

Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants

Anesthesiology

The *Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants* is a collaborative effort between the Organization of Program Directors Association (OPDA), Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), and American Medical Association (AMA). Its purpose is to provide specialty-specific guidance, application information, and resources. This guide outlines specialty-level guidance and policies for applicants to Anesthesiology programs.

Specialty responses in this guide were provided through a standardized web form. The corresponding questions from that form are referenced in the footnotes. If a specialty indicated "No specialty recommendation to programs," it means the specialty does not provide guidance on how programs should approach that aspect of the selection process.

Please note that not all aspects of the residency application process are standardized at the specialty level. Applicants should review individual program requirements in Residency Explorer™ tool, FREIDA™, or on program websites.

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Specialty Guidance for the 2025–2026 Cycle

Anesthesiology has published a statement: <https://www.saaapm.org/guide-for-residency-applicants-2025-2026>

Application Process

| Application Process Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|--|--|
| Main Residency Match Season | AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) |
| Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) | AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) |
| Application deadline to be considered for interview ¹ | Date applications are released to programs |
| Application materials accepted after the deadline ² | Letters of recommendation, Step 2 or Level 2 transcripts |

Additional Deadline Guidance: Individual programs vary on their review of materials added after September 24th.

- Anesthesiology applicants should ideally have both their Step 1 and Step 2 CK transcripts (or COMLEX Level 1 or Level 2-CE) available for programs to review by the application opening date. Many programs will not review applications that do not have a result reported on Step 1 or Step 2 (or COMLEX Level 1 or Level 2-CE).
- If additional material is added after September 25th, the information may not be reviewed.
- LORs beyond the minimum of 3 can be added at a later date, but programs may not notice documents added to ERAS after September 24th.

We suggest any late materials be uploaded AND emailed to the program coordinator of programs the applicant is applying to.

Match Platform

Anesthesiology participates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP).

Additional Guidance: None noted.

¹ By when should applicants submit applications to programs to be considered for interview?: Date applications are released to programs; Universal interview offer date for the specialty; Other

² Is it acceptable for applicants to submit some application materials after the initial application?: Yes; No

Program Signals

| Program Signals Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|---|--------------------------|
| Number of signals | 5 gold, 10 silver |
| Signal home institution or away rotation sites? | Yes |

Additional Guidance:

- Programs will be able to view signaling (if present) on each applicant's ERAS profile. Signals are not further presented in any particular order. In other words, there is not a "gold number 1, gold number 2, etc.).
- Programs will NOT be able to see which other programs an applicant has signaled.
- Applicants should use all their signals. There is no known advantage to not using all available signals.
- Anesthesiology applicants will be asked to provide a signal statement explaining their interest in each program they signal.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider their personal values and goals, consult faculty advisors, as well as utilize resources to explore residency programs such as individual program websites, AMA FREIDA, AAMC Residency Explorer, and any other available resources. The applicant's goal should be to find programs that best align with their goals and where they are most likely to be competitive. It is highly discouraged to send signals to programs at which the applicant is unlikely to be competitive, as this is less likely to result in an interview offer.
- Geographic signaling was utilized in different ways in individual Anesthesiology programs in the 2024-2025 application cycle. Please refer to program specific guidance.
- Additional guidance on using program signals and geographic signals is available on the AAMC ERAS website.
- Applicants who are couples matching should ensure both members of the couple signal the same programs whenever possible. Asking a program an applicant did not signal to grant the applicant an interview because their partner received an interview at the same institution is discouraged and unlikely to be successful.

Specialty-Specific Questions in MyERAS

Applicants to Anesthesiology are required to complete the following questions in MyERAS before they can submit their application to Anesthesiology programs. Responses to these questions will be shared only with Anesthesiology programs.

- Describe a time when you faced adversity, how you overcame it, and any lessons learned from it. (500-character limit)
- Describe a situation in which you would have made a different decision that might have led to a better outcome. (500-character limit)
- Describe your ideal career as an attending. (500-character limit)

Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores

| License Exam Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|---|---|
| Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be considered for interview³ | No specialty recommendation to programs |
| Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be ranked⁴ | No specialty recommendation to programs |
| USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants?⁵ | No, USMLE scores are not required for DO applicants |

Additional Guidance:

- Anesthesiology applicants should ideally have both their Step 1 and Step 2 CK transcripts (or COMLEX Level 1 or Level 2-CE) available for programs to review by the application opening date. Many programs will not review applications in consideration for interview that do not have a result reported on Step 1 or Step 2 CK (or COMLEX Level 1 or Level 2-CE).
- We suggest any late materials be uploaded AND emailed to the program coordinator of programs the applicant is applying to.
- Most programs require a Step 2 CK or COMLEX Level 2-CE to be reported to be considered for the rank list.
- The Association of Anesthesiology Core Program Directors recommends that programs should not require osteopathic trainees to take other licensing examinations in addition to COMLEX-USA. However, individual programs may choose to require USMLE examination scores for osteopathic students. Please look for guidance regarding this requirement on individual program websites.
- Many programs consider applicants with failure on a licensure exam depending on the context provided by the applicant. Programs vary in their consideration of applicants who have previously failed a licensure exam.
- The average Step 2 CK score for matched first year residents in Anesthesiology from the 2020-2021 AAMC Report on Residents showed a Step 2 CK score > 240 or a COMLEX Level 2-CE score > 600, although programs may choose to interview applicants whose test performance is below these values.

