



## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Updated – June 23, 2020**

**With some uncertainty surrounding the upcoming Main Residency Match season due to the pandemic, has the NRMP considered making any changes to the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) process?**

The Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) is the process during Match Week for the Main Residency Match whereby positions left unfilled after the matching algorithm has been processed are offered to eligible, unmatched and partially matched applicants through a series of offer rounds. Since the 2017 Match, SOAP has included three offer rounds; however, because of the increasing number of unfilled positions that have remained at the end of SOAP in recent years, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the upcoming application and Match season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NRMP has decided to add an additional, fourth offer round to the SOAP process.

The additional SOAP offer round will begin at 12:00 p.m. ET on Thursday of Match Week and end at 2:00 p.m. ET. SOAP will now conclude at 3:00 p.m. ET with the posting of the final List of Unfilled Programs in the Registration, Ranking, and Results (R3) system. Please be aware that all SOAP communication and policies within the Match Participation Agreement will remain in place through the conclusion of SOAP at 3:00 p.m. ET on Thursday of Match Week. See this [schedule](#) and this [calendar](#) for more information.

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**May 27, 2020**

**On May 26, the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) and the Federation of State Medical Board (FSMB) announced the suspension of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) examination for a period of 12-18 months. If I have not taken or passed the CS examination, am I eligible to participate in the Match?**

The NRMP does not specifically require that applicants take or pass the CS examination in order to participate in the Match. The NRMP requires that U.S. applicants meet the requirements for graduation set by their medical school and the eligibility criteria set by their matched residency training program. International medical graduate (IMGs) applicants must meet the exam requirements set by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) to achieve ECFMG certification.

NRMP will continue to work with the NBME, ECFMG, and other medical education organizations to understand the implications of this decision on applicants planning to participate in the 2021 Main Residency Match. NRMP leadership will communicate as needed with constituents.

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**May 26, 2020**

**ERAS has moved the application cycle for fellowship programs. Does the NRMP intend to change the Match deadlines and dates for the upcoming Medical Specialties Matching Program and the Pediatric Specialties Fellowship Matches?**

The NRMP is aware that ERAS has changed the application date for Fellowship programs for the July ERAS cycle to August 12, 2020. The NRMP has made no decision to change the dates for the Fellowship Matches. While single specialty Matches can be moved with relatively few consequences, Fellowship Matches that have multiple specialties such as the Medical Specialties Matching Program (MSMP) and the Pediatric Specialties Match (PSM), require that all specialties in the Match agree to the same schedule. This ensures that applicants who participate in the same Match have the option to cross apply and rank between specialties and to match as a couple. NRMP leadership is concerned that if only some of the specialties in the MSMP and PSM move, applicants may see an unanticipated and possible reduction in their matching options due to being unable to couple and/or rank more than one specialty to which they may have applied.

NRMP leadership will continue to work with the specialty program director's groups (i.e., associations of training program directors) that serve as the Match sponsors to determine if there is a need to adjust the schedules for Fellowship Matches.

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**May 13, 2020**

**Does the NRMP intend to change the Match deadlines and dates for the upcoming Fellowship Matches or the 2021 Main Residency Match?**

Match Week and SOAP for the 2021 Main Match will remain as scheduled for March 15-18, with Match Day occurring on March 19, 2021. However, in response to national discussions about the implications of the novel coronavirus on transitions among students to graduate medical education, the NRMP has decided to implement schedule changes to the Rank Order List (ROL) Open and Certification Deadline dates for the 2021 Main Residency Match.

The ROL Open, when applicants and programs can begin entering their ROLs, will move to February 1, 2021 at 12:00 p.m. Eastern Time, and the ROL Certification Deadline, when applicants and programs must finalize and certify their ROLs for use when the matching algorithm is processed, will move to March 3, 2021 at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

Because the ROL opening has shifted after the deadline for programs to finalize their participation in the Match, applicants will benefit from knowing the final number of positions (quota) and withdrawal status for the programs they intend to rank prior to the opening of ranking; programs and applicants will have more time to interview and make ranking decisions; and, more applicants may be eligible to participate in the Match because there will be an additional USMLE score release before the ROL Certification Deadline.

