

# Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

## Otolaryngology

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 Otolaryngology 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.....	3
Application Process .....	3
Geographic Preferences.....	4
Program Signals.....	4
Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation .....	5
Research/Scholarly Activity .....	5
Supplemental Information.....	6
Applicant Communications .....	6
Interviews.....	6
Open Houses / Second Looks .....	7
Match Platform.....	7

# Specialty Guidance for the 2026–2027 Cycle

## Specialty-Specific Resources

Otolaryngology has published a statement: Otolaryngology applicants are encouraged to attend the OPDO 2026-2027 Recruitment Update webinar June 30, 2026, at 8pm EST. Members of the OPDO Council will discuss several aspects of the recruitment process, including online resources, application recommendations, interview format, preference signaling, the new standardized letter of recommendation for otolaryngology, and the combined interview offer date. Invitations will go out via OPDO and via the AAMC.

Otolaryngology Program Directors/faculty are encouraged to attend the OPDO 2026-2027 Recruitment Update webinar July 1, 2026, at 8pm EST. Members of the OPDO Council will discuss several aspects of the recruitment process, including online resources, application recommendations, interview format, preference signaling, the new standardized letter of recommendation for otolaryngology, and the combined interview offer date. Invitations will go out via OPDO and via the AAMC.

## Away Rotations

Away Rotation Details	Specialty Recommendation
Away rotations in the specialty <sup>1</sup>	Strongly Recommended Purpose: important to being considered, but not always required given certain circumstances
Number of away rotations in the specialty	No specialty guidance

**Additional Guidance:** Most applicants into otolaryngology perform one home acting internship (AI), and between 1-3 away acting internships.

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<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)

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

License Exam Details	Specialty Recommendation
<b>USMLE transcripts required for DO applicants?</b> <sup>2</sup>	Yes, USMLE scores are required for all applicants

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## 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>When programs start reviewing applications</b> <sup>3</sup>	Date applications are released to programs by the application service
<b>Application materials accepted after the deadline</b> <sup>4</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters of recommendation by ASAP, if not available, after applications released, as otolaryngology residency application committees oftentimes commence soon after the initial application is released. More complete applications may get greater consideration.</li> <li>• MSPE by ASAP, if not available, after applications released, as otolaryngology residency application committees oftentimes commence soon after the initial application is released. More complete applications may get greater consideration.</li> </ul>

<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

<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

**Additional Guidance:** Applicants are encouraged to get as many materials submitted as possible with the initial application submission in September. Many programs start to evaluate applications soon after the release date, and thus it is to the applicant’s advantage to have the most complete application possible. It is understood that some documents, such as the MSPE or perhaps a letter of recommendation from a September sub internship, may not be ready by then and these should be submitted as soon as available.

## Geographic Preferences

Otolaryngology programs **will not** receive applicants’ geographic preferences in the 2027 ERAS application season. While applicants may enter geographic preference information in their MyERAS application if applying to other specialties, these preferences will not be shared with Otolaryngology programs.

## Program Signals

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

**Additional Guidance:** OPDO does not endorse any specific strategy with signaling, other than stating that applicants should signal their home program and any away rotations (if the applicant considers those programs in his/her top 25 programs).

## Letters of Recommendation or Evaluation

LOR Details	Specialty Recommendation
<b>Required number of LORs</b>	At least 3
<b>Required letter writers<sup>5</sup></b>	Someone within the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending), Department chair, Program director, Physician preceptor at an away rotation (e.g., program director, faculty), Personnel such as research mentors who may have close personal knowledge of an applicant
<b>Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter?<sup>6</sup></b>	Yes
<b>Specialty-specific standardized letter required?<sup>7</sup></b>	Recommended

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

**Guidance for Applicants from Transitional Year/Prelim Programs:** None noted.

**Guidance for IMG Applicants:** None noted.

## Research/Scholarly Activity

Research and scholarly activity are considered important aspects of applications to otolaryngology for many programs. The Otolaryngology Program Directors' Organization has no "requirements" or suggested thresholds; however, the AAMC/NRMP has kept data over the years demonstrating averages and ranges for scholarly activity for otolaryngology applicants. This data may be of utility to potential or active applicants into otolaryngology.

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<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

<sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup>	No

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Applicant Communications

**Pre-Interview Communication Guidance:** OPDO does not make specific recommendations regarding pre- and post-interview communication.

**Post-Interview Communication Guidance:** OPDO does not make specific recommendations regarding pre- and post-interview communication.

## Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	November 5, 2026
Typical interview offer window	–
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format <sup>9</sup>	No specialty guidance

**Additional Guidance:** OPDO does not require a specific interview format. However, data suggests that both programs and applicants within otolaryngology prefer in-person interviews, and thus interview format the past few years has trended towards more-and-more in person interviews.

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

<sup>9</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)

## **Open Houses / Second Looks**

**Open Houses:** OPDO does not have any specialty guidance on open houses.

**Second Looks:** OPDO does not have any specialty guidance regarding second look visits.

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

## **Match Platform**

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

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.