



# **Common Questions about NBME® CBSE/CBSSA Score Report Changes**

**For Examinees**

February 7, 2022

Copyright © 2021 NBME. All rights reserved.



# COMPREHENSIVE BASIC SCIENCE SELF-ASSESSMENT (CBSSA) COMMON QUESTIONS

NBME's Medical School Services team explored how scores from our Comprehensive Basic Science Self-Assessments could best support your needs to gauge readiness for USMLE® Step 1, which will move to pass/fail reporting starting from January 26, 2022. Answers to commonly asked questions asked about our recent announcement are available below to help with the CBSSA score reporting transition planned for February 23, 2022.

## **What is changing on the CBSSA score reports?**

The overall, 3-digit score is being replaced by an equated percent correct score that represents the percentage of content mastered. In addition, the report will show your estimated probability of passing if you take USMLE Step 1 within one week (i.e., with a similar level of knowledge as when you took CBSSAs). This estimated probability will be calculated based on a large group of examinees who tested within one week of taking Step 1 for the first time.

For each content area, the new report will include an equated percent correct score and the average equated percent correct score for a Step 1 comparison group. The boxes indicating whether content area performance was lower, the same, or higher than one's overall performance are going away.

What's not changing?

- There will still be a histogram depicting overall performance. It will show the distribution of equated percent correct scores for a national cohort, with lines indicating your specific score and the low-pass range for Step 1, which corresponds to performance that is above but near the passing standard.
- All content areas are staying the same. The percentage of the test comprised by each content area will continue being reported.
- The boxes indicating whether performance was lower, average, or higher in relation to a Step 1 comparison group will still be provided.

Providing an equated percent correct score for CBSSAs along with an estimated probability of passing Step 1 was a way to continue reporting a score while staying aligned with the Step 1 move to pass/fail. We heard from students that receiving an overall CBSSA score was important, and we selected equated percent correct scores based on the familiarity of the 0-100 scale. Like the previous 3-digit scores, equated percent correct scores can be used to track performance over time if you take CBSSAs more than once.

The new equated percent correct scores that will be reported for each content area help to provide more detail about areas of strength and weakness, so you can plan your study time more effectively. The boxes that will continue being reported are designed to help you interpret your results as accurately as possible.

## **When will the new CBSSA score reports be released?**

The new score reports with equated percent correct scores will be released on February 23, 2022.

## **Will CBSSAs still report a 3-digit score? If not, why are CBSSAs no longer reporting a 3-digit score?**

No, the 3-digit score corresponding to the USMLE Step 1 score scale will not be reported because Step 1 scores will no longer be reported. The USMLE program views the transition to Step 1 pass/fail score reporting as an important first step toward facilitating broader, system-wide changes to improve the transition from undergraduate to graduate medical education. In support of this decision, reference to the USMLE Step 1 3-digit score scale will be removed from the supporting documentation of all NBME assessments. Staff worked directly with medical school students and faculty to develop alternate score reporting for CBSSAs to ensure the reporting would still meet the needs of score users. We recognize that for a period of time this change may present challenges, but we will continue to do what we can to support you and other stakeholders during this transition.

**Will CBSSAs still report a numeric score?**

CBSSAs will soon provide an equated percent correct score that represents the percentage of content mastered. Equated percent correct scores are statistically adjusted to account for slight variations in exam form difficulty, so they can be used to track performance over time if you take CBSSAs more than once. In addition, the CBSSA report will provide your estimated probability of passing if you take Step 1 within one week (i.e., with a similar level of knowledge as when you took CBSSAs).

**Why are CBSSAs still reporting numeric scores after Step 1 changes to pass/fail only reporting?**

Ongoing market research has demonstrated that students and faculty value numeric scores on CBSSA score reports, and NBME will continue to provide this information along with an estimated probability of passing Step 1 to help gauge readiness for the examination.

