Introduction to the 2021 Main Residency Match Webinar - Questions and Answers

On September 9, NRMP Chief of Match Operations Jeanette Calli presented a webinar designed to assist program staff in administering their programs in the Main Residency Match. The first in a series of webinars, the presentation provided introductory information about the Match as well as information about program set-up options, Match policies, and support resources. Future webinars will address entering and certifying rank order lists and Match Week, including the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program.

Below are the webinar questions and answers received from participants to further assist as you prepare for the 2021 Main Residency Match season.

Realizing that each program is unique, is there a recommended template for conducting zoom interviews for the match?

NRMP does not oversee or regulate interviews. The interview process and timing is set by individual programs. The AAMC and other specialty organizations have put together resources to assist programs in transitioning to virtual interviews that may provide templates or other guides to assist you in formatting your interviews.

What does the acronym "SOAP" stand for?

SOAP is the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program. Positions left unfilled after the matching algorithm has been processed are offered to eligible applicants through the SOAP process.

Our program has two program coordinators (PC). Is there a way to allow both coordinators to have accounts?

The NRMP’s Registration, Ranking, and Results® (R3®) system allows only one program coordinator role for each program. There are no plans to offer access to additional coordinators.

If the program director (PD) has changed effective 9/1 in the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME®) system, will NRMP receive this information and update the program information?

No, the NRMP does not receive updates made in the ACGME system. It is the responsibility of institutions and programs to update their information with the NRMP either through making the update directly in the R3 system after the Match opens for registration or by contacting the NRMP, support@nrmp.org.
Can we start interviews by November 2 or are we required to start interviews at a later date?

NRMP does not oversee or regulate interviews. The interview process and timing is set by individual programs.

Is there a tutorial available for new program directors and coordinators on how to navigate both websites? Or a checklist?

There is an Institution and Program Match Process video as well as a Program Support page on the NRMP website with click-by-click R3 support guides for each aspect of the matching process. There is also a checklist available to help you keep track of steps and tasks that includes links to appropriate resources.

Can you be more than one 'type' of program?

Yes. For example, a program accredited to begin at the PGY-2 level, may have a track for Categorical positions, where the preliminary year is included in the training at your institution, and a track for Advanced positions, where applicants must secure a separate preliminary position. This is just one example. Please see the Program Codes and Types page on our website for additional information on program types in the Main Residency Match.

Will institution and program staff get email notifications/reminders for upcoming deadlines?

Yes, NRMP sends reminders of events and deadlines throughout the Match season. Please consult the Match Calendar to view the complete schedule.

Is the Match Participation Agreement (MPA) available as a download?

Yes, the MPA can be downloaded in PDF format on Policy section of the NRMP website.

Can the PC complete the registration process and sign the agreement, or does this have to be done by the PD?

User accounts in the NRMP system are individual. Each user (PD and PC) must have their own user account and each must sign the Match Participation Agreement.

Can the coordinator register the program?

User accounts in the NRMP system are individual and individual user registration is separate from program registration/activation. If your program was in the Match last year, it has been rolled over into the 2021 Main Residency Match and must be activated for participation by your Institutional Official (IO) when the Match opens. If your program is new and has not participated in the Match previously, please complete the New Program Form to have your program added to the Match.

I have never provided my applicants with our NRMP code in order to rank us. I assume the NRMP also provides a list for the applicants when ranking?

It is important to provide applicants your NRMP program code to assist them in ranking your program, especially if you have multiple program tracks or types. NRMP provides a search function for applicants to search for the programs they wish to rank. However,
institutions may have similar names or multiple tracks in a specialty which can be confusing to applicants when ranking. We encourage programs to provide the correct NRMP program code to applicants to assist them in ranking and help them avoid ranking incorrect programs.

We have two coordinators for our pediatrics residency program. How are coordinators expected not to share account information if only one of us can have access? In our case, the coordinator with access will be on maternity leave starting sometime in December.

The NRMP’s Registration, Ranking, and Results® (R3®) system allows only one program coordinator role for each program. If the current coordinator will be out for an extended period, the PD can change/update the coordinator access to the second coordinator during that period.

What if our program number was changed due to ACGME accreditation. How do we get activated?

Please contact NRMP at support@nrmp.org for assistance with updating the ACGME program code.

My program will be submitting a complement change to the ACGME in December, but the committee does not meet until after the Quota Change Deadline. How can we update the quota after the Quota Change Deadline if the complement increase is approved? What is latest an IO can request an increase in quota?

