

Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants

General Surgery

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 General Surgery 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

General Surgery has published a statement: None noted.

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 | No specialty recommendation to programs |

Additional Deadline Guidance: None noted.

Match Platform

General Surgery participates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP).

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Program Signals

| Program Signals Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|---|--------------------------|
| Number of signals | 15 |
| Signal home institution or away rotation sites? | Yes |

Additional Guidance: Follow individual residency requirements.

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

Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores

| License Exam Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|---|---|
| Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be considered for interview³ | Initial application deadline |
| Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be ranked⁴ | Initial application deadline |
| USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants?⁵ | No specialty recommendation to programs |

Additional Guidance: While the APDS recognizes the predictive value of COMLEX, at this time it is still recommended that DO students who wish to preserve the best chance for a successful match continue to participate in USMLE to maintain the best chance of equivalent application review by programs.

Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

| LOR Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|--|---|
| Required number of LORs | No specialty recommendation to programs |
| Required specialty-specific letters⁶ | No specialty recommendation to programs |

Additional Guidance for Specialty-Specific Letters: Follow individual residency guidelines for total number of LOR, deadlines, and if Chair letters are encouraged or discouraged.

Guidance for Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: Follow individual residency guidelines.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: Follow individual residency guidelines.

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

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

Supplemental Information

| Supplemental Application Materials | Specialty Recommendation |
|--|---|
| Supplemental application materials recommended | No specialty recommendation to programs |

Additional Supplemental Application Materials: None noted.

Away Rotations

| Away Rotation Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|--|---|
| Away rotations in the specialty ⁷ | No specialty recommendation to programs |
| Number of away rotations in the specialty | – |

Additional Guidance: Based on specific interest in specialty and location.

Interviews

| Interview Details | Specialty Recommendation |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Universal interview offer date(s) | October 22, 2025 through October 31, 2025 |
| Typical interview offer window | – |
| Interview scheduling platform | Thalamus Core |
| Interview format(s) ⁸ | Virtual, In-person, Hybrid |

Additional Guidance: It is recommended that each program perform interviews in a manner that is most consistent with their specific program and institutional values in mind.

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

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: Applicants to surgical programs are encouraged to maintain professional and timely communication to programs in order to provide the most consistent recruitment process possible. If necessary to cancel an interview, timely and professional communication is expected with at least one-week notice.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: None noted.

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses: None noted.

Second Looks: Some programs may offer second looks; these should be meant as an opportunity for the applicant to gain more information about the program and its location. The structure of second looks will be dependent on program goals and values.

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