduate 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 software, which places medical students into US residency programs based on a variety of criteria.

During the final year of the four-year MD Program, students begin sending out applications to postgraduate residency programs through the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) system. ERAS is the centralized online application service students use to deliver their applications and supporting documents to residency programs.

Stages of “The Match”

1 Prepare documentation

- Personal statement: SGU has a team of experts who will assist students with personal statements for each specialty they apply to.
- Letter of recommendation: SGU provides support to students identifying and approaching potential recommenders, and guidance on how to request and follow up.
- USMLE transcript: Applicants must authorize the release of their USMLE transcript and assign it to the programs they designate.
- Medical Student Performance Evaluation: SGU faculty members provide information on a student’s academic performance and potential.
- Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certification: Students attending medical schools outside the US need to obtain ECFMG certification.

2 Submit residency applications and register for the correct match

The ERAS system opens for application submission in September of the year before residency programs begin. Due to high demand, it is recommended that students apply for their programs immediately as the system opens.

4 Compare programs, and submit a rank order list

Rank Order Lists (ROLs) are submitted and certified during the first week of March. These rankings allow students to indicate which programs they would prefer to be matched into. Considerations at this stage tend to be around specialty and location preferences.

3 Residency interview preparation

Interviews for residency spots take place between October and January, residency interview preparation is essential, so students at SGU are supported with a mock interview service conducted by the Office of Career Guidance (OCG).

5 Discover where you matched

The NRMP’s Match algorithm produces Match results in the third week of March, indicating if a student has obtained a residency, and in what program and hospital they will begin their postgraduate training.

Step 10. Graduate from medical school and start residency.

Upon graduation, **SGU graduates are awarded an MD degree** and will typically start their residency in July. Graduates starting a “Categorical” residency (a full residency program) will usually be in the program for three years. However, some more advanced residency programs may be longer if they require more specialized areas of practice.



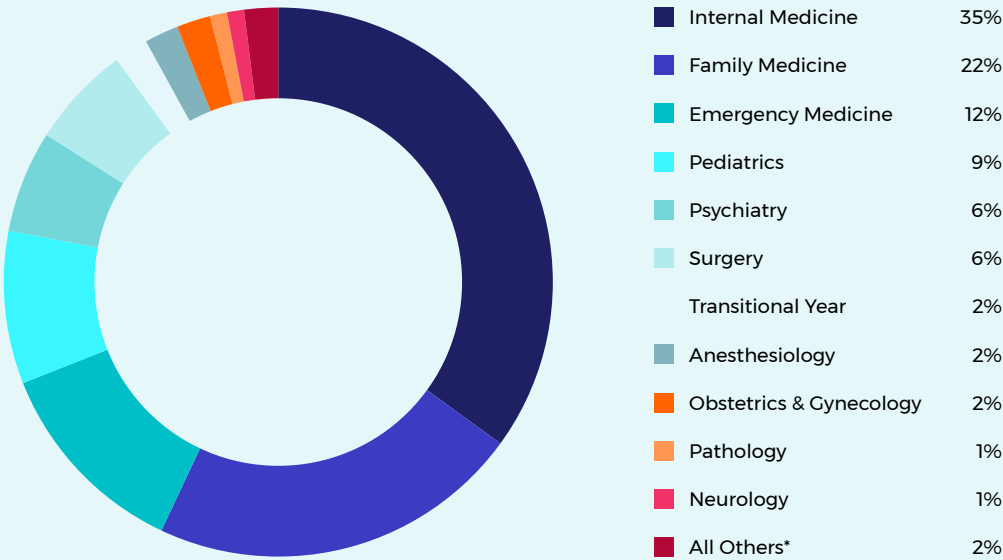
“ I honed my skills of teaching and guidance, hard work, dedication, and leadership at SGU. The years in Grenada, along with my rotations in New York, prepared me extremely well for day 1 of residency, where I did not feel any different in terms of overall standard and knowledge from any other American medical school grad. I am extremely grateful to SGU ”

Shivantha Amarnath, MD
SGU 2017 Graduate

DID YOU KNOW

In 2023, SGU students and graduates were matched into residencies in 21 specialties across 46 US 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)



Step 11. Pass the USMLE Step 3 exam.

The USMLE Step 3 is the final examination in the USMLE sequence. **Passing this exam leads to a license to practice medicine without supervision.**

Residents tend to take this exam when they have at least one full year of residency. MDs are required to pass Step 3 before starting their third year of residency.

SPOTLIGHT ON

USMLEs

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.

STEP

1

Taken after Year 2 of the MD Program

SGU's faculty members and advisors conduct hundreds of workshops a week to assist students with their USMLE prep. SGU exams are based on the USMLE Step 1, exposing students to the material from day one.

STEP

2

Taken during Year 4 of the MD Program

SGU's 2 years of clinical rotations in the US and UK provide students with clinical experience to prepare for the USMLE Step 2. Dedicated USMLE Step 2 courses, self-learning resources, and practice tests for students are also provided by SGU.

STEP

3

Taken during residency

To take the USMLE Step 3, graduates must have been matched into a US residency. The USMLE program recommends that applicants have completed at least one full year of post-medical school training before taking the Step 3 exam.



Step 12. Obtain a license to practice medicine to become an Attending Physician, start a Fellowship, and/or become board-certified.

During the third year of residency, an application for a medical license can be submitted to the State Medical Board of the US state you wish to practice in.



Once the residency is completed, there are several options available for licensed doctors:

- Become an Attending Physician (for example, in a hospital, clinic, or private office).
- Start a Fellowship in an advanced specialty. Some residents opt to participate in a medical fellowship and sub-fellowships after their residency that will provide advanced training in the specialty and allow them to do research that could result in publication. Completing a fellowship could add anywhere from one to five or more years of study in subspecialty areas. For example, after completing an Internal Medicine Residency of three years, you would do a Fellowship in Cardiology which might last 2 to four years depending on your area of interest in Cardiology. Other Fellowships include Gastroenterology, Endocrinology, Infectious Diseases, Pediatric Surgery, Trauma Surgery, etc.

In addition, after residency, many residents will progress to obtain board certification. Board certification is not a legal requirement, but an expectation for many healthcare employers, and licensing requirements vary by state.

Board-certified doctors have chosen to go even further by obtaining additional education in a given specialty and demonstrating their knowledge and signifies the highest level of accreditation within a given specialty. To become board-certified, doctors need to take written and sometimes oral examinations after their postgraduate training to verify knowledge and competency.

Many physicians who maintain certification do so to demonstrate they're committed to upholding the highest patient-care standards and continuing their education. Given how rapidly healthcare is advancing, it makes sense that doctors need to stay up to date on new techniques and tools.



Take The Next Step
Start your journey toward
becoming a doctor with SGU.
Scan to find out more.



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