**As a Canadian trainee, will the date changes announced by the Canadian Resident Matching Service**

## **(CaRMS) for its 2021 Match cycle affect my ability to participate in the NRMP Main Residency Match?**

Applicants still will be able to participate in both CaRMS and NRMP for 2021 appointments. Based on a longstanding agreement, NRMP and CaRMS rules for withdrawing applicants are based on whichever Match occurs first. For the 2021 appointment year, it appears that the CaRMS first iteration Match will occur after the NRMP Match; accordingly, applicants registered for CaRMS who match in the NRMP Match for 2021 will be withdrawn from the CaRMS Match. Applicants who register for both Matches are encouraged to think carefully about the Matching Program in which they most want to obtain a position.

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**April 1, 2020**

Dear Medical Education Community,

The NRMP Board, leadership, and staff understand and deeply appreciate the substantial risks that each of you are taking to provide care to COVID-19 patients and to continue to provide educational resources and training for the country's medical students, residents, and fellows. We also recognize the substantial emotional and physical stress you are under while caring for yourself as well as your parents, children, extended families, and colleagues. Thank you for your continued focus on medical education during this rapidly evolving, uncertain time. Your selfless efforts and professionalism will ensure that the nation has well trained physicians – now and in the future. To address questions regarding the applicant transition to graduate medical education, NRMP has created these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). While the situation remains fluid, NRMP will continue to monitor the situation and update the FAQs as new information and/or questions emerge. Please feel free to contact the NRMP leadership with questions at [admin@nrmp.org](mailto:admin@nrmp.org).

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **\*\*Updated May 13, 2020 - Does the NRMP intend to change the Match deadlines and dates for the upcoming Fellowship Matches or the 2021 Main Residency Match?**

The NRMP is acutely aware of the importance of matriculating residents and fellows into training programs to prepare our nation's future physicians. As such, no decision has been made to change the Match schedules for the 2021 Main Residency Match. However, the cancellation of exams and rotations as well as the added patient-care burden faced by the training programs are factors that NRMP will consider in our decision-making as we continue to monitor the needs of the medical education community. NRMP leadership will also continue to work with program director's groups (i.e., associations of training program directors) that serve as Match sponsors to determine if there is a need to adjust the Match schedules for Fellowship programs.

#### **Can medical students who have graduated early work in a clinical capacity -not in a training capacity- in a hospital system before they begin their residency training program?**

NRMP is aware that some medical schools are planning to graduate senior students early so they may support local efforts responding to the surge in COVID-19 cases. NRMP cannot comment on the feasibility of such efforts (e.g., CMS reimbursement protocols, procurement of training licenses) but reminds the community that Match commitments and offers accepted during the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) are binding. Individuals may not, during this interval, be registered in a

training program other than the one in which he/she matched. Once a party has matched or a position has been accepted during SOAP, a waiver of the binding commitment may be obtained only from the NRMP. Please read the [Waiver Policy](#) for more information. Absent a waiver, applicants and programs with binding commitments are expected to enter training in good faith on the date specified in the appointment contract.

In addition, the NRMP Board and leadership feels strongly that medical students who have graduated early must have the ability to accept or decline to work in a clinical capacity in the interval before beginning their training program without the risk of retaliation or other negative consequences.

**Can medical students who have graduated early begin a residency training program (other than their matched program) and then transfer to their matched program at a later date?**

Match policies remain in force and do not permit individuals to enter a program into which they have not matched. All matched applicants are expected to begin training in good faith (i.e., with the intent to complete the program) at their matched program on the date specified in their appointment contract absent a waiver from the NRMP.

**Will moving a program's start date to begin before July 1 constitute a violation of the Match Participation Agreement?**

Training programs initiating the 2020 appointment year earlier than July 1 will not violate the Match Participation Agreement. However, if the program has provided program materials and/or an appointment agreement indicating a June/July 2020 start date, the matched applicant must have the option to decide whether he/she will begin the training program on an earlier date determined by the program.

