

**Assembly of Osteopathic Graduate Medical Educators  
May 18, 2020**

**Guidance on 2020-2021 Residency Application and Selection Process**

The Assembly of Osteopathic Graduate Medical Educators (AOGME), part of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) supporting osteopathic graduate medical education professionals, realizes the significant impact of COVID-19 on the 2020-2021 residency application and selection process. Program directors and program staff will face a challenging and vastly changed environment from the traditional residency selection process. Similarly, applicants are faced with even greater uncertainty and increased pressure as disruptions to clinical training, board examinations, away/audition rotations and travel restrictions impact the traditional residency cycle and fulfillment of clinical experiences and requirements in the third and fourth year of medical school.

Given the unexpected and vast implications of the pandemic on medical education and the residency application process in 2020-2021, AOGME supports an alternative and more comprehensive approach to the residency application review process. AOGME recommends you consider the following approaches:

- Flexibility in expectations for letters of recommendation (LoR) or Standard Letters of Evaluation (SLOEs) and consider alternative letters. Applications that may not have the typical LoR from the specialty of interest or SLOEs should not be penalized given the restrictions many students face in obtaining these letters. For many osteopathic medical students, access to a home residency is unlikely, and travel limitations and limitations on away rotations may result in no SLOEs at all. Programs should also consider LoRs outside of the program's discipline
- Review applicants without all the typical core or elective rotations with an understanding that clinical education has been dramatically impacted due to disruptions in training and guidance to limit clinical experiences due to safety concerns
- Accept online or virtual rotations in place of in-person clinical experiences
- Extend interviews to applicants that may not have an away rotation due to the restrictions on away rotations, but otherwise would meet the requirements of the program
- Conduct all residency interviews in a virtual setting for all candidates
- Exercise caution in the filtering criteria used for applicants based on board scores, as significant disruptions and postponements of board examinations will leave some candidates at a unique disadvantage
- Expect an increase in applications this year, and less time to review them. Consider extending invitations to more reviewers, use new methods of filtering students and

compare those results with your traditional methods, and be prepared to offer and participate in more interviews this year

- Review the applications and extend interview invitations prior to receiving a COMLEX or USMLE score
- Value the stated or demonstrated interest of the applicant in the program, for instance, participation in virtual fairs and letters of interest
- Provide clear guidance on the ideal candidates for a program, how programs plan to review and select applicants in this cycle, particularly given the impact of COVID-19. This may help to reduce the number of applications from those that may not be a good fit for the program
- Share information about the program, institution, facilities, and surrounding area to potential applicants in a virtual format and provide opportunities for informal interaction with current trainees
- Utilize behaviorally based interview questions, and input from official interviewers and experiences from current trainees and staff about applicant interactions
- Ensure that you allow opportunities for candidates to explore their goodness-of-fit with your program, including transparently providing information on work hours, research, and other expectations, and time to get to know some faculty and residents during the interview process
- Expect changes to the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) letters due to pandemic-related disruptions, which may result in gaps or shorter MSPEs
- Seek guidance from specialty societies to ensure uniform response and clear communication to applicants in this application cycle

AOGME understands the pandemic impacts medical education in far-reaching and consequential ways. We encourage a comprehensive review of candidates, and the utilization of a broad set of information to determine the best fit candidates. We encourage you to provide more communication than usual about your program, your expectations of applicants and residents, and about the selection process you will be using this year. We also encourage applicants to be mindful of the number of applications programs may receive at this time, and to make decisions about programs of interest carefully and utilizing all available data and information. AOGME is committed to providing additional guidance and serving as a resource to support the osteopathic medical education community during this time.