

# Program Director Associations Guide for Residency Applicants

## Internal Medicine

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 Internal Medicine 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> | Optional, Not Expected<br>Purpose: to gain additional exposure or confirm interest in specialty before applying |
| Number of away rotations in the specialty    | –                                                                                                               |

**Additional Guidance:** Applicants should review a program’s requirements for this area and consult with a career advisor for individualized guidance.

## 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:** On March 2024, AAIM encouraged all IM residency programs and IM subspecialty fellowship programs, in their holistic review of applicants, to accept that the COMLEX-USA results are equivalent to the USMLE. To access the statement, click [here](#).

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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> | No specialty guidance                                                 |

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Program Signals

| Program Signals Details                                     | Specialty Recommendation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Number of signals</b>                                    | 3 gold, 12 silver        |
| <b>Signal home institutions?</b>                            | Yes                      |
| <b>Signal programs where they completed away rotations?</b> | Yes                      |

**Additional Guidance:** Please reference the [2026-27 Tiered Program Signals for IM Residency Programs webpage on the AAIM website](#) (login required).

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<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                                         | No specialty guidance                                   |
| Required letter writers <sup>5</sup>                            | Someone within the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending) |
| Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter? <sup>6</sup> | Yes                                                     |
| Specialty-specific standardized letter required? <sup>7</sup>   | Recommended                                             |

**Additional Guidance:** The AAIM Internal Medicine Structured Evaluative Letter (IM SEL) incorporates competency-based language reflective of the ACGME IM Milestones 2.0. By presenting specific data in a standardized and structured format, the IM SEL enables a standardized and structured review of the applicant. The IM SEL provides an opportunity to highlight clinical competencies and professional skills not assessed on standardized exams, providing a more holistic view of an applicant's possible strengths and areas of improvement. To access the AAIM IM SEL template and mock-up, visit the [AAIM Guidelines for Internal Medicine Structured Evaluative Letter page](#). To note, the SEL template will undergo review and potential revisions in academic year 2027.

**Guidance for Applicants from Transitional Year/Prelim Programs:** One (1) clinical LoR from an IM faculty member and one (1) clinical LoR from any specialty faculty member. Applicants are encouraged to visit the residency program's site to determine what their prelim program's requirements are. To note the SEL FAQs, which includes guidance on TYP programs, will undergo review and potential revision in academic year 2027.

**Guidance for IMG Applicants:** Please reference the [AAIM FAQs for IMGs](#). To note the AAIM FAQs for IMGs will undergo review and potential revision in academic year 2027.

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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

## Research/Scholarly Activity

- a. Because of the range of programs' mission and focus, research or scholarly work is not uniformly expected.
- b. Quality of scholarship, including effort and depth of involvement, is much more valued than quantity of publications where an applicant is only peripherally involved.
- c. Quality/depth of involvement in an extracurricular area of interest is important (ex. quality improvement and patient safety projects, community service, leadership in these extracurricular activities).

## Supplemental Information

| Supplemental Application Materials                        | Specialty Recommendation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Supplemental application materials required? <sup>8</sup> | No specialty guidance    |

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Applicant Communications

**Pre-Interview Communication Guidance:** AAIM strongly discourages programs from sending tailored, individualized post-interview communication. If post-interview communication is necessary, establishing guardrails are imperative. Below are some recommendations:

- Programs who wish to send updates or any "program-initiated informational outreach or post-interview events" should share these with all candidates, regardless of their background, standing, or track interest. Overall, programs are strongly encouraged to message all applicants or all candidates within a specific group, rather than individuals.
- Programs should articulate that interviewees refrain from sending "thank you" notes. Rather, they are encouraged to ask clarifying questions about the program or are willing to share additional information pertaining to the program, at the candidate's request. Faculty and staff should emphasize that they are prohibited from communicating the candidate's odds of ranking or matching to their program.

**Post-Interview Communication Guidance:** Reference the previous entry, as well as the [AAIM Recommendations for IM Residency Recruitment: Interview and In-Person Visits](#).

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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

## Interviews

| Interview Details                 | Specialty Recommendation                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Universal interview offer date(s) | AAIM recommends releasing interview invitations on Tuesdays after 3PM (Eastern) and on Fridays after 3PM (Eastern) |
| Typical interview offer window    | –                                                                                                                  |
| Interview scheduling platform     | Thalamus Core                                                                                                      |
| Interview format <sup>9</sup>     | Virtual                                                                                                            |

**Additional Guidance:** None noted.

## Open Houses / Second Looks

**Open Houses:** In-person visits should be optional, including open houses or program-sponsored second looks. Programs that opt to conduct second looks should do so as part of the NRMP Rank Order List Pilot. For additional guidance, reference the [AAIM Recommendations for IM Residency Recruitment: Interview and In-Person Visits](#).

**Second Looks:** AAIM is actively participating in the NRMP Voluntary Rank Order List (ROL) Lock Pilot program. Internal Medicine programs will have the opportunity to participate in the voluntary pilot this FY27. To note, IM programs must sign up for the pilot by October 16, 2026. IM programs participating in the program must certify and “lock” their ROLs at least 24 hours before the first post-interview visit or by February 8, 2027. For more information on the NRMP ROL Lock Pilot, click [here](#).

**NRMP Voluntary Rank Order List (ROL) Lock Pilot Initiative:** Yes

## Match Platform

Internal Medicine 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)