

# Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

## Pathology

The *Program Director Associations 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-specific guidance reflects the specialty’s intent for applicant preparation and the residency application process but may not reflect all individual program requirements.** Applicants should review individual program requirements in Residency Explorer™ tool, FREIDA™, or on program websites.

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 guidance,” it means the specialty does not provide guidance on that aspect of the selection process.

## Table of Contents

Specialty-Specific Resources.....	2
Away Rotations.....	2
Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores.....	2
Application Process .....	3
Program Signals .....	3
Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation .....	4
Research/Scholarly Activity .....	4
Supplemental Information.....	5
Applicant Communications .....	5
Interviews.....	5
Open Houses / Second Looks .....	5
Match Platform.....	6

# Specialty Guidance for the 2026–2027 Cycle

## Specialty-Specific Resources

None noted.

## Away Rotations

Away Rotation Details	Specialty Recommendation
<b>Away rotations in the specialty<sup>1</sup></b>	Strongly Recommended Purpose: important to being considered, but not always required given certain circumstances
<b>Number of away rotations in the specialty</b>	At least 1

**Additional Guidance:** Given the highly specialized nature of Pathology residency, some experience in it prior to interviews will be helpful. We understand that this is not always feasible, particularly for international candidates. Therefore, the applications without such rotations will still be considered in a holistic manner.

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

License Exam Details	Specialty Recommendation
<b>USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants?<sup>2</sup></b>	No, USMLE scores are not required for DO applicants

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

---

<sup>1</sup> Even if an applicant's home institution has a program in your specialty, are completing away rotations in the specialty optional, strongly recommended, or required for applicants?: Optional, Not Expected (to gain additional exposure or confirm interest in specialty before applying); Strongly Recommended (important to being considered, but not always required given certain circumstances); Required (will not be considered without it)

<sup>2</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

## 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)
When programs start reviewing applications <sup>3</sup>	No specialty guidance
Application materials accepted after the deadline <sup>4</sup>	No specialty guidance

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	5
Signal home institutions?	No specialty guidance
Signal programs where they completed away rotations?	No specialty guidance

**Additional Guidance:** Signals are helpful to programs when evaluating candidates with similar credentials and allows us to tailor interview offers and/or rank list. However, due to the limited number of signals given to candidates, signals would not supersede qualifications.

---

<sup>3</sup> Which best describes when programs will start reviewing applications for this application cycle (2026-2027)?: Date applications are released to programs; Other

<sup>4</sup> Is it acceptable for applicants to submit some application materials after the initial application?: Yes; No

## Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
Required number of LORs	At least 3
Required letter writers <sup>5</sup>	Someone within the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending)
Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter? <sup>6</sup>	No

**Additional Guidance:** 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 Applicants from Transitional Year/Prelim Programs:** Not applicable.

**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.

## Research/Scholarly Activity

Research requirements are very institution-specific. While all institutions consider research experience to be a positive attribute since the applicants gain critical thinking, and analytic skills, other indicators of such skills in the application will also be considered.

---

<sup>5</sup> Who is required to submit letters? (Select all that apply): Someone within the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending); Department chair; Program director; Physician preceptor at an away rotation (e.g., program director, faculty); Other

<sup>6</sup> Does your specialty have a specialty-specific standardized letter of evaluation or standardized letter of recommendation?: Yes; No

## Supplemental Information

Supplemental Application Materials	Specialty Recommendation
Supplemental application materials required? <sup>7</sup>	No specialty guidance

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Applicant Communications

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

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

## Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	October 15th, 2026 at 4pm EST
Typical interview offer window	–
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format <sup>8</sup>	Virtual

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Open Houses / Second Looks

**Open Houses:** Program dependent.

**Second Looks:** Program dependent.

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

---

<sup>7</sup> Does the specialty require applicants to submit supplemental application materials (e.g., use of other assessments, supplemental videos or essays)?: Yes; No

<sup>8</sup> Which interview format does the specialty recommend that programs use?: Virtual; In-person; Hybrid (an applicant chooses either an in-person or virtual interview format); Hybrid (an applicant completes both virtual and in-person interviews)

## **Match Platform**

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

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.