

Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

Dermatology

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 Dermatology 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.

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Specialty Guidance for the 2026–2027 Cycle

Specialty-Specific Resources

Dermatology has published a statement: This site will be updated during the application season with updated documents: https://www.dermatologyprofessors.org/programdirectors_resources.php

Away Rotations

Away Rotation Details	Specialty Recommendation
Away rotations in the specialty ¹	Optional, Not Expected Purpose: to gain additional exposure or confirm interest in specialty before applying
Number of away rotations in the specialty	–

Additional Guidance: Away rotations are not required nor expected. Students with a home dermatology program who choose to do away rotations should limit their experiences to up to 2 external electives. Students without a home dermatology program should limit their experiences up to 3 external electives.

Use of USMLE and/or COMLEX-USA Scores

License Exam Details	Specialty Recommendation
USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants? ²	No specialty guidance

Additional Guidance: None noted.

¹ 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)

² 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 applications³	Date applications are released to programs by the application service
Application materials accepted after the deadline⁴	No specialty guidance

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	3 gold, 25 silver
Signal home institutions?	Yes
Signal programs where they completed away rotations?	Yes

Additional Guidance: Most dermatology programs will participate in signaling through ERAS. A list of participating programs will be released by AAMC after July 1.

This year, dermatology will continue with the strategy of 28 program signals – 3 gold, 25 silver. This allows applicants to denote their top 3 programs and an additional 25 programs of particular interest. Importantly, home programs and programs at which an away rotation was completed should be included in the signaling process. Signals should be used to denote an applicant's true preference; thus, applicants can consider using a gold or silver for programs at which they rotated or at their home institutions or they may not signal at all if that reflects their true preferences. Programs are encouraged to follow these guidelines and not offer conflicting advice to applicants.

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

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

Of note, based on data from past cycles, there is a near-zero chance of being invited to interview at non-signaled programs. A gold signal confers a greater chance of an interview invitation than silver. Please refer to [AAMC's website](#) for more information about program signaling and its impact on interview invitations across specialties.

Given this data, applicants are highly discouraged from applying widely. Limiting applications to the 28 signaled programs and any program that is not participating in signaling is recommended. As a reminder to programs and applicants, a signal does not guarantee an interview invitation.

Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
Required number of LORs	At least 3, No more than 4
Required letter writers⁵	Someone within the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending)
Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter?⁶	Yes
Specialty-specific standardized letter required?⁷	Required

Additional Guidance: For the 2026-27 application cycle, dermatology will require 3 letters. At least *one* letter should be a standardized letter (SLOE) from a dermatologist and must be submitted through the AAMC Letter Writer Portal (LWP) using the new online form. PDF versions of previous standardized letter formats will not meet this requirement. There are no specialty requirements for the other two required letters.

Guidance for Applicants from Transitional Year/Prelim Programs: No specific specialty guidance/requirements.

Guidance for IMG Applicants: No specific specialty guidance/requirements.

Research/Scholarly Activity

No specialty-specific guidance.

⁵ 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

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

⁷ If yes, is the specialty-specific standardized letter of evaluation recommended or required?: Recommended; Required

Supplemental Information

Supplemental Application Materials	Specialty Recommendation
Supplemental application materials required? ⁸	No

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Applicant Communications

Pre-Interview Communication Guidance: Before and during interview season, applicants are asked to refrain from contacting programs to express interest or provide application updates prior to interviews, except in truly exceptional circumstances (e.g. couples matching updates, major life events that impact preferences). Questions about a program that cannot be easily answered by available materials (website, social media, etc.) can be directed to the program. Applicants should not initiate requests to visit the program, participate in its conferences or solicit other avenues for familiarizing themselves with the program that are not volunteered by the program itself.

Post-Interview Communication Guidance: Post-interview communication of preference – including “letters of intent” and thank you letters – should not be sent to programs. These types of communication are typically not used by residency programs in decision-making and lead to downstream pressures on applicants. Programs are also encouraged to either avoid direct communication with applicants after interviews and before Match Day, or at a minimum, ensure that such communication is informational in nature, avoiding efforts to persuade or pressure candidates, in line with NRMP guidelines. Applicants should not equate lack of communication from programs with lack of interest, just as programs will not equate lack of communication from applicants with lack of interest.

Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	November 2, November 16, November 30
Typical interview offer window	–
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format ⁹	No specialty guidance

⁸ Does the specialty require applicants to submit supplemental application materials (e.g., use of other assessments, supplemental videos or essays)? Yes; No

⁹ 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)

Additional Guidance: There will be three sets of interview invitation release dates. Participating programs will not release more interview invitations than interview slots available. Programs not participating have also been asked to follow this guideline and to post the date of interview invitation release on their websites. A list of participating programs will be released later in mid to late August, and a spreadsheet listing all participating programs and their selected interview release dates will be released in September through the Association of Professors of Dermatology.

Open Houses / Second Looks

Open Houses: No specific specialty guidance. A list of dates will be shared through the Association of Program Directors website.

Second Looks: No specific specialty guidance.

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

Match Platform

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

Additional Guidance: None noted.