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Integrated Residency Program in Obstetrics and Gynecology

Applying into Ob/Gyn Virtual Edition 2020 Sarah Dolisca, MD

*Document initially written in 2017 and now updated in 2020 given the ongoing
COVID-19 Pandemic*

Glossary

APGO: Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics
ACOG: American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
CREOG: Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology
ERAS: Electronic Residency Application Service
NRMP: National Residency Matching Program
ROL: Rank Order List

Introduction



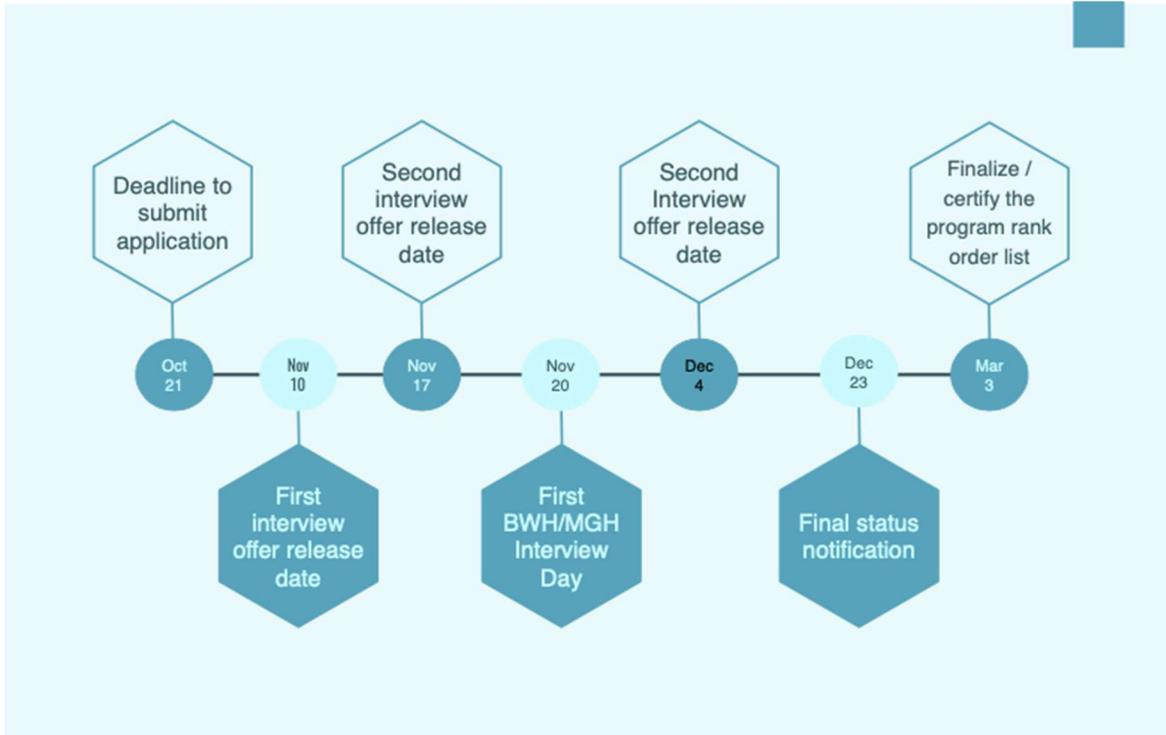
APGO and CREOG Guidelines for Students Applying for an OBGYN Residency

Excerpt from APGO/CREOGS "Right Resident. Right Program. Ready Day One" Initiative¹

The COVID-19 Pandemic will have a large impact on the 2020-21 application cycle. It has already led to a change in the ERAS timeline for release of applications, an extended timeframe for rank order list submissions, and recommendations from organizations about how interviews should be conducted. In order to ensure a fair and equitable application cycle, the leadership of APGO and CREOG have produced the following guidelines for residency programs and for medical students applying to OBGYN residency in 2021.

In addition, programs are encouraged to limit the number of interview offers to the number of interview spots available for each program and to allow applicants a minimum of 48 hours to respond to an interview offer.

Timeline



Important Considerations

Interview Offers: Between October 21 – approximately November 17th be mindful of your ability to access emails. This is when interview offers are released. These offers are TIME SENSITIVE (48 hours to reply) – you want to be sure that whatever you are doing (i.e. zoom meetings, researching, on clinical electives) that you have access to your phone and reliable internet connection so that as soon as you receive an interview invite you can schedule it in a timely fashion.

Advising

Recruit an Ob/Gyn resident **AND** a faculty advisor to mentor you throughout your application process. This can be an invaluable resource as you navigate the various phases of the road to residency. There are many faculty members and trainees who are part of the academic community who have a wealth of experience in helping students to successfully apply into residency; do not do this alone.