Quotas will be changed by the NRMP after the January 31 deadline only in cases of extreme emergency, such as loss of funding or loss of accreditation or if the ACGME approves an increase in resident complement. Requests for those exceptions must be made in writing by the institutional official only via an email to support@nrmp.org, and must be approved by NRMP leadership. We will review quota change exceptions up through the ranking deadline.

When will the IO receive the email to activate our program?

All Institutional Officials will receive an email when the Match opens on September 15th with instructions to activate both the institution and all programs for participation in the Match.

My PD has withdrawn us from the Match. I accidently made us active under my coordinator name. What do I need to do to deactivate our program?

User accounts in the NRMP system are individual and individual user registration is separate from program registration/activation. You may have registered your individual user account for a Match, but your program was then subsequently withdrawn. There is nothing you need to do, as PCs cannot activate or withdraw programs from Match participation. Please contact support@nrmp.org if you have additional concerns.
What is the rationale for moving the date applications are made available to programs in the Electronic Residency Application Service® (ERAS®) system?

ERAS is the application service provided by the AAMC®, which is a separate organization from the Match. ERAS is where you will review your program’s applications and supporting materials. ERAS made the decision to delay the application process in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The application and interview processes are not managed by the NRMP and so the NRMP cannot speak to the ERAS decision. Please direct all questions about the application process to ERAS and their staff will be happy to assist.

How do we change the quota within the PGY levels only so the change does not increase the overall position numbers? The change will only change within the PGY levels.

Positions in different PGY levels are in different program tracks, each with their own quota and rank list. Each track can have their quota adjusted to ensure the correct number of incoming residents. Please see the Quota Changes page on our website for more information and a support guide on adjusting quotas.

The email information under the Public Contact tab for my program is not correct. How can it be updated?

Once the Match opens on September 15th and your program has been activated by the IO, either the PC or PD can make the updates.

If a program does not participate in SOAP and an additional SOAP offer round has been added, when can a position be offered?

Programs who do not opt to participate in SOAP cannot extend offers to applicants until after SOAP concludes, at 3:00 p.m. ET on Thursday of Match Week.

I’m a new program coordinator. Am I understanding that I cannot create new user/login until September 15?

Match opening emails will be sent to institution and program staff when the Match opens on Tuesday, September 15th, at noon, Eastern Time. You can begin accessing your account and your program’s Match information when the Match opens for registration.

What is the benefit of reversions? Why would a program want to participate in reversions?

The R3 system offers institutions the option to revert, or donate, unfilled positions in one program to another during the matching process. If a donor program does not fill its quota, a designated number (equal to, or less than, the quota) of its unfilled positions can be added automatically to the quota of a receiver program. Reversions offer a degree of protection against the possibility that positions will not fill when the matching algorithm is processed. Please see the Creating Reversions for Residency Programs page on our website for more information.
Why do you allow applicants to register/rank programs if they have a match violation?
Match violations vary in nature and severity as do the sanctions imposed on applicants. Not all Match violations rise to the level that would necessitate an applicant being barred from the Match.

Why is the Match history of any violations or sanctions imposed on an applicant not included in ERAS? Why would someone who violates match be able to register for ERAS?
Match violations vary in nature and severity as do the sanctions imposed on applicants. Not all Match violations rise to the level that would necessitate an applicant being barred from the Match and not all programs that use ERAS participate with the NRMP.

What other national matching plans are there?
There are other national matching plans for urology, ophthalmology, and U.S. military graduate medical education programs.

Does my IO need to add our new PD and PC to the NRMP?
PD and PC information can be updated at any time during the Match season by the institutional official, institutional administrator, or the NRMP if the PD and PC have been updated on the ACGME website. Send an email to support@nrmp.org with name of your institution and program, the NRMP program code, and the first and last name, email address, and date of birth for the new program staff.

For virtual meet and greets, may we ask the attendees if they are applying to our program and/or our specialty?
Section 6.2 of the Match Participation Agreement prohibits programs from requesting that applicants reveal their ranking preferences or the names, specialties, geographic locations, or other identifying information about programs to which they have or may apply. Programs also are prohibited from requesting applicants reveal any information pertaining to interviews, including the number of applications sent, and/or the number of interviews offered, accepted or attended. Although virtual meet and greet opportunities are not explicitly referenced in the Match Participation Agreement, they can reasonably be viewed as a component of this year’s recruitment season.

