COMSAE FAQ 2012

Introduction
“There has been strong interest among osteopathic medical students in measurement tools at various educational stages to self-assess their understanding of osteopathic medicine. The National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) developed the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Self-Assessment Examination (COMSAE) series to serve this need for self-assessment for osteopathic medical students. COMSAE Phase 1 was first launched on March 24, 2008; Phase 2 was launched on June 26, 2008; and Phase 3 was launched on October 31, 2008. By the end of 2008, more than 3000 osteopathic students had completed COMSAE.” ¹

Osteopathic students can greatly benefit by taking COMSAE prior to taking the COMLEX (Comprehensive Osteopathic Licensing Examination). COMSAE can help a student assess his or her preparedness for COMLEX. COMSAE was created using the same competency framework as COMLEX, therefore COMSAE scores can offer insight into likely COMLEX performance. Research completed at the NBOME demonstrates a good correlation (r = 0.76 for timed mode) between COMSAE and COMLEX scores.¹

COMSAE is available for each Level of the COMLEX. The items encountered in the COMSAE include retired multiple-choice questions used on the actual COMLEX.

A COMSAE Bulletin of Information that presents the information above and much more is available for your review at: http://www.nbome.org/docs/comsae-boi.pdf

How will taking COMSAE help you?
COMSAE will provide you with COMLEX familiarity and discipline-based feedback.

The items used on each phase (1-3) of the COMSAE are in the same format and style as the respective level of the COMLEX (Levels 1-3). Upon completing COMSAE you immediately have access to a Performance Report that is similar to the report you receive after completing COMLEX.

COMSAE scores are reported numerically as a standardized three-digit score on a scale that is equivalent to the COMLEX score. COMSAE scores are also reported as a Performance Level (Poor, Borderline, Acceptable, Good). A graphic profile, provided immediately upon completion of the assessment, identifies performance by content areas.

The nature of the COMSAE Performance Report (i.e., feedback) and its correlation to the COMLEX provide helpful information. This feedback can be very helpful in identifying discipline-based strengths and weaknesses that you should use to guide further studying. Furthermore, by becoming more familiar with the test, prior to your review, you gain insight into how you will be expected to apply your knowledge, thus enabling you to better study for the test you will be taking.

¹ http://www.nbome.org/comsae.asp
Why do you have to take COMSAE?
COMSAE is so beneficial to your preparation for COMLEX that MSUCOM will pay for all members of the Class of 2015 to take the COMSAE Phase 1 examination [Fall Semester, 2012]. In fact, the Dean of MSUCOM is requiring that you complete and obtain a minimum “cut-score” on COMSAE prior to being allowed to register to take COMLEX in January of 2013.

What score do you need to achieve to be allowed to register for COMLEX?
National reports and MSUCOM-specific data (from the Classes of 2013 and 2014) exist. Since you will be taking COMSAE this fall, a cut-score (i.e., score required to be allowed to register for the COMLEX) has not yet been established. The score required on the COMSAE taken in the fall will be lower than if the examination were administered during the spring of the year. The cut-score will be based on normative statistics. We anticipate that approximately 45 – 50 students will have scores below the cut-score.

What happens if your COMSAE score is below the cut-score?
If your score is below the cut-score, you will be required to complete an online Study Skills assessment (an 80 item survey tool that can be completed in less than 30 minutes). You will also be required to meet with an advisor from Student Services to: 1) review your COMSAE report and 2) discuss the results of your Study Skills assessment. Once you complete these two requirements you will be allowed to register for the COMLEX.

Should you study for the COMSAE?
Although it is in your best interest to perform to the best of your ability on COMSAE so that you receive accurate feedback, we recommend that you do not study for COMSAE. The intervention (described above) for those that do not achieve the cut-score is designed to be useful to you, not burdensome. The intervention can be completed in 2 – 3 hours. Once the intervention is completed, you will be allowed to register for the COMLEX. You will not be required to take the COMSAE a second time prior to registering.

What is the process for gaining access to and completing COMSAE?
The COMSAE is a 200-item examination that you will have four (4) hours to complete. As the scheduling process is complicated, MSUCOM is currently working with the NBOME to delineate when the COMSAE will be made available to you. Information on scheduling your COMSAE will soon be e-mailed.

Will you be able to take the COMSAE a second or third time?
Currently, MSUCOM plans to pay for you to take the COMSAE a second time during Spring Semester, 2013. MSUCOM will not pay for you to take the COMSAE a third time; you may pay to take COMSAE a third time if you so choose as there are three different versions (forms A, B and C).