

2021 AAMC Supplemental ERAS® Application: Final Results of the Applicant Reaction Survey

Overview

On Oct. 21, 2021, 22,899 applicants who submitted their supplemental ERAS® application were invited to take an online survey about their experience preparing and completing it. The survey contained 19 questions and took about 15 minutes to complete. The survey closed Nov. 8, 2021, and 8,207 applicants responded (32% response rate). Key takeaways from the survey results are displayed in the tables below.

Findings

Preparation

- More than 80% of respondents used the supplemental ERAS application guide and website. Around half consulted with their medical school advisor and/or program director or faculty mentor(s). If they used the resource, most thought it was useful.
- About 70% indicated they prepared their responses before filling out their application. More than half spent one to five hours and about 40% spent more than five hours preparing in advance.
- If the applicant consulted with their medical school advisor and/or program director or faculty mentor(s), more than 75% spent up to two hours discussing the supplemental ERAS application with them.

Table 1. How useful were the following supplemental ERAS application resources?

Resource	N	Did Not Use % (n)	Used % (n)	Not Useful % (n)	Somewhat Useful % (n)	Useful % (n)	Somewhat Useful or Useful % (n)
AAMC Supplemental ERAS Application Guide	8,075	15% (1,234)	85% (6,841)	7% (493)	40% (2,756)	53% (3,592)	93% (6,348)
AAMC Supplemental ERAS Application 101 Webinar for Applicants	8,052	53% (4,283)	47% (3,769)	12% (462)	43% (1,623)	45% (1,684)	88% (3,307)
AAMC supplemental ERAS application website	8,040	16% (1,323)	84% (6,717)	9% (624)	48% (3,192)	43% (2,901)	91% (6,093)
Medical school advisor	7,852	47% (3,720)	53% (4,132)	30% (1,228)	40% (1,650)	30% (1,254)	70% (2,904)
Program director or faculty mentor(s)	7,859	52% (4,123)	48% (3,736)	28% (1,029)	40% (1,477)	33% (1,230)	72% (2,707)
Social media discussion	7,891	50% (3,957)	50% (3,934)	23% (908)	46% (1,797)	31% (1,229)	77% (3,026)
Webinar or information session hosted by a specialty organization	7,853	66% (5,171)	34% (2,682)	24% (633)	44% (1,181)	32% (868)	76% (2,049)
Webinar or information session hosted by a student or resident organization	7,852	69% (5,418)	31% (2,434)	24% (577)	44% (1,071)	32% (786)	76% (1,857)
Others	5,876	85% (4,969)	15% (907)	29% (264)	38% (341)	33% (302)	71% (643)

Table 2. Did you prepare your responses in advance before entering the supplemental ERAS application?

Option	% (n)
Yes	71% (5,756)
No	29% (2,378)
Total	100% (8,134)

Table 3. About how much time did you spend preparing in advance before entering the supplemental ERAS application?

Time	%* (n)
Less than 1 hour	5% (275)
1-3 hours	27% (1,558)
3-5 hours	27% (1,511)
More than 5 hours	41% (2,340)
Total	100% (5,684)

*Respondents who selected “No” on the question “Did you prepare your responses in advance ...” and who selected “Did not prepare in advance” for this question were excluded from this analysis.

Table 4. Approximately how much time did you spend discussing the supplemental ERAS application with your medical school advisor or other mentor(s)?

Time	%* (n)
< 1 hour	46% (1,262)
1-2 hours	30% (834)
2-3 hours	11% (296)
More than 3 hours	13% (356)
Total	100% (2,748)

*Respondents who selected “Did Not Use” a medical school advisor on the question “How useful were the following ...” and who selected “Not applicable” or “Did not discuss with my advisor ...” on this question were excluded from this analysis.

Table 5. Approximately how much time did you spend discussing the supplemental ERAS application with your program director or faculty mentor(s)?

Time	%* (n)
< 1 hour	56% (1,086)
1-2 hours	28% (537)
2-3 hours	7% (127)
More than 3 hours	9% (182)
Total	100% (1,932)

*Respondents who selected “Did Not Use” a program director or faculty mentor(s) on question “How useful were the following ...” and who selected “Not applicable” or “Did not discuss with my program director ...” on this question were excluded from this analysis.

Past Experiences

- Nearly 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the instructions in the past experiences section were easy to understand.
- Over half of respondents thought the questions in the past experiences section allowed them to accurately describe their most meaningful experiences.
- Less than half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the meaningful experiences essays empowered them to highlight who they are to programs.

