

FAQS FOR RISING FELLOWS AND FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS DAY OF INTERVIEW AND POST-INTERVIEW COMMUNICATIONS

Resources For Fellowship Programs

Post-Interview Communication from Fellowship Programs to Applicants

With more than a dozen Internal Medicine subspecialties and each aptly represented and supported by their respective society or organization, AAIM defers to each subspecialty society to develop post-interview communication recommendations or guidelines that best reflect their community's values and needs. As the various subspecialty societies develop and socialize their respective post-interview guidelines or recommendations, AAIM encourages subspecialty organizations to include language that prohibit programs from sending tailored, individualized post-interview communication outside of the parameters set forth below.

– Programs who wish to send updates or any program-initiated informational outreach or post-interview events should share these with candidates, regardless of their background, standing, or track interest. An exception would be communication to a specific group – as an example, candidates applying to a program's physician-scientist or research-in-residency track.

– Programs should articulate that interviewees refrain from sending "thank you" notes; however, program should communicate that they welcome 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.

Ultimately, programs should be precise and honest in their communications and messages to applicants, ensuring that misleading language is not used. Adherence to the NRMP Match Code of Conduct for Programs concerning post-interview communication is critical.

Program directors and other recruitment team members must ensure all information related to the program's mission, aims and eligibility are clearly communicated to applicants. However, applicants may not have adequate time to obtain the information needed to make informed decisions about ranking and may wish to clarify information following interviews. The recruitment team may exchange clarifying information with applicants following the interview, but must not solicit or require post-interview communication for the purposes of influencing applicants' ranking preferences. Program directors and all members of the recruitment team should take great care not to promote misleading communication to applicants about ranking intentions and preferences or inappropriately share private information (e.g., letters of recommendation) with outside parties.

Sample Responses:

- Our program does not contact applicants after their interview. However, we may send out a general email to share program updates.
- Yes, applicants may receive an email once all interviews have concluded. However, our program does not provide any information to applicants about their likelihood to match into our program.

In-Person Second Looks

Optional in-person visits as part of the interview process can serve as a means for applicants to best evaluate their options when selecting a program, as an institution's customs and a city's culture will help learners determine their fit and ability to thrive. Further, program-sponsored second looks are also a tool for institutions in smaller cities to showcase both their educational offerings and their town's aesthetics.

AAIM encourages fellowship programs to employ a voluntary rank order list (ROL) lock process, which will allow programs the option of securing their ROL and then allowing interviewed applicants to visit the program, confident in the knowledge that visiting (or not) will not impact their ranking on the list. Separation of program and applicant ROL deadlines will permit time for applicants to participate in optional in-person second look visits (during the gap period between those due dates) without fear of added bias, since the applicant's visit would not influence a program's rank order list.

AAIM strongly recommends that fellowship programs commit to their GME office by submitting their rank lists before holding any in-person second looks. To that end, the ideal would be that programs who choose to offer open houses or second looks structure them so that applicants meet with current fellows or other faculty who were not involved in developing their program's rank list. This would set applicants' minds at ease, as well as expose them to other faculty and staff who can provide additional perspective about the program.

Sample Responses:

- To be equitable to all candidates, our program does not offer second looks.
- We do offer second-look visits to applicants. These are optional, not required. (Provide additional detail about the second look visits your program offers). Whether or not a candidate opts to visit for a second look will not affect how high our program ranks them.
- Second looks are available to those applicants that believe it will help them make a decision about their rank list, but we do not use them to assess candidates.
- Yes, you are welcome to visit. However, to be equitable, our program does not arrange for tours or meetings outside of the usual interview day. You can visit at your own accord.

Communicating Ranking Status

It is not expected or necessary that applicants email fellowship programs to inform them of their ranking status (i.e., how high a fellowship program is on an applicant's rank order list). Conversely, fellowship programs should not inquire from applicants, whether verbally or through written correspondence, how their particular program was perceived and/or ranked. Communications such as these are prohibited by the NRMP. If reported, NRMP reserves the right to impose disciplinary measures.

Sample Responses:

Applicant Question: How would you rank your program compared to other local competitors?

Sample Interviewer Response: All programs have their own character and strength. Comparing ourselves to others does not change who we are, and we prefer to sell ourselves on our own merits.

Applicant Question: Whom do I need to inform that you are my number one choice?

Sample Interviewer Response: Our program follows the AAIM guidelines for interview and post-interview communication, so, while that type of communication may be discouraged, you are free to mention that to whomever you would like. However, do not expect a response.

Thank You Email Expectations

Fellowship programs should not expect thank you notes or emails from applicants. As indicated above, learners who have specific questions regarding a program's operations, curriculum, mission etc. are welcome to send these questions. Fellowship program faculty, administrators, and staff should respond to those types of inquiries.

Sample Responses:

- We do not expect candidates to send thank you emails or letters. Please do not feel obligated to do so.
- Thank you emails are not required, but you are welcome to send one. However, we receive an overwhelming number of these and typically do not respond.

Additional Sample Interviewer Responses to Applicant Questions

Applicant Question: If I told you I was interested in [specialty/primary care/interviewer's research interest], would that increase my chances of matching here?

Sample Interviewer Response: The rank list committee considers many facets of an application, including authenticity, so I cannot speak specifically to your question.

Applicant Question: Are there international medical graduates in this program? If so, why?

