

**Final Report and Recommendations for Medical Education Institutions of LCME-Accredited,  
U.S. Osteopathic, and Non-U.S. Medical School Applicants**

Submitted by

The Coalition for Physician Accountability's Work Group on Medical Students in the Class of 2021  
Moving Across Institutions for Post Graduate Training

**Executive Summary**

The Coalition for Physician Accountability (Coalition), a cross-organizational group composed of AACOM, AAMC, ACCME, ACGME, AMA, AOGME, AOA, CMSS (OPDA), ECFMG, FSMB, LCME, NBME, and NBOME, was established in 2009 to promote professional accountability by improving the quality, efficiency, and continuity of the education, training, and assessment of physicians. The Coalition established the Work Group on Medical Students in the Class of 2021 Moving Across Institutions for Post Graduate Training (WG) to address three major issues facing applicants and training programs as they prepare for the 2020-2021 residency application cycle: (1) away rotations, (2) in-person interviews for residency, and (3) the ERAS® timeline.

The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the clinical education of most, if not all, medical students. While limitations placed on learners' ability to work in the clinical learning environment, restrictions on individual travel, and the inability to complete assessments and educational requirements will render the traditional selection process impossible to replicate this year, the WG believes a meaningful and effective selection process can be achieved for both applicants and residency programs. In developing this guidance statement, the WG considered the broad diversity of applicants and programs and their differing needs and goals. It also considered the traditional uses and perceived benefits of away rotations and in-person interviews and alternate approaches to meeting these needs and goals.

This guidance is intended to add to, but not supersede, the independent judgment of a medical school, sponsoring institution, or residency program regarding the immediate needs of its patients and the preparation of its learners: Medical school deans have the authority and responsibility to make decisions regarding their medical students, and designated institutional officer (DIOs) and program directors have the authority to make decisions regarding residents in their sponsoring institution and programs. Because students rely on predictable, common practices across schools and programs as they prepare to transition to residency, a shared response to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will greatly reduce unnecessary confusion, stress, and inequity among students, while promoting a more successful residency selection process for all.

The WG established guiding principles as a framework for considering the important issues under its charge:

- Patient care and the safety of the community, patients, and learners are most important.
- Medical schools must prioritize meeting core competencies anchored in accreditation and graduation requirements for their own students. Likewise, residency programs must prioritize fulfilling current residents' competencies and meeting accreditation and specialty board certification requirements.
- The residency selection process should be as equitable as possible for applicants, recognizing the diversity of learners and educational programs and the differing missions and priorities of schools, training programs, and institutions.

- A concerted effort to reduce anxiety and promote well-being of students, program staff, and institutions (home and host) in an already stressed system is critical.
- We anticipate stakeholders will commit to policies that prioritize these guiding principles yet recognize the necessity for innovation and flexibility in this new COVID-19 environment.
- Recommendations at the national level are intended to facilitate transparency, promote fairness across the country, and reinforce our commitment to an equitable process for all.

As the following recommendations are released, the WG recognizes that there can be no “one size fits all” solution; however, the WG believes these recommendations can promote consistency and fairness for all applicants.

#### **Recommendation 1 — Away Rotations for Medical Students**

The WG recommends that for the 2020-2021 academic year, away rotations be discouraged, except under the following circumstances:

- Learners who have a specialty interest and do not have access to a clinical experience with a residency program in that specialty in their school’s system.
- Learners for whom an away rotation is required for graduation or accreditation requirements.

Individuals meeting these exceptions should limit the number of away rotations as much as possible. Students should consider geographically proximate programs, when appropriate, to meet learning needs.

#### **Recommendation 2 — Virtual Interviews**

The WG recommends that all programs commit to online interviews and virtual visits for all applicants, including local students, rather than in-person interviews for the entire cycle and that the medical education community commit to creating a robust digital environment and set of tools to yield the best experiences for programs and applicants.

#### **Recommendation 3 — The ERAS Opening for Programs and the Overall Residency Timeline**

The WG recommends a delayed opening of ERAS for residency programs and a delayed release of the medical student performance evaluation (MSPE) and that the opening and release happen on the same day.

#### **Recommendation 4 — General Communications**

Implementation of these recommendations will require transparency and regular, clear communications among all stakeholders. The WG encourages the medical education community to work together to provide consistency and equity for applicants across the country.

Acknowledging that these recommendations cannot address every eventuality, they are offered to provide the best possible path forward to promote consistency and fairness across the country and to reinforce our commitment to an equitable process for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education  
 American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
 American Medical Association  
 Assembly of Osteopathic Graduate Medical Educators  
 Association of American Medical Colleges  
 Council of Medical Specialty Societies/Organization of Program Director Associations  
 Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates  
 National Resident Matching Program