**Will I be able to compare my equated percent correct scores to 3-digit scores?**

You will be able to compare your performance on CBSSAs to a range representing low passing performance on Step 1. You will also be able to compare your content area performance to the performance of a Step 1 comparison group based on content area equated percent correct scores (new) and boxes indicating whether your performance was statistically lower, about the same, or higher than the performance of the comparison group. The new score report will help you compare your score against others in the content areas and you will get a more detailed view of your relative performance. A direct comparison of your previous 3-digit score to the new equated percent correct score scale will not be possible due to the elimination of the 3-digit scores on Step 1.

**What does equated mean?**

Equating is a statistical procedure that adjusts scores for slight variations in exam form difficulty so all scores are comparable regardless of which exam form is taken.

**What are the benefits of an equated percent correct score?**

Equated percent correct scores tell you how much of the content you mastered using the familiar 0-100 scale so you can easily understand your performance, including areas of strength and weakness. The 3-digit scores did not provide this type of criterion-referenced information. Like the 3-digit scores, equated percent correct scores can be used to track performance over time if you take CBSSAs more than once.

**How does equated percent correct differ from classic percent correct?**

Equated percent correct scores are statistically adjusted to account for slight variations in exam form difficulty, so they can support more accurate comparisons than unadjusted percent correct scores.

**Will the new CBSSA score reports provide longitudinal feedback?**

A longitudinal report will be available sometime in April 2022.

**Will the new CBSSA score reports provide information on my readiness/likelihood of passing Step 1?**

Yes, the new CBSSA score reports will allow you to compare your score to a range representing low passing performance on Step 1 and will also provide an estimated probability of passing Step 1 if testing within one week of your CBSSA attempt.

**What type of feedback will I receive if I purchase CBSSA prior to February 23, 2022?**

If you purchase CBSSA prior to February 23, you will receive the current 3-digit score report regardless of when you launch or complete the self-assessment. You will have 90-days from the purchase date to complete your self-assessment and receive the 3-digit score so long as the purchase was made prior to

February 23. Note: if you purchase the self-assessment prior to February 23, you will not receive the content area equated percent correct scores or estimated probability of passing, you will only get the 3-digit score and the graphical content area boxes.

**What type of feedback will I receive if I purchase CBSSA on February 23?**

If you purchase CBSSA on February 23, the type of feedback you receive (3-digit scaled score or equated percent correct score) will depend on whether you made the purchase prior to the time the change goes live that day. For example, if the change goes live at 8AM on February 23 and you purchase the assessment before that time (6AM for example), you will receive the current score report with the 3-digit score, but if you purchase after 8AM, you will get the new score report with the equated percent correct score and estimated probability of passing.

If you want to receive the current 3-digit score report, you should plan on making your purchase prior to February 23, and if you want to receive the new score report with the equated percent correct score and estimated probability of passing, you should plan on making your purchase later in the day on February 23 to ensure the change has gone into effect. You will be able to see if the new score report was implemented before you make a purchase on MyNBME<sup>SM</sup> Examinee Portal. You will have 90 days from the date of purchase to complete your self-assessment.

**What type of feedback will I receive if I purchase CBSSA after February 23?**

If you purchase CBSSA after February 23, you will receive the new score report with equated percent correct scores and estimated probability of passing. You will not receive a 3-digit score on CBSSA forms purchased after February 23.

## COMPREHENSIVE BASIC SCIENCE EXAM (CBSE) COMMON QUESTIONS

NBME's Medical School Services team explored how scores from our Comprehensive Basic Science Subject Exams could best support your needs to gauge readiness for USMLE® Step 1, which will move to pass/fail reporting starting from January 26, 2022. Answers to common questions asked about our recent announcement are available below to help with the CBSE score reporting transition anticipated for February 23, 2022.

### **What is changing on the CBSE score reports?**

The overall, 3-digit score is being replaced by an equated percent correct score that represents the percentage of content mastered. In addition, the report will show your estimated probability of passing if you take USMLE Step 1 within one week (i.e., with a similar level of knowledge as when you took CBSEs). This estimated probability will be calculated based on a large group of examinees who tested within one week of taking Step 1 for the first time.

For each content area, the new report will include an equated percent correct score and the average equated percent correct score for a Step 1 comparison group. The boxes indicating whether content area performance was lower, the same, or higher than one's overall performance are going away.

What's not changing?