Table 6. Responses to the Past Experiences Questions

Statement	N	Strongly Disagree % (n)	Disagree % (n)	Neither Agree nor Disagree % (n)	Agree % (n)	Strongly Agree % (n)	Agree or Strongly Agree % (n)
The instructions in the past experiences section were easy to understand.	7,971	3% (214)	7% (552)	16% (1,249)	59% (4,731)	15% (1,225)	75% (5,956)
The questions allowed me to accurately describe my most meaningful experiences.	7,969	8% (639)	17% (1,372)	21% (1,676)	43% (3,407)	11% (875)	54% (4,282)
The meaningful experiences essays empowered me to highlight “who I am” to programs.	7,953	11% (838)	17% (1,375)	27% (2,116)	35% (2,774)	11% (850)	46% (3,624)

Geographic Preferences

- Nearly 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the instructions in the geographic preferences section were easy to understand.
- Nearly 70% of respondents thought their responses to the geographic preferences section reflected their true preferences at the time of their application.
- Around half agreed or strongly agreed the geographic preference information may help applicants be noticed by programs in which they have the most interest.
- Of the respondents who selected they had no geographic preference or did not wish to indicate a geographic preference, around half either indicated geography was not important to them or they were concerned that programs would overlook their application if they did not select their region.

Table 7. Responses to the Geographic Preferences Questions

Statement	N	Strongly Disagree % (n)	Disagree % (n)	Neither Agree nor Disagree % (n)	Agree % (n)	Strongly Agree % (n)	Agree or Strongly Agree % (n)
The instructions in the geographic (division) preferences section were easy to understand.	7,632	3% (235)	7% (564)	16% (1,212)	54% (4,129)	20% (1,492)	74% (5,621)
My response(s) to the geographic (division) preferences section reflected my true preferences at the time of application.	7,608	4% (318)	7% (567)	19% (1,462)	44% (3,337)	25% (1,924)	69% (5,261)
Geographic preference information may help applicants be noticed by programs in which they have the most interest.	7,592	9% (693)	12% (880)	29% (2,183)	36% (2,712)	15% (1,124)	51% (3,836)

Table 8. If you selected “Do Not Wish to Indicate” what factors did you consider when making that selection? (Select all that apply)

Factor	%* (n)
I was uncertain about my geographic preferences	19% (291)
Geography is not important to me	44% (667)
Concern that programs would overlook my application if I did not select their region	54% (820)
Advice from a medical school advisor or other mentor(s)	7% (101)
Other	4% (59)

*Based on 1,519 respondents who selected at least one factor on this question.

Table 9. If you selected “No Geographic Preference,” what factors did you consider when making that selection? (Select all that apply.)

Factor	%* (n)
I was uncertain about my geographic preferences	17% (510)
Geography is not important to me	58% (1,739)
Concern that programs would overlook my application if I did not select their region	51% (1,526)
Advice from a medical school advisor or other mentor(s)	11% (315)
Other	4% (105)

*Based on 2,986 respondents who selected at least one factor on this question.

Preference Signals

- Nearly 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the instructions in the preference signals section were easy to understand.
- More than 70% of respondents thought their preference signals reflected their true preferences at the time of their application.
- More than half agreed or strongly agreed preference signals may help applicants be noticed by programs in which they have the most interest.
- The top factors respondents considered when selecting programs to signal were alignment of program strengths with career interests, location of program/geographic preference, and strength of the program’s clinical training.
- Nearly half signaled programs they were truly interested in, while a third sent signals to a mix of safety and reach programs.

Table 10. Responses to the Preference Signal Questions

Statement	N	Strongly Disagree % (n)	Disagree % (n)	Neither Agree nor Disagree % (n)	Agree % (n)	Strongly Agree % (n)	Agree or Strongly Agree % (n)
The instructions for submitting preference signals were easy to understand.	7,556	3% (258)	7% (504)	12% (872)	56% (4,203)	23% (1,719)	78% (5,922)
My preference signals reflected my true preferences at the time of application.	7,527	4% (296)	8% (568)	17% (1,253)	47% (3,570)	24% (1,840)	72% (5,410)
Preference signals may help applicants be noticed by programs in which they have the most interest.	7,516	9% (663)	10% (759)	24% (1,806)	39% (2,949)	18% (1,339)	57% (4,288)

Table 11. What factors did you consider when selecting programs to signal? (Select all that apply)

Factor	%* (n)
Alignment of program strengths with my career interests	67% (4,950)
Location of program/geographic preference	66% (4,862)
Strength of program’s clinical training	54% (3,965)
Program reputation/prestige	45% (3,280)
Program culture/resident camaraderie	42% (3,102)
Strength of program’s research training	25% (1,814)
Advice from faculty or resident mentors	21% (1,526)
Other	4% (311)

*Based on 7,353 respondents who selected at least one factor on this question.

Table 12. What strategy did you use when selecting programs to signal?

Strategy	% (n)
Only send to “safety” programs, or those you felt you would have less difficulty getting into	11% (777)
Only send to “reach” programs, or those you felt you would have more difficulty getting into	10% (739)
Send it to a mix of safety and reach programs	34% (2,486)
Send to the programs I was truly most interested in	46% (3,348)
Total	100% (7,350)

Overall

- Half the respondents spent up to two hours filling out the nonresearch sections of the supplemental application, and the other half spent more than two hours.

Table 13. About how long did it take you to fill out the non-research sections of the supplemental application (i.e., past experiences, geographic preferences, preference signals)?

Time	% (n)
< 1 hour	21% (1,602)
1-2 hours	31% (2,387)
2-3 hours	19% (1,498)
3+ hours	29% (2,210)
Total	100% (7,697)