

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 ¹	Optional, Not Expected 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? ²	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](#).

¹ 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)

² 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	AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)
Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP)	AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)
When programs start reviewing applications³	Date applications are released to programs by the application service
Application materials accepted after the deadline⁴	No specialty guidance

Additional Guidance: None noted.

Program Signals

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

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

³ Which best describes when programs will start reviewing applications for this application cycle (2026-2027)?: Date applications are released to programs; Other

⁴ 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 ⁵	Someone within the specialty (e.g., faculty, attending)
Is there a specialty-specific standardized letter? ⁶	Yes
Specialty-specific standardized letter required? ⁷	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.

⁵ 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

⁶ Does your specialty have a specialty-specific standardized letter of evaluation or standardized letter of recommendation?: Yes; No

⁷ 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? ⁸	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](#).

⁸ 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 format⁹	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.

⁹ 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)