

# Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants

## Ophthalmology

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 Ophthalmology 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

Ophthalmology has published a statement: Please refer to the SF Match website for details regarding the upcoming 2026 application cycle.

## Application Process

Application Process Details	Specialty Recommendation
Main Residency Match Season	San Francisco Match Central Application Service (CAS)
Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP)	No specialty recommendation to programs
Application deadline to be considered for interview <sup>1</sup>	Refer to specific programs for individual deadlines
Application materials accepted after the deadline <sup>2</sup>	Letters of recommendation, MSPE, Step 1 or Level 1 transcripts, Step 2 or Level 2 transcripts

**Additional Deadline Guidance:** Please refer to individual programs for specific guidance.

## Match Platform

Ophthalmology participates in the San Francisco Match.

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	10
Signal home institution or away rotation sites?	Yes

**Additional Guidance:** Ophthalmology Program Signaling began in 2024. As it evolves, information will be posted on the SF Match website. Applicants are encouraged to signal programs at which they

<sup>1</sup> 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

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

are most interested in interviewing, including their home institution or any other institutions at which they completed an away rotation.

## Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores

License Exam Details	Specialty Recommendation
<b>Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be considered for interview<sup>3</sup></b>	This is program dependent. Some programs may not review applications without a USMLE Step 2 CK/COMLEX Level 2 score.
<b>Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be ranked<sup>4</sup></b>	This is program dependent. It is more likely than not that an applicant will not be ranked without a USMLE Step 2CK/COMLEX level 2 score.
<b>USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants?<sup>5</sup></b>	USMLE Step 1 scores required for all applicants

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
<b>Required number of LORs</b>	2 or 3
<b>Required specialty-specific letters<sup>6</sup></b>	Letter from someone in the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending)

**Additional Guidance for Specialty-Specific Letters:** It is recommended for applicants to obtain 2 letters from Ophthalmology. Currently, there is no standard format for recommendation letters in Ophthalmology. There is no specific recommendation for a Chair letter, although applicants should review program websites for specific recommendations.

<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>6</sup> 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

**Guidance for Transitional Year/Prelim Programs:** see above

**Guidance for IMG Applicants:** see above

## Supplemental Information

Supplemental Application Materials	Specialty Recommendation
Supplemental application materials recommended	Yes

**Additional Supplemental Application Materials:** Supplemental application materials are program-specific, and applicants are encouraged to consult individual programs for further details.

## Away Rotations

Away Rotation Details	Specialty Recommendation
Away rotations in the specialty <sup>7</sup>	Strong recommended
Number of away rotations in the specialty	–

**Additional Guidance:** Away rotations in Ophthalmology are not a prerequisite for residency application. However, they may be helpful to confirm your interest and obtain a broader experience in the field. There are no specialty specific recommendations about the number of away rotations.

## Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	October 25th, October 22nd, October 29th, November 5th
Typical interview offer window	October 27th - December 19th
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format(s) <sup>8</sup>	Virtual

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

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

**Additional Guidance:** Currently, all Ophthalmology residency interviews are conducted virtually. This decision has been made on an annual basis. If it changes, the SF Match website will indicate the change.

## **Applicant Communications**

**Pre-Interview Communication Guidance:** There is no specialty-wide guidance on pre-interview communication. Please refer to individual programs for specific details.

**Post-Interview Communication Guidance:** There is no specialty-wide guidance on post-interview communication. Please refer to individual programs for specific details.

## **Open Houses / Second Looks**

**Open Houses:** Individual programs may offer an open house in the 4-week period after the program rank list submission deadline and before the applicant rank list submission due date. More information on open houses is listed on the SF Match website. Please contact individual programs for specific details.

**Second Looks:** There is no specialty guidance on Second Looks. Currently, only open houses are held as indicated above, and this is at the discretion of individual programs.

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