



AMERICAN
ORTHOPAEDIC
ASSOCIATION

AOA's Council of Orthopaedic Residency Directors (CORD) Recommended Guidelines for 2022-2023 Residency Recruitment

August 19, 2022

Background

Fulfilling its mission to establish best practices, the AOA's CORD/Academics Committee (CAC) has been leading the charge in helping to manage the growing challenges of residency recruitment and the match process. These have included too many applications for holistic review by programs, changes in standardized testing, inflated letters of recommendation, national medical education recommendations that are not aligned with the needs of orthopaedic surgery, an unwieldy interview process, and finally, the superimposed impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic that produced several adjustments to residency recruitment, the AOA CAC remained diligent in monitoring and responding to the resulting unique challenges. In an effort to help students and programs navigate through the changes and achieve a good match, the AOA CAC began to publish recommended guidelines in 2020. These guidelines have been updated as needed.

For the 2022-2023 cycle, the AOA CAC formed nine workgroups in January 2022 to address several topics related to residency recruitment. Each workgroup was tasked with:

- Helping to understand how the COPA UME-GME Recommendations affect our specialty
- Understanding the opinions of CORD members as related to the working-groups topic
- Creating consensus statement / recommendations for Orthopaedic Surgery
- Aiding in efforts to contribute our voice to the national conversation on the topic

The workgroup topics included:

- [AOA/CORD's Orthopaedic Residency Information Network \(ORIN\)[™]](#) -
- Away Rotations
- Universal Offer Day (UOD) / Interview Invitation Process
- Supplemental Application Information
- Application Limits
- Interviews: In-Person or Virtual
- [AOA/CORD's Electronic Standardized Letter of Recommendation \(eSLOR\)](#)
- Medical Student Advising
- Interview Limits

The recommendations listed below were researched, discussed, and finalized by these workgroups and approved by the CORD Academic Committee. Through these continued efforts, the AOA CAC strives to help create a recruitment process that will allow students to make the best match for their career goals, help programs to match the best students for their residencies, encourage diversity, inclusion, and equity in the field, and facilitate a process that is better for applicants and residency programs.

Orthopaedic Residency Information Network (ORIN)TM

- ORIN is an information resource for applicants to help them find accurate information about programs, initiated and developed by the AOA CAC
- AOA/CORD encourages programs to include information about their programs in ORIN to serve as a repository for accurate and transparent residency program information.
 - Please update all fields to reflect the current state of your residency. Having accurate information will ensure that the material contained in ORIN remains a trustworthy source, especially with regard to interviews, Universal Offer Day, and participation in the AAMC ERAS Supplemental Application/preference signaling.

Away Rotations

- CORD recommends no limitations/restrictions for medical student away rotations.
- CORD strongly recommends students communicate with advisors to determine number and location for away rotations.

Rationale:

There are numerous benefits to away rotations in orthopaedic surgery:

- Orthopaedic away rotations can further educate medical students and prepare them for residency
- Away rotations allow students education/interactions with faculty outside of their home program which increases mentorship and networking opportunities
- Students can observe different types (academic vs community) and sizes of programs which can assist students in finding the right learning environment
- Students can be evaluated more holistically
 - Students with application deficiencies can compensate with strong in-person clinical performance demonstrating work ethic, teamwork, and “getting it”

Universal Offer Day (UOD)

- AOA/CORD will continue the use of [Universal Offer Day](#).
- The consensus among program directors (PD), program coordinators (PC), and applicants was that we should continue with the UOD. Applicants believed that this reduces their stress.
- Universal Offer Day timeline for 2022-2023:
 - All participating programs will send interview offers on **Monday, November 14, 12:00pm ET**.

- Programs should only offer as many interview spots as they have available.
- CORD recommends programs should consider sending invitation, waitlist, or rejection letters to applicants on this date.
- A 24-hour moratorium on accepting or scheduling interviews will follow.
 - During the moratorium, applicants should review their invitations with faculty mentors, advisors, family or others who can help create a plan for which and how many interviews to accept.
 - **Applicants should not reach out to programs during these 24 hours.**
 - **Programs should not accept/confirm early responses during these 24 hours.**
- Beginning **Tuesday, November 15, 12:00pm ET**, applicants can accept offers.
- Each applicant will have 48 hours to respond to the program without fear of the offer being rescinded.
- If an applicant declines/does not respond by **Thursday, November 17, 12:00pm ET**, the program may extend an invitation to another applicant.
- There will be no set timeline for the second or any subsequent waves of interview offers, which may be offered at the program's discretion.

Preference Signaling/Supplemental Application

- For the 2022-23 residency application cycle, orthopaedic surgery, with the support of the AOA CAC and AOA Executive Committee, chose to participate in the AAMC/ERAS Supplemental Application Pilot Project. This includes sections on program signaling, geographic preferences, and additional information about meaningful work, volunteer, and research experiences.
- AOA/CORD strongly recommended that both applicants and programs opt-in as part of the ERAS participation agreement.
- Orthopaedic surgery applicants will be allowed thirty (30) signals of equal weight to send to programs. CORD recommends that programs incorporate the Supplemental Application data, including program signals, into their holistic review of applications in deciding on interview offers. Further details can be found on [the AOA/CORD](#) and on [the AAMC ERAS](#) websites.

Interviews/In-Person and Virtual

- CORD supports a program's decision to host virtual or in-person interviews for the 2022-2023 cycle.
 - Rationale: CORD recognizes that each program has unique perspectives and methods to achieve the best match for students and their programs.
- CORD discourages the practice of hybrid interviewing (i.e. some interviews held virtually and some in-person within the same program's match cycle) for the main applicant pool (non-home students and non-rotators).
 - Rationale: For students who have not had an opportunity to rotate at a program, a hybrid format introduces inequities to applicants in the interview process.
- If a program chooses to conduct in-person interviews, a virtual format should only be considered for interviewing home students or those who have done an in-person rotation.
 - Rationale: In prior years, these students who had spent time at a program were, in many instances, not brought back for a formal interview but rather 'interviewed' during their rotation. Continuing this format or considering a virtual interview in this situation would avoid the additional burdens of travel and cost.
- The decision to proceed with virtual or in-person interviews should be published clearly on the program's website and in the program's profile in the ORIN.
 - Rationale: Regardless of interview format, the program should clearly state details online no later than one week prior to the Universal Offer Day to allow candidates to plan accordingly. This will also provide time for programs to consider in-person or virtual interviews in the event of a change in public health concerns.

Electronic Standardized Letter of Recommendation (eSLOR)

AOA/CORD recommends that programs clearly communicate their requirements for letters of recommendation on their website and in their ORIN profile, including whether or not an AOA/CORD eSLOR is preferred and if a department chair/program director letter of recommendation is required.