

Program Directors Association Guide for Residency Applicants

Neurological 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 Neurological 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

Neurological Surgery has published a statement: <file:///Users/comaher/Downloads/2024-25 SNS Recruitment Guidelines.pdf>

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 interview¹	Date applications are released to programs
Application materials accepted after the deadline²	No specialty recommendation to programs

Additional Deadline Guidance: None noted.

Match Platform

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

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	25
Signal home institution or away rotation sites?	Yes

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

Specialty-Specific Questions in MyERAS

Specialty-Specific Questions

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

- Describe a time when you had to make a quick decision. What did you consider when making the decision? Who did you consult or not and why? (1000-character limit)
- Describe a specific situation where you received negative feedback about your performance. How did you adjust your behavior? What did you learn from this situation? (1000-character limit)
- Describe a specific situation when your workload was overwhelming. What specific actions did you take to manage your workload? What was the outcome? (1000-character limit)

Specialty-Specific Personal Statement

Neurological Surgery Leadership has also asked all candidates to follow this prompt when writing their personal statement for the 2026 season:

- Neurosurgery is an arduous but rewarding career track. Describe your vision for your future career as a neurosurgeon. Discuss the challenges you foresee for your career as a neurosurgeon. Discuss the competencies and experiences you have had that prepare you for that future career and to face those challenges effectively.

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 specialty recommendation to programs

Additional Guidance: None noted.

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
Required specialty-specific letters ⁶	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: SNS recommends that each applicant obtain the following recommendations:

- One (1) Home program: SNS Standardized Home Letter of Evaluation (LOE).
- One (1) letter of any kind at each program, letters using the LOE/LOR standardized format may be written by an individual or by an evaluation committee, which will commonly involve the department chair, PD, and/or core education faculty who have worked with each applicant.

Guidance for Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: None noted.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: None noted.

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 ⁷	Expected
Number of away rotations in the specialty	2 or 3

Additional Guidance: 1 Home and 1-2 External AI rotations.

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

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)	any Friday in October after 4pm EST
Typical interview offer window	–
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format(s) ⁸	No specialty recommendation to programs

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: None noted.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: None noted.

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses: None noted.

Second Looks: None noted.

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

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