

ASSOCIATION OF PROGRAM DIRECTORS IN SURGERY

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APDS Task Force General Surgery Application and Interview Recommendations for 2023-2024 Recruitment Cycle

Applicant Considerations

- Applicants should use available data and their unique characteristics to determine the number of submitted applications.
- Applicants should use available data based upon applicant characteristics when considering the number of interview invitations to accept.
- We recommend that applicants utilize their 5 signals to indicate their top five programs.
- We recommend speaking to program directors at away/audition rotations and home institutions regarding their signaling advice.

Program Considerations

- Holistic Review is strongly recommended as part of the General Surgery residency selection process.
- Transparency relating to program values and characteristics is strongly encouraged to provide applicants insight into the selection process as well as program use of signaling during holistic review.
- USMLE Step 1 and COMLEX Level 1 numerical scores, when available for some applicants, should still be deemphasized in the 2023-2024 Application Cycle. Applicants and their standardized scores should be considered within the context of a holistic review, and programs should disclose how USMLE Step 2 and COMLEX Level 2 will be considered.
- Programs should not offer the first round of interviews prior to Thursday, October 26, 2023. The first round of offers should be sent between Thursday October 26, 2023 and Tuesday, October 31, 2023, and programs should allow a minimum of 48 hours for the candidates to respond after any interview offer before extending an offer to a different candidate. Programs should provide transparency to applicants if making interview offers outside of this window.
- We strongly recommend programs 1) only make the number of interview offers to exactly match the number of interview slots that they have available and 2) disclose expectations about interview offer response and cancellation. (i.e., if a program has 20 interview slots, only 20 invitations should be released. Additional invitations may be offered only after applicants deny or cancel their invitation.)
- While we recommend virtual interviews with the option of a voluntary, post-evaluative (e.g., after program rank list finalization) live site visit, programs should use best-practices that fit their individual selection criteria and program values when considering other interview modalities such as hybrid or in-person interviews.
- We recommend that interview methods adhere to the following best practices:
 - equitable opportunities to all invited applicants
 - uniformity of the evaluation process within the program
 - transparency about the process
 - mitigation strategies to prevent bias

Explanation of Recommendations:

Based on data available from AAMC [ERAS® Statistics | AAMC](#), the number of applicants applying to general surgery decreased by 3% from 2022-2023. But the average number of applications per applicant increased by almost 9%, resulting in increased average number of applications per program.

The APDS Recruitment task force is collecting data relating to recruitment practices for the 2022-2023 recruitment cycle to gain additional information. We used currently available data to update the recommendations for the 2023-2024 recruitment cycle and provide the following resources to support the recommendations.

The task force aims to put forth recommendations on recruitment intended to be applicant-centric and based upon equity for applicants and programs.

Our immediate and long-term goals remain:

- a) Equity for General Surgery applicants in the interview and application process
- b) Improved application and interview systems that support the needs of the applicants
- c) Increased efficiency of process for programs so that focus can be on conducting holistic review

Applicant Considerations:

Applicants should use available data and their unique characteristics to determine the number of submitted applications.

- Applicants should meet with their advisors to help assess an appropriate number of applications to submit. We do not offer any recommendation of limiting application numbers but do present that the average number of applications per applicant has increased over the past several years, which has increased the number of applications received on average by programs.

Applicants should be guided by available data and their personal characteristics when considering the number of interview invitations to accept.

- Based on the 2022 NRMP applicant survey, the median number of interviews attended for matched applicants was 16 for US MD Seniors, 13 for US DO Seniors, and 5 for other applicant types. This information can be considered when making decisions regarding accepting and attending interviews.

We recommend that applicants utilize their 5 signals to indicate their top five programs.

We recommend speaking to program directors at away/audition rotations and home institutions regarding their signaling advice.

- There is not sufficient data to identify potential harm with using program signals. Available preliminary data suggests that applicants who used signals had an improved likelihood of receiving an interview invitation at the programs they signaled.

Resources

- [ERAS® Statistics | AAMC](#)
- [NRMP-2022-Applicant-Survey-Report-Final.pdf](#)
- [Residency Data & Reports | NRMP](#)
- [Residency Explorer™ Tool: Log in](#)

Program Considerations:

Holistic Review is strongly recommended as part of the General Surgery residency selection process.

- Holistic review remains a recommendation of this task force to highlight the importance of considering the applicant as a whole. Utilizing information that demonstrates life-experience, interest, and career aspiration instead of focusing on numerical scores or objective measurements. Utilization of holistic review can also mitigate racial bias and ethnic disparities among applicants.

Resources

- [Holistic Review | AAMC](#)
- [APDS Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit - Association of Program Directors in Surgery](#)

Transparency relating to program values and characteristics is strongly encouraged to provide applicants insight into the selection process.

- Program characteristics and values should be shared with applicants in order to allow prospective students to identify programs that share their common values. This can also act as an opportunity for applicants to identify programs that they would prefer not to apply to.

USMLE Step 1 and COMLEX Level 1 numerical scores, when available for some applicants, should still be deemphasized in the 2023-2024 Application Cycle. Applicants and their standardized scores should be considered within the context of a holistic review, and programs should disclose how Step 2 and COMLEX Level 2 will be considered.

- USMLE Step 1 and COMLEX Level 1 continue to report pass/fail grading. For applicants who still have a numerical score, this number should be de-emphasized in favor of holistic review to provide fair and equitable review of applications.

Programs should not offer the first round of interviews prior to Thursday, October 26, 2023. The first round of offers should be sent between Thursday, October 26, 2023 and Tuesday, October 31, 2023, and programs should allow a minimum of 48 hours for the candidates to respond after any interview offer before extending an offer to a different candidate. Programs should provide transparency to applicants if making interview offers outside of this window.

- This window aligns with previously identified peak in interview offers during the fourth week of PDWS being open for application review. By offering a single period of interview release dates, we allow applicants to better participate in their rotations and plan their schedules better to receive and respond to interview offers.
- 48 hours was identified as an acceptable amount of time for applicants to respond to interview invitations while also allowing ample time for additional invitations to go out for other applicants.
- As reported by Santos-Parker et al, standardized interview invitation offers may mitigate over-interviewing for some applicants. (Santos-Parker et al, Journal of Surgical Education, Volume 78, Issue 4, 2021, Pages 1091-1096.)

We strongly recommend programs 1) only make the number of interview offers to exactly match the number of interview slots that they have available and 2) disclose expectations about interview offer response and cancellation. (i.e., if a program has 20 interview slots, only 20 invitations should be released. More invitations may go out only after applicants deny or cancel their invitation.)

- in order to maintain trust among applicants and to reduce anxiety, programs are recommended to only invite the number of applicants that match the number of interview slots that are available.

While we recommend virtual interviews with the option of a voluntary, post-evaluative (e.g., after program rank list finalization) live site visit. Programs should use best-practices that fit their individual selection criteria and program values when considering other interview modalities such as hybrid or in-person interviews.

- In the interest of maintaining equity and fairness while decreasing cost and time away from educational experience, the task force continues to recommend virtual interviews. This will provide the greatest access for applicants to interview at programs of their choice without the financial or time burden of in-person interviews.
- Second look options should be considered on a voluntary basis and should not be strongly emphasized to use against applicants if they are unable to attend an in-person visit.

Resources

- [Interviews in GME: Where Do We Go From Here? | AAMC](#)

We recommend that interview methods adhere to the following best practices:

- equitable opportunities to all invited applicants
- uniformity of the evaluation process within the program
- transparency about the process
- mitigation strategies to prevent bias.

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