AMERICAN
ORTHOPAEDIC
ASSOCIATION

**AOA's Council of Orthopaedic Residency Directors (CORD) Recommended
Guidelines for 2024-2025 Residency Recruitment
March 4, 2024**

**Recommended Guidelines At-a-Glance\*\***
**AOA/CORD recommends:**

- Programs include information about their programs in ORIN® to serve as a repository for accurate and transparent residency program information.

- A limit of 4 medical student rotations, inclusive of all rotations (home and away).

- Programs participate in **Universal Interview Offer Day** on Monday, November 18, 2024, 12:00pm ET, according to the published guidelines.

- Both applicants and programs opt-in to **Preference Signaling** as part of the AAMC ERAS participation agreement.
  - Each applicant will be allotted 30 signals.
  - Applicants should signal their home programs as well as programs where they may have completed a sub-internship, if those programs are among their preferred programs.
  - Applicants with no geographic preference should indicate "no geographic preference" in lieu of leaving that field blank.

- Programs should carefully consider eliminating the requirement for a Chair letter as part of the holistic review, recognizing that applicants are from differing types of institutions.

- **Virtual or In-Person Interviews**

  - Programs **should** make their own individual decisions about whether to host virtual or in-person interviews for the 2024-2025 cycle.

  - Programs **should not** offer 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).

  - 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.

  - Programs should publish their decision to proceed with virtual or in-person interviews on the program's website and in the program's profile in ORIN®.

  - Programs encourage all applicants/recommendation writers to use the **eSLOR.**

**\*\*For complete rationale and detailed guidelines, please see the information that follows.**

**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 each year updated and approved by the CORD/Academics Committee (CAC). Through these continued efforts, the AOA's 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. The recommendations below have been updated for the 2024-2025 residency recruitment cycle.

**Orthopaedic Residency Information Network (ORIN)®**
- 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 AAMC ERAS Preference Signaling.

**Away Rotations**
- CORD acknowledges:
  - The financial burden of doing multiple away rotations.
  - That there is unequal access to away rotations at different medical schools
- CORD recommends a limit of 4 medical student rotations, inclusive of all rotations (home and away).
- CORD strongly recommends students consult 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 2024-2025:
  - All participating programs will send interview offers on **Monday, November 18, 12:00pm ET**.
  - Programs should only offer as many interview spots as they have available.
  - CORD recommends programs should send 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 19, 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 21, 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.

- These recommendations were formulated after consulting with the AAMC, NRMP, and CORD Affiliates. Documentation about the AOA/CORD's discussion with NRMP regarding compliance with the Match Codes of Conduct are posted on the AOA/CORD website.

**Preference Signaling**

- For the 2024-25 residency application cycle, orthopaedic surgery, with the support of the AOA CAC and AOA Executive Committee, chose to participate in AAMC/ERAS Preference Signaling.
  - Note: The ERAS supplemental application is now part of the main application process. Preference Signaling option still requires a program to opt in/out.
- AOA/CORD strongly recommends that both applicants and programs opt-in to Preference Signaling 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:
  - Programs incorporate all application data, including program signals, into their holistic review of applications in deciding on interview offers.
  - Given the large number of signals available for Orthopaedic Surgery applicants, applicants SHOULD signal their home programs as well as programs where they may have completed a sub-internship if those programs are among their preferred programs.
  - If applicants have no geographic preference, they should indicate "no geographic preference" in lieu of leaving that field blank.
- Further details can be found on the AOA/CORD website and on the AAMC ERAS websites.

**Consideration to Eliminate Requirement for Chair Letter of Recommendation**

- CORD recommends that programs should carefully consider eliminating the requirement for a Chair letter as part of the holistic review, recognizing that applicants are from differing types of institutions. Rationale:
  - Not all department chairs have the opportunity to meet and know each student applying to orthopaedics with great depth.
  - At times, letters of recommendations from the department leaders are largely review of the CV and evaluations from other faculty; others have worked with their PDs to co-author letters in an effort to include the feedback from someone who knows the student.
  - A cadre of students come from medical schools without an orthopaedic department and neither have access to a chair nor a program director to write this letter, when required.

**Interviews/In-Person and Virtual**

- 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.

- These guidelines align with the recommendations set forth by the AAMC.

**Electronic Standardized Letter of Recommendation (eSLOR)**

AOA/CORD encourages the use of the eSLOR for all letters of recommendation. The electronic form has been updated based on feedback from the CORD community and can be found on the AOA/CORD webpage.

AOA/CORD recommends that programs clearly communicate their requirements for letters of recommendation on their website and in their ORIN profile, including whether a department chair/program director letter of recommendation is required.