**If new trainees are expected to quarantine when they begin their training program, will this impact the official "start" date of the program, as outlined in the Match Participation Agreement?**

Resident/Fellow contracts that begin on or before July 1, with pay and benefits, regardless of the quarantine status, meets the requirements of the Match Participation Agreement. The Match Participation Agreement does not require the immediate delivery of curriculum. Programs are encouraged to find non-clinical activities (e.g., orientation, acclimation to the EMR, etc.) for quarantined trainees until they can begin their clinical duties. NRMP will not consider a waiver request solely because an individual requires quarantine when first arriving at their training program.

**What happens if I lose my program funding and cannot support the applicants who Matched into my program?**

In accordance with NRMP policy, the loss of program funding may be grounds for a waiver request.

**Will a waiver be considered for immunocompromised applicants who have matched into areas hardest hit by the virus, given that their medical status could limit their ability to participate in many direct patient care scenarios until the pandemic is controlled?**

In accordance with NRMP policy, approval of a waiver requires the requestor to demonstrate that accepting a matched applicant, or a matched applicant entering the program, would result in an unanticipated serious and extreme hardship. Conditions of eligibility/onboarding (e.g., medical school graduation, drug screen, ability to obtain licensure, visa, malpractice coverage as needed, etc.) outlined in the Match Participation Agreement and in the program's recruitment and/or appointment materials remain in force.

NRMP expects programs to fully investigate how immunocompromised individuals may be redeployed within the training program to support their health needs while meeting the training commitment if needed. NRMP also expects matched applicants to consider any health issues that may be exacerbated by training and/or the training environment when selecting their specialty, location, and training program.

NRMP will individually consider requests for waivers as received. Before requesting a waiver, the NRMP recommends that programs and matched applicants who are immunocompromised, consider beginning training “off cycle” (any time before January 31) or deferring training to the next appointment year.

Deferral of training allows the individual to begin training in their matched program the following appointment year and allows the program to fill the unfilled position for the upcoming appointment year.

**Is the NRMP collaborating with the ECFMG on the needs of the Match IMG applicants?**

NRMP staff has provided a complete list of all matched IMGs to the ECFMG, enabling their staff to work with the Department of State.

NRMP is concerned that IMGs currently residing in countries under a travel ban will be unable to obtain a visa and permission to travel to the United States for training. NRMP staff is identifying those individuals and programs and will work with the ECFMG/State Department to determine who may not be able to begin their program due to restrictions of travel. The NRMP also will work with individuals and programs to determine the need for a deferral or waiver, encouraging programs to consider a deferral in order to begin the matched applicant’s training the following year.

**Now that the Main Residency Match has concluded, we are expecting invoices from the NRMP for Matching services. Have the payment deadlines for the Main Residency Match been extended?**

Yes, the NRMP is sending the 2020 Main Residency Match invoices on April 17 and has extended the payment period from 60 days to 90 days before late fees will be assessed. Institutions unable to meet these deadlines should contact [accounting@nrmp.org](mailto:accounting@nrmp.org).

Invoice adjustments for Fellowship Matches will be addressed with each Match as needed.

**Does the NRMP have recommendations for how programs conduct recruitment in the current environment of COVID-19 restrictions?**

To abide by public health recommendations regarding limited travel and continued social distancing, and for the health and safety of applicants and program staff, NRMP recommends fellowship programs conduct at least initial screening interviews for the upcoming Fellowship Match season virtually. In addition, NRMP calls on all institutions and programs to enhance the electronic information available about their programs to better inform the research applicants conduct to determine where they would like to interview and potentially train. These measures will work to ensure interested applicants can be evaluated by programs while also providing applicants as much information as possible when making decisions about training. This poses a significant shift from the standard in-person interview and recruiting process but is a necessary step as we move into the upcoming fellow recruitment season.