

# Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

## Radiation Oncology

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 Radiation Oncology 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

None noted.

## 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:** It is expected that students actively participate in patient care and get familiar with contouring and radiation planning.

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

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

**Additional Guidance:** Submitting USMLE scores for DO applicants is not required but strongly preferred.

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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)

<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
<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<sup>3</sup></b>	Date applications are released to programs by the application service
<b>Application materials accepted after the deadline<sup>4</sup></b>	USMLE Step 2 CK or COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE transcripts can be submitted as soon as they are available until the rank list meeting

**Additional Guidance:** USMLE Step 2 CK score should be submitted as soon as it becomes available.

## Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
<b>Number of signals</b>	4
<b>Signal home institutions?</b>	No specialty guidance
<b>Signal programs where they completed away rotations?</b>	No specialty guidance
<b>Submit program signal explanations?</b>	Yes

**Program Signal Explanations:** As part of the ERAS application, applicants will be asked to provide a statement explaining their interest in each program they signal.

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

<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, No more than 4
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:** None noted.

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

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

## Research/Scholarly Activity

In radiation oncology, scholarly activity is not a strict requirement for application review; however, it is strongly preferred.

We value applicants who demonstrate familiarity with the research process and the ability to think critically about scientific literature, as these skills are essential for practicing evidence-based oncology. Applicants who have participated in research projects, whether clinical, translational, or basic science, are viewed favorably, particularly if their work has led to presentations at regional or national meetings or resulted in peer-reviewed publications. These experiences reflect initiative, intellectual curiosity, and the ability to contribute to the academic mission of the field.

In addition to traditional research, we also place high value on leadership experiences, quality improvement initiatives, and involvement in global health efforts. These activities highlight important qualities such as teamwork, systems-based thinking, commitment to patient care, and a broader understanding of healthcare delivery.

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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

## Supplemental Information

### Supplemental Application Materials

### Specialty Recommendation

Supplemental application materials required? <sup>7</sup>	No
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**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Applicant Communications

**Pre-Interview Communication Guidance:** Pre-interview communications are not encouraged unless there is a specific question about the program.

**Post-Interview Communication Guidance:** Post-interview communication is only encouraged if there are specific questions about the program.

## Interviews

### Interview Details

### Specialty Recommendation

Universal interview offer date(s)	–
Typical interview offer window	September 2026 - November 2026
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format <sup>8</sup>	No specialty guidance

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Open Houses / Second Looks

**Open Houses:** Open house dates are shared by the programs.

**Second Looks:** Second look is handled by each program and is optional. Programs are encouraged to submit rank lists prior to the second look.

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

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<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**

Radiation Oncology participates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) and Military Match (i.e., Joint Service Graduate Medical Education Selection Board, Military Selection Board).

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.