

# Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants

## Pathology

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 Pathology 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.

## Table of Contents

Application Process .....	2
Match Platform.....	2
Program Signals.....	2
Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores.....	3
Letters of Recommendation (LORs) .....	3
Supplemental Information.....	4
Away Rotations.....	4
Interviews.....	5
Applicant Communications .....	5
Open Houses / Second Looks .....	5

# Specialty Guidance for the 2025–2026 Cycle

Pathology has published a statement: Pathology supports the AAMC recommendation, supporting the use of virtual interviews for residency program recruitment.

## Application Process

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

**Additional Deadline Guidance:** Before the rank list deadline

## Match Platform

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

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
<b>Number of signals</b>	5
<b>Signal home institution or away rotation sites?</b>	Yes

<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

**Additional Guidance:** Pathology follows the AAMC guidance regarding the use of signals. Applicants should signal their home institution, or an institution where they completed an away rotation, if they are interested in an interview at that program.

## 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>	No recommended date nationally. Individual programs may provide additional specification and/or recommendations for applicants applying to their program.
<b>Deadline to submit license exam transcripts to be ranked<sup>4</sup></b>	Applicants are strongly encouraged to have a USMLE Step 2CK/COMLEX Level 2 score available by the time rank lists open in February. Individual programs may provide additional specification and/or recommendations for applicants applying to their program.
<b>USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants?<sup>5</sup></b>	No, USMLE scores are not required for DO applicants

**Additional Guidance:** Individual programs may provide additional specification and/or recommendations for applicants applying to their program.

## Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

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

<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

**Additional Guidance for Specialty-Specific Letters:** Applicants to Pathology Residency Programs are encouraged to have at least 3 letters of recommendation. As applicants may have limited opportunities to rotate in pathology in advance of applying for residency, letters can be from physicians in other specialties who have worked closely with the applicant. However, at least one letter of recommendation from a pathologist is generally required. Individual programs may specify more stringent requirements, and a date by which these letters are received.

**Guidance for Transitional Year/Prelim Programs:** Applicants to Pathology Residency Programs are encouraged to have at least 3 letters of recommendation. As applicants may have limited opportunities to rotate in pathology in advance of applying for residency, letters can be from physicians in other specialties during the transitional year who have worked closely with the applicant. However, at least one letter of recommendation from a pathologist is generally required. Individual programs may specify more stringent requirements, and a date by which these letters are received.

**Guidance for IMG Applicants:** Applicants to Pathology Residency Programs are encouraged to have at least 3 letters of recommendation. As applicants may have limited opportunities to rotate in pathology in advance of applying for residency, letters can be from physicians in other specialties who have worked closely with the applicant. However, at least one letter of recommendation from a pathologist is generally required. Individual programs may specify more stringent requirements, and a date by which these letters are received.

## Supplemental Information

Supplemental Application Materials	Specialty Recommendation
Supplemental application materials recommended	No

**Additional Supplemental Application Materials:** None noted.

## Away Rotations

Away Rotation Details	Specialty Recommendation
Away rotations in the specialty <sup>7</sup>	Not required or recommended
Number of away rotations in the specialty	–

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

<sup>7</sup> 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)	October 15, 2025, Individual program specific
Typical interview offer window	–
Interview scheduling platform	Thalamus Core
Interview format(s) <sup>8</sup>	Virtual

**Additional Guidance:** Pathology supports the AAMC recommendation, supporting the use of virtual interviews for residency program recruitment.

## Applicant Communications

**Pre-Interview Communication Guidance:** Please refer to the NRMP code of conduct.

**Post-Interview Communication Guidance:** Please refer to the NRMP code of conduct.

## Open Houses / Second Looks

**Open Houses:** TBD by individual programs.

**Second Looks:** TBD by individual programs. Optional to applicants. Programs are required to submit their Rank Order list in advance.

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

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