

The American Orthopaedic Association's Council of Orthopaedic Residency Directors Guide for Residency Applicants

Application platform: Applicants to orthopaedic surgery should apply via the AAMC's ERAS application. Please visit the AAMC ERAS website for additional information.

Application deadline: Orthopaedic surgery will begin reviewing applications on September 24, 2025. Applicants are expected to have at least three letters of recommendation (LORs) submitted by that date (four is recommended), as well as all other supporting documents (e.g., transcript, MSPE, and USMLE/COMLEX transcript).

Match platform: Orthopaedic surgery participates in the NRMP Main Residency Match. Please visit the [NRMP website](#) for additional information.

Letters of recommendation: We recommend that applicants to orthopaedic surgery include at least three LORs as part of their application (four is recommended). Of these LORs, at least two should be from the field of orthopaedic surgery. These can be from your home institution and/or an institution where you completed an away rotation. AOA/CORD recommends that programs should carefully consider eliminating the requirement for a Chair letter as part of the holistic review, recognizing that applicants are from differing types of institutions. Applicants should review the program's profile in the [AOA/CORD Orthopaedic Residency Information Network \(ORIN\)](#)[®] and/or program websites to which they plan to apply. Programs encourage all applicants/recommendation writers to use the [AOA/CORD Electronic Standardized Letter of Recommendation \(eSLOR\)](#).

Away rotation expectations: Orthopaedic surgery encourages each applicant to arrange a fourth-year rotation schedule that allows them to confirm their interest in orthopaedic surgery and also gain broad-based experience in other areas of medicine that interest them. AOA/CORD acknowledges: The financial burden of doing multiple away rotations; and that there is unequal access to away rotations at different medical schools. AOA/CORD recommends a limit of 4 medical student rotations, inclusive of all rotations

(home and away). AOA/CORD strongly recommends students consult with advisors to determine number and location for away rotations.

Signal information: Orthopaedic surgery applicants can signal their interest in up to 30 programs for interviews. Additional guidance on using program signals is available on the AAMC ERAS website, and orthopaedic surgery applicants are encouraged to signal any programs at which they are most interested in interviewing, including their home institution and any other institutions at which they completed an away rotation. All programs in orthopaedic surgery will be automatically opted in to receive program signals. Individual programs may choose to opt-out of receiving program signals in the Program Management tab of the PDWS and should do so by their respective cycle's deadline outlined above. Regarding geographic preference signaling, orthopaedic surgery has turned off this option; therefore, applicants to orthopaedic surgery residency will no longer have the option to signal a geographic preference.

Use of Step scores: Orthopaedic surgery applicants should ideally have both their Step 1 and Step 2CK transcripts, or COMLEX Level 1 or Level 2-CE) available for programs to review by the application opening date.

Interview invitation process: Orthopaedic surgery is encouraging the use of [Universal Interview Offer Day](#). This year, the first round of interview offers for participating programs will be on November 17, 2025, 12:00pm ET. When interview offers are extended, there will be a 24-hour moratorium on accepting interviews. Following this moratorium, applicants will have 48 hours to schedule interviews. If an applicant declines/does not respond by Thursday, November 20, 2025, 12:00pm ET, the program may extend an invitation to another applicant.

Interview format: AOA/CORD recommends that programs should make their own individual decisions about whether to host virtual or in-person interviews for the 2025-2026 cycle. Programs should not offer hybrid interviewing (i.e. some interviews held virtually and some in-person within the same program's match cycle) for the main applicant pool (non-home students and non-rotators). If a program chooses to conduct in-person interviews, a virtual format should only be considered for interviewing home students or those who have

done an in-person rotation. Programs should publish their decision to proceed with virtual or in-person interviews on the program's website and in the program's profile in ORIN®.

Applicant communications: AOA/CORD recommends that programs discourage ANY and ALL post-interview communication with residency applicants to their programs. Contact of any kind by the Chairman, Program Director, Program Coordinator, or other Faculty that represent Orthopaedic Surgery Residency program will place the applicants at a disadvantage. Applicants feel they need to provide a response even if not asked for that response. For this reason, AOA/CORD encourages all institutions to eliminate ALL post-interview communication. Post-interview communication includes emails, letters, and phone calls to highly ranked applicants.

Post Interview Open House or Second Look planning: Attendance at Post Interview Open House or Second Look events is optional and should have no impact on ranking decisions. We encourage programs to consider a voluntary lock of their rank order list prior to hosting their Post Interview Open House or Second Look events to reinforce the optional nature of these programs for applicants.