Can you ask applicants about names, specialties, or geographic locations of programs to which they applied in a post-Match anonymous survey?
No. Per Section 6.2 of the Match Participation Agreement, applicants shall at all times be free to keep confidential all information pertaining to interviews, their ranking preferences, and the names or identities of programs to which they have or may apply.

What is cost of the NRMP for applicants?
The standard registration fee for applicants is $85. This fee includes the listing of up to 20 unique program codes on the primary rank order list and up to 20 unique codes on all supplemental rank order lists combined. See the Match Fees page on our website for additional fees for extra ranks, late registration and couples.

What is the web address for the R3 system?
https://r3.nrmp.org

Can a Preliminary program ask what Advanced specialty an applicant is applying to?
No. Per Section 6.2 of the Match Participation Agreement, programs are prohibited from requesting that applicants reveal their ranking preferences or the names, specialties, geographic locations, or other identifying information about programs to which they have or may apply. However, programs can ask questions about anything an applicant provides in the ERAS application (e.g. personal statement) or voluntarily states during an interview about specialty interest.

Can we decrease the number of positions our program wants to fill in the Match?
Yes, if the change is entered prior to the Quota Change Deadline of January 31, 2021. Please see the Quota Changes page on our website for more information and a support guide on adjusting quotas.

Does NRMP have an opinion on whether programs send interview welcome packets and swag or other goodies?
The NRMP does not oversee the recruitment process and the Match Participation Agreement does not include policies concerning gifts provided to applicants. However, the NRMP strongly recommends that if a program chooses to give gifts to the applicants it interviews, all applicants interviewed should receive the same gift or value of gift.

Are one-year fellowship programs in surgery subspecialties considered Preliminary, Categorical or Advanced?
Fellowship programs do not participate in the Main Residency Match. Preliminary, Categorical, and Advanced position/program types are available only in the Main Residency Match. Fellowship positions have a position type of “F” for Fellowship in the Specialties Matching Service, which is our matching program for fellowships.

If an institution participates in multiple matches, e.g., Main Residency Match and Specialty (fellowship) Matches, are they charged the institutional fee for each Match?
Yes, the institution registration fee is $250 per Match in which the institution participates.

How can NRMP and ERAS partner closer together to accurately reflect if an applicant is truly couples’ matching or not?
While ERAS does ask applicants if they intend to participate in the Match as a couple, the applicants must couple in the NRMP system for the algorithm to treat them as a couple. The NRMP does not identify to programs applicants who are participating as a couple. It is up to the applicants to let programs know their couple status, if they choose. An applicant’s couple status should have no bearing on how an applicant is ranked by the program.
When is payment due to the NRMP to participate in the Match?
At the conclusion of each Match, the NRMP institutional official and billing contact, if one has been designated, will receive an invoice.

Would a program be in violation if they were to interview their 4th year audition students at the end of the rotation instead of during the official interview dates?
NRMP does not oversee or regulate the interview process, so timing and format can be established as preferred by individual programs. That being said, NRMP strongly encourages all programs to conduct virtual interviews of all applicants for the 2021 Main Residency Match/July 2021 appointment year. Furthermore, NRMP encourages programs to respect the preferences of applicants if they wish to conduct interviews virtually and ensure that the interview process (virtual or in-person) and any program visits do not unfairly advantage one applicant over another.

If you have more than one program track, do you have to submit a separate rank order list for each track? Can you combine the tracks on your rank order list so we submit only one list?
For each track your program has in the Match, you will certify a separate rank order list. If you want a combined rank order list, then you should consider whether your program needs separate tracks. Please contact us at 866-653-6767 to discuss your program set-up options.

Is it permissible to communicate with applicants after interviewing via email or snail mail to say thank you for interviewing or see if they have any questions about our program?
Yes.

I am also a new PD with a new PC. Are there more webinars/workshops for ERAS and NRMP or a hotline to answer questions if we have problems navigating the websites?
The NRMP will host two additional webinars during the Match season on the ranking process and on Match Week and SOAP. Assistance is available from the NRMP support staff Monday - Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Eastern Time by emailing support@nrmp.org or calling our toll-free number at 866-653-NRMP (6767).

Can we put our Program Code on our website?
Yes.

Should applicants be required to email a signed acknowledgement that they have received a copy of our contact and all institutional policies?
While not required, the NRMP recommends programs obtain a signed acknowledgment that applicants have received a copy of the program contract and institution policies regarding eligibility for appointment.

Can a physician only position be reverted to a categorical position?
Yes.