

Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants

Internal Medicine

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 Internal Medicine 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

Internal Medicine has published a statement: Guidelines for Residency Interview Scheduling: <https://www.im.org/resources/ume-gme-program-resources/residency-scheduling-guidelines>

Tiered Program Signals: <https://www.im.org/resources/tiered-signaling>

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

Internal Medicine participates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP).

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	3 gold, 12 silver
Signal home institution or away rotation sites?	Yes

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

Additional Guidance: Please reference the soon-to-be updated AAIM Tiered Program Signals webpage (June 2025).

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: None noted.

Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
Required number of LORs	No specialty recommendation to programs
Required specialty-specific letters⁶	Specialty-specific standardized letter(s) of evaluation (e.g., SLOE, SEL, SLOR), Letter from someone in the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending)

Additional Guidance for Specialty-Specific Letters: The AAIM Internal Medicine Structured Letter of Evaluation (IM SEL) incorporates competency-based language reflective of the ACGME IM Milestones 2.0. By presenting specific data in a standardized and structured format, the IM SEL enables a standardized and structured review of the applicant. The IM SEL provides an opportunity to highlight clinical competencies and professional skills not assessed on standardized exams, providing

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

a more holistic view of an applicant's possible strengths and areas of improvement. To access the AAIM IM SEL template and mock-up, visit the AAIM Guidelines for Internal Medicine Structured Evaluative Letter page: <https://tinyurl.com/bdfxyvsf>.

To note, there is no specialty-wide recommendation on away rotation LoRs, which is dependent on the specific program. Applicants should review a program's requirements for this area. AAIM established in FY24 an Away Rotations Work Group. It is anticipated that the work group will develop guidelines or recommendations in this space in FY26 or FY27.

Guidance for Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: One (1) clinical LoR from an IM faculty member and one (1) clinical LoR from any specialty faculty member. Applicants are encouraged to visit the residency program's site to determine what their prelim program's requirements are.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: Please reference the AAIM FAQs for IMGs.

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: Applicants should review a program's requirements for this area and to consult with a career advisor for individualized guidance.

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

Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	–
Typical interview offer window	October 2025 - December 2025
Interview scheduling platform	Thalamus Core
Interview format(s) ⁸	Virtual

Additional Guidance: Please reference our soon-to-be updated Guidelines for Residency Interview Scheduling (June 2025) .

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: None noted.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: AAIM strongly discourages programs from sending tailored, individualized post-interview communication. If post-interview communication is necessary, establishing guardrails are imperative. Below are some recommendations:

Programs who wish to send updates or any “program-initiated informational outreach or post-interview events” should share these with all candidates, regardless of their background, standing, or track interest. Overall, programs are strongly encouraged to message all applicants or all candidates within a specific group, rather than individuals.

Programs should articulate that interviewees refrain from sending “thank you” notes. Rather, they are encouraged to ask clarifying questions about the program or are willing to share additional information pertaining to the program, at the candidate’s request. Faculty and staff should emphasize that they are prohibited from communicating the candidate’s odds of ranking or matching to their program.

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses: None noted.

Second Looks: AAIM recommends that in-person visits be optional, including open houses or program-sponsored second looks. Programs that opt to conduct second looks should do so as part of the NRMP Rank Order List Pilot.

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

NRMP announced its Voluntary Rank Order List (ROL) Lock Pilot initiative. AAIM is actively participating in the pilot program, along with representatives from pediatrics and vascular surgery. Internal Medicine programs will have the opportunity to participate in the voluntary pilot this FY26. For more information on the ROL Lock Pilot initiative, click [here](#). To note, IM programs must sign-up for the pilot by September 5, 2025. IM programs participating in the program must certify and “lock” their ROLs at least 24 hours before the first post-interview visit or by February 9, 2026 at the latest.

The voluntary ROL Lock Pilot allows programs the option of securing their ROL and then allowing interviewed applicants to visit the program, confident in the knowledge that visiting (or not) will not impact their ranking on the list. Separation of program and applicant ROL deadlines will permit time for applicants to participate in optional in-person second look visits without fear of added bias, since the applicant’s visit would not influence a program’s rank order list.

Whether a program elects to take part in the NRMP ROL Pilot or not, AAIM strongly recommends that programs commit to their GME office to submit their rank lists before holding any in-person second looks. To further democratize the process, AAIM recommends that programs who choose to offer open houses or second looks structure them so that applicants are precluded from meeting program leaders or other faculty that hold decision-making authority; rather, they would meet with current fellows or non-voting faculty members who can answer any questions regarding the institution’s customs and culture.

NRMP Voluntary Rank Order List (ROL) Lock Pilot Initiative: Yes