³ By when must an applicant submit a USMLE Step 2 CK or COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE score to be considered for interview?: Initial application deadline; Other

⁴ By when must an applicant submit a USMLE Step 2 CK or COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE score to be ranked?: Initial application deadline; Prior to rank order list opening

⁵ Does your specialty require that DO applicants submit USMLE scores in addition to COMLEX-USA scores?: Yes, USMLE scores are required for all applicants; No, USMLE scores are not required for DO applicants

Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

| LOR Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|--|---|
| Required number of LORs | 3 - 4 |
| Required specialty-specific letters ⁶ | Letter from someone in the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending) |

Additional Guidance for Specialty-Specific Letters:

- Applicants should submit at least 3 LORs and no more than 4.
- At least one LOR (many programs require at least 2) should be from the field of Anesthesiology. Please review program websites for guidance.
- Other supporting letters should come from faculty that are most familiar with your performance. These faculty may include research mentors, medical school mentors, or faculty from other clinical specialties, whether from your home institution or an away rotation.
- There is no specific recommendation or requirement for a Standard Letter of Evaluation (SLOE) or Chair or Program Director letter, although individual programs may have specific requirements for letters. Applicants should review program websites to which they plan to apply.

Guidance for Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: It is highly recommended (but not required) that any applicant who is currently in a residency training program provide a letter of recommendation from their current program director. Programs may vary on their requirements for this.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: There are no specific letter of recommendation requirements for IMG applicants however it is suggested to have at least one letter from a US-based physician who knows the applicant's clinical experience. Otherwise, applicants should refer to program specific guidelines.

Supplemental Information

| Supplemental Application Materials | Specialty Recommendation |
|--|--------------------------|
| Supplemental application materials recommended | Yes |

Additional Supplemental Application Materials: Anesthesiology is piloting the use of specialty specific questions within the ERAS application as well as a signal statement. It is highly recommended that you complete this section of the application for program use in interview selection.

⁶ Which specialty-specific letters of recommendation should an applicant submit to a program? (Select all that apply): Specialty-specific standardized letter(s) of evaluation (e.g., SLOE, SEL, SLOR); Letter from a Chair; Letter from someone in the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending); Other letters

Away Rotations

| Away Rotation Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Away rotations in the specialty⁷ | Not required or recommended |
| Number of away rotations in the specialty | – |

Additional Guidance: Anesthesiology programs encourage applicants to arrange a fourth-year rotation schedule that allows them to confirm their interest in Anesthesiology and gain broad-based experience in other areas of medicine that interest them.

- Completion of an away rotation is welcomed but not required.
- Applicants should complete no more than 2 external electives in Anesthesiology to be mindful of future colleagues and equity concerns related to access to rotations.
- Applicants will not be penalized for not completing away rotations at programs to which they have applied.
- We recommend that individuals who choose to complete away rotations perform at an acting intern level and utilize the month to gain broad experience in Anesthesiology as well as familiarize yourself with that program and institution.
- If interested in away rotations, students should visit the website(s) of programs they are interested in to see if they utilize the Visiting Student Learning Opportunity (VSLO) platform and/or have separate applications.
- IMG applicants should strongly consider an away rotation with clinical experience in the US system
- Completion of an away rotation is independent of program signaling. Applicants SHOULD signal programs where they completed a sub-internship/away rotation if those programs are among their preferred programs.

Interviews

| Interview Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|--|---|
| Universal interview offer date(s) | No specialty recommendation to programs |
| Typical interview offer window | No specialty recommendation to programs |
| Interview scheduling platform | – |
| Interview format(s)⁸ | Virtual |

⁷ Does the specialty expect or strongly recommend that applicants complete away rotations in the specialty?: No; Strongly recommended; Expected

⁸ Which interview format does the specialty recommend that programs use? (Select all that apply): Virtual; In-person; Hybrid

Additional Guidance: Anesthesiology programs usually interview from late October to mid-January.

- There is no universal release date for Anesthesiology interviews or deadline by which all interviews will be offered.
- Please refer to individual program websites or coordinators for more information and for platforms utilized for interview offers/scheduling.
- The Association of Anesthesiology Core Program Directors recommends that all Anesthesiology programs conduct virtual interviews for this application cycle, although individual programs may choose to conduct interviews in-person depending on the unique needs of their program.

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: It is not recommended to use letters of interest prior to receiving an interview offer. Please utilize the signaling process to express program interest.

If an applicant receives a rejection email, further communication asking for an interview should be avoided.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: Post-interview or pre-rank list communication is also not necessary for applicants. If an applicant would like to send a thank you note or a letter of interest, they are welcome to do so. Applicants should understand that the program director may not respond, and this correspondence will not be utilized to influence interview/rank list outcomes.

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses:

- Open houses prior to ERAS application opening may be provided by individual programs. Please see program websites/social media for additional information. The American Society of Anesthesiologists website has a list of many planned open houses. Attendance and participation at open houses are optional and purely for applicant information. They will not be utilized to determine interview offers.
- The ASA residency open house at the Anesthesiology Annual meeting is not a recruiting opportunity for 4th year applicants. Active applicants should not expect to meet program directors or discuss interview offers during this session.

Second Looks: Second look opportunities after interviews (but before rank lists are due by applicants) may also be available to applicants depending on the individual program. Please see program websites for additional information.

- Attendance at these events is optional and should not affect rank list determination by programs.
- It is strongly encouraged that programs consider a voluntary lock of their rank order list prior to hosting their second look events to reinforce the optional nature of these programs. Program leadership may choose not to participate in any second look events to avoid bias or equity issues for applicants.

NRMP Voluntary Rank Order List (ROL) Lock Pilot Initiative: No