- There will still be a histogram depicting overall performance. It will show the distribution of equated percent correct scores for a national cohort, with lines indicating your specific score and the low-pass range for Step 1, which corresponds to performance that is above but near the passing standard.
- All content areas are staying the same. The percentage of the test comprised by each content area will continue being reported.
- The boxes indicating whether performance was lower, average, or higher in relation to a Step 1 comparison group will still be provided.

Providing an equated percent correct score for CBSEs along with an estimated probability of passing Step 1 was a way to continue reporting a score while staying aligned with the Step 1 move to pass/fail. We heard from students that receiving an overall CBSE score was important, and we selected equated percent correct scores based on the familiarity of the 0-100 scale. Like the previous 3-digit scores, equated percent correct scores can be used to track performance over time if you take CBSEs more than once.

The new equated percent correct scores that will be reported for each content area can help provide more detail about areas of strength and weakness, and the boxes that will continue being reported are designed to help you interpret your result as accurately as possible.

### **When will the new CBSE score reports be released?**

The new score reports with equated percent correct scores will be released on February 23, 2022.

### **Will CBSEs still report a 3-digit score? If not, why are CBSEs no longer reporting a 3-digit score?**

No, the 3-digit score corresponding to the USMLE Step 1 score scale will not be reported because Step 1 scores will no longer be reported. The USMLE program views the transition to Step 1 pass/fail score reporting as an important first step toward facilitating broader, system-wide changes to improve the transition from undergraduate to graduate medical education. In support of this decision, reference to the USMLE Step 1 3-digit score scale will be removed from the supporting documentation of all NBME assessments. Staff worked directly with medical school faculty and students to develop alternate score reporting for CBSEs to ensure the reporting would still meet the needs of score users. We recognize that

for a period of time this change may present challenges, but we will continue to do what we can to support you and other stakeholders during this transition.

**Will CBSEs still report a numeric score?**

CBSEs will soon provide an equated percent correct score that represents the percentage of content mastered. Equated percent correct scores are statistically adjusted to account for slight variations in exam form difficulty, so they can be used to track performance over time if you take CBSEs more than once. In addition, the CBSE report will provide your estimated probability of passing if you take Step 1 within one week (i.e., with a similar level of knowledge as when you took CBSEs).

**Why will CBSEs still report numeric scores after Step 1 changes to pass/fail only reporting?**

Ongoing market research has demonstrated that students and faculty value numeric scores on CBSE score reports, and NBME will continue to provide this information along with an estimated probability of passing Step 1 to help gauge readiness for the examination.

**Will I be able to compare my equated percent correct scores to 3-digit score?**

You will be able to compare your performance on CBSEs to a range representing low passing performance on Step 1. You will also be able to compare your content area performance to the performance of a Step 1 comparison group based on content area equated percent correct scores (new) and boxes indicating whether your performance was statistically lower, about the same, or higher than the performance of the comparison group. The new score report will help you compare your score against others in the content areas and you will get a more detailed view of your relative performance. A direct comparison of your previous 3-digit score to the new equated percent correct score scale will not be possible due to the elimination of the 3-digit scores on Step 1.

**What does equated mean?**

Equating is a statistical procedure that adjusts scores for slight variations in exam form difficulty so all scores are comparable regardless of which exam form is taken.

**What are the benefits of an equated percent correct score?**

Equated percent correct scores tell you how much of the content you mastered using the familiar 0-100 scale so you can easily understand your performance, including areas of strength and weakness. The 3-digit scale scores did not provide this type of criterion-referenced information. Like the 3-digit scores, equated percent correct scores can be used to track performance over time if you take CBSEs more than once.

**How does equated percent correct differ from classic percent correct?**

Equated percent correct scores are statistically adjusted to account for slight variations in exam form difficulty, so they can support more accurate comparisons than unadjusted percent correct scores.

**Will the new CBSE score reports provide information on my readiness/likelihood of passing USMLE Step 1?**

Yes, the new CBSE score reports will allow you to compare your score to a range representing low passing performance on Step 1 and will also provide an estimated probability of passing Step 1 if testing within one week of your CBSE attempt.