

Glossary of U.S. Medical Education Terms

LCME (Liaison Committee on Medical Education)

The accrediting body for MD-granting medical schools in the United States and Canada. LCME standards (e.g., Standard 7.6) specify what medical schools must include in their curricula, including expectations around structural competence, cultural competence, and health inequities.

ACOG (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)

The main professional organization for obstetrician–gynecologists in the United States. ACOG issues clinical guidelines and committee statements that strongly influence standards of care and education in Ob/Gyn.

Ob/Gyn (Obstetrics and Gynecology)

A medical specialty focused on pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care (obstetrics), and on medical and surgical care of the female reproductive system (gynecology).

Preclerkship

The early phase of medical school (typically years 1–2 in the U.S.) when students primarily learn through classroom-based, small-group, and simulated activities rather than direct patient care.

Clerkship

The phase of medical education (typically year 3 and part of year 4 in the U.S.) when students rotate through core clinical specialties (e.g., Internal Medicine, Surgery, Ob/Gyn, Pediatrics) and provide supervised patient care.

USMLE Step Exam (United States Medical Licensing Examination “Step” Exams)

A series of high-stakes standardized exams required for medical licensure in the U.S. “Step” usually refers to Step 1 or Step 2, which heavily influence students’ study priorities and sometimes perceived curricular value.

MS2 / MS3 / MS4

Abbreviations for “medical student, year 2 / 3 / 4” in a U.S. 4-year MD program.

- **MS2:** typically preclerkship, classroom-focused.
- **MS3–MS4:** in core clinical clerkships and advanced rotations.

Residency

Postgraduate training after medical school during which physicians train in a specific specialty (e.g., an Ob/Gyn residency). Residents are licensed doctors practicing under supervision.

Attending Physician

A fully trained, independent physician who supervises medical students and residents in clinical settings.