

# Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

## Surgical Critical Care

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 Surgical Critical Care 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.....	4
Applicant Communications .....	5
Interviews.....	5
Open Houses / Second Looks .....	5
Match Platform.....	5

# 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>	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 an expectation. Individual programs will decide if away rotations are available.

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

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

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

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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
Main Residency Match Season	No specialty guidance
Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP)	No specialty guidance
When programs start reviewing applications <sup>3</sup>	No specialty guidance
Application materials accepted after the deadline <sup>4</sup>	Letters of recommendation

### Additional Guidance:

- Application platform: Surgical critical care and Acute care surgery Fellowship Application Service (SAFAS)
- Website: [safas.smapply.io](https://safas.smapply.io)
- Applications open: March annually
- Application deadline: July annually
- Application Instructions and Resources are available on the SAFAS Website.

## Program Signals

Program Signals Details	Specialty Recommendation
Number of signals	Not applicable or specialty does not participate in signaling
Signal home institutions?	–
Signal programs where they completed away rotations?	–

**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
Required letter writers <sup>5</sup>	No specialty guidance
Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter? <sup>6</sup>	Yes
Specialty-specific standardized letter required? <sup>7</sup>	Recommended

### Additional Guidance:

- Give your Recommenders advance notice.
- SAFAS application requires entering names and E-mail addresses for 3 Recommenders.
- Submit your Application - Do NOT wait for Recommenders to complete letters.
- Each Recommender will be asked to complete 2 tasks: Separate and Standardized LORs.

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

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

## Research/Scholarly Activity

None noted.

## Supplemental Information

Supplemental Application Materials	Specialty Recommendation
Supplemental application materials required? <sup>8</sup>	No

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

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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

<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

## Applicant Communications

**Pre-Interview Communication Guidance:** No specialty guidance to programs.

**Post-Interview Communication Guidance:** No specialty guidance to programs.

## Interviews

Interview Details	Specialty Recommendation
Universal interview offer date(s)	–
Typical interview offer window	March 2027 - June 2027
Interview scheduling platform	–
Interview format <sup>9</sup>	Virtual

**Additional Guidance:** Although SCCPDS recommends a virtual interview format, it is the discretion of individual programs to use an in-person interview or hybrid format.

## Open Houses / Second Looks

**Open Houses:** It is the discretion of individual programs to offer Open House visits.

**Second Looks:** It is the discretion of individual programs to offer Second Look visits.

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

## Match Platform

Surgical Critical Care participates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP).

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

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<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)