Sample Interviewer Response: We fill our program with those that we think are the best fit for them and for us, regardless of where they are from.

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Resources For Applicants

Thank You Email Expectations

Routine thank you notes or emails are not expected. Most programs would prefer that thank you notes or emails not be sent, as these add to the myriad of communications that faculty receive on a daily basis. Learners are encouraged to ask clarifying questions about the program and should refrain from sending “thank you” notes.

In-Person Second Looks

Optional in-person visits as part of the interview process can serve as a means for applicants to best evaluate their options when selecting a program, as an institution’s customs and a city’s culture will help learners determine their fit and ability to thrive. Further, program-sponsored second looks are also a tool for institutions in smaller cities to showcase both their educational offerings and their town’s aesthetics.

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AAIM strongly recommends that programs commit to their GME office by submitting their rank lists before holding any in-person second looks. To that end, the ideal would be that programs who choose to offer open houses or second looks structure them so that applicants meet with current fellows or other faculty who were not involved in developing their program's rank list. This would set applicants' minds at ease, as well as expose them to other faculty and staff who can provide additional perspective about the program.

Communicating Ranking Status

It is not expected or necessary that applicants email fellowship programs to inform them of their ranking status (i.e., how high a fellowship program is on their rank order list). It is advisable to refrain from sending such types of communication, as this will not impact an applicant’s standing.

Conversely, if a fellowship program inquires – whether verbally or through written correspondence – how their particular program was perceived and/or ranked, applicants should decline responding and communicate the uncomfortable situation. Further, learners are

encouraged to communicate such violations to the NRMP Policy office at policy@nrmp.org, 202-400-2235.

Sample Responses:

Interviewer Question: Where did you rotate for your Sub-Is and how would you rank them against this program?

Sample Applicant Initial Response: I'm still in the process of gathering information about programs, so I can't answer that question right now.

Sample Applicant Response Should Interviewer Continue to Press: Honestly, my understanding of NRMP (or AAIM) rules is that we shouldn't be talking about this.

Interviewer Question: How would you rank our program compared to others? or What other programs are you ranking?

Sample Applicant Initial Response: I'm still in the process of gathering information about programs, so I can't answer that question right now.

Sample Applicant Response Should Interviewer Continue to Press: Honestly, my understanding of NRMP (or AAIM) rules is that we shouldn't be talking about this.

Application Updates

ERAS application updates should not impact a learner's standing. However, it is the applicant's responsibility to inform programs of any modifications to their personal, educational, or professional experiences should it impact their ability to commence fellowship training at the appointed time.

Family Planning

Applicants can voluntarily disclose any future, personal plans. However, fellowship program faculty and administrators are prohibited from inquiring about personal matters (i.e., marital status, family planning, etc.). Furthermore, programs will not factor a learner's plan to start a family when assessing applicants. At an applicant's request, programs can provide benefits and parental leave policies.

Sample Responses:

Interviewer Question: I see that you are in a couple's match. Are you planning to have a family soon?

Sample Applicant Initial Response: Yes, we're in a couple's match, but our decision about whether or not to start a family won't affect my training.

Sample Applicant Response Should Interviewer Continue to Press: Honestly, my understanding of NRMP (or AAIM) rules is that we shouldn't be talking about this.

Interviewer Question: I see that you are married. Are you planning to have kids?

Sample Applicant Initial Response: Yes, we are thinking about kids, but I do not anticipate this will influence my performance during training.

Sample Applicant Response Should Interviewer Continue to Press: Honestly, my understanding of NRMP (or AAIM) rules is that we shouldn't be talking about this.

Communicating Interview Status

Fellowship programs are prohibited from inquiring where else an applicant has interviewed. The [NRMP Code of Conduct for Programs](#) stipulates that "Program directors and other recruitment team members may freely express their interest in a candidate, but they must not request an applicant disclose ranking preferences, ranking intentions, or the specialty or locations of other programs to which the applicant has applied or may apply".

Sample Response:

Interviewer Question: Where else have you interviewed?

Sample Applicant Response: My understanding of NRMP (or AAIM) rules is that we shouldn't be talking about this.

Couples Matching

Please share this information with the program and indicate this, as well, in the ERAS application. This should also be disclosed during the interview day.

Violations to the NRMP Code of Conduct

If you suspect any violations to the NRMP Code of Conduct, please contact the NRMP Policy office at policy@nrmp.org, 202-400-2235.

Additional Examples of Applicant Responses to Inappropriate Interview Questions

Interviewer Question: What was the worst thing that happened to you during an away rotation? Where was the away rotation?

Sample Applicant Response: Thanks for asking. I had really positive experiences during my away rotation. OR Thanks for asking. I was really lucky to be able to do "x" during my away rotation.

Interviewer Question: What geographical areas are you considering?

Sample Applicant Initial Response: I'm keeping an open mind about locations. Ultimately, I want to find a program that matches my needs and interests, which is more important to me than just the location.

Sample Applicant Response Should Interviewer Continue to Press: Honestly, my understanding of NRMP (or AAIM) rules is that we shouldn't be talking about this.

Interviewer Question: Is there anything about your religion that would keep you from performing your clinical duties?

Sample Applicant Initial Response: I can't think of any. In fact, my faith makes me a better doctor.

Sample Applicant Response Should Interviewer Continue to Press: Honestly, my understanding of NRMP (or AAIM) rules is that we shouldn't be talking about this.