How do I pick a faculty or resident mentor?

Choose someone you trust and someone who is happy to help you.

Faculty: consider your clerkship director, preceptor, or research mentor

Resident: consider your resident coach or a resident who seems interested and invested in helping medical students +/- you

So I have a faculty mentor when should I check in?

Pre-Application

- Meet with your faculty mentor as you decide where to apply. He or she can help you gauge how competitive you are and subsequently advise you as you put together a reasonable list of programs to apply to

Interviews

- Set up mock interviews with colleagues and provide wise counsel about interview format trends in Ob/Gyn Residency Programs
- Serve as advocates to help you get interviews at desired programs

Post-Interview

- Help you navigate how to respond to post-interview communication
- Provide counsel as you put together your rank list
- Serve as an advocate

Application

Key Components

- Photo
- Background / Personal Information
- CV: Volunteer, Research, and Work Experiences
- Personal Statement
- Letter of Recommendations
- Selection of Programs You Are Applying To

Interviews

Interview Offers and Scheduling

Once you have selected the programs you will apply to create a spreadsheet with the tentative dates each program will be conducting interviews. Many programs list this information on their website. You should create your “ideal interview trail” based on this information to optimize your ability to easily schedule interviews when offered and maximize the number of programs you can virtually visit.

Preparation

Prior to interviewing you should participate in mock interview sessions facilitated by your medical school and/or faculty or resident mentor. This is an opportunity to practice virtual interviews (via Zoom, Google Chat, etc.) and get a chance to get and incorporate specific feedback on your interview skills.

Anything written in your application is fair game for discussion throughout the interview season. Be authentic and represent yourself well.

For every program I interviewed at I created “fact sheets” – a recommendation that came from my resident mentor! As I reviewed the residency program and departmental website, I created a word document that included images of leadership in the program and department, the program’s mission, vision, curriculum, unique attributes, alumni who graduated from my medical school, etc.

It is your job as an applicant to answer the question “*Why X program?*” to every institution you interview with on the trail. As you comb through the department and program websites you will find information that informs your answer to this essential question.

Additionally, I found that these fact sheets were great references as I considered my rank and impressions of programs after interview season.

The Interview Day

Five DON'TS for Interview

1. **Don't** say that you want to go somewhere else
2. **Don't** show up late
3. **Don't** check your phone, text, or email throughout the day
4. **Don't** speak negatively about other programs, other applicants, or other schools
5. **Don't** be arrogant with other applicants

Keep in mind at all points of interactions with a program (even virtual interviews) you are under some degree of scrutiny. From the first email exchange, to interactions at the pre-interview virtual social, throughout the virtual interview day. There is no need to be paranoid but remember to represent yourself (and your medical school) well throughout the interview season

Cancelling Interviews

You may have to cancel some interviews along the way. Be gracious in your correspondence when cancelling. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, give programs at least a two week notice when cancelling.

Post-Interviews

Thank You Notes

I was advised by my faculty mentor to send thank you notes after interviewing. I sent personalized emails to most of the faculty members and residents who interviewed me. Most programs included emails and contact information within the interview day thumb drive / correspondence. For programs who did not provide this information, I would send a message to

the program coordinator and/or program director expressing gratitude for the interview experience and include the names of my interviewers.

Please note there are some programs explicitly state do not send thank you notes. Play by the rules. Talk to your faculty mentor(s) should you have further questions about this.

Defining “Fit”

This nebulous term gets tossed around a lot throughout the application process. It is emphasized as an important factor for both applicants and programs but what does it actually mean? Is there an actual definition? The AAMC, posits two definitions *person-organization fit* and *person-job fit*.²

“Person-organization fit” refers to compatibility between an applicant’s personality, attitude, work, and learning style/preferences, and goals and the organization’s culture”

“Person-job fit” refers to compatibility between an applicant’s competencies, knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes and the competencies and characteristics required to learn and perform the job successfully.”

Reflection

I found the interview trail to be helpful in allowing me to discover what I really wanted in the next stage of my training. Certain “non-negotiable” aspects of where I wanted to live, what I wanted to be sure the program had, etc arose as I compared institutions. Conversely, I also was able to see what was not a contributing factor in my decision making.

Post Interview Communication

One may receive post interview communication from residents, faculty, and/or program directors. Professionally and respectfully reply to all communication.

Discuss with your faculty mentor whether it is advisable to inform your top program options about your intent to consider them favorably.

Excerpts from the NRMP Code of Conduct³

To promote the highest ethical standards during the interview, ranking, and matching processes, program directors participating in a Match shall commit to:

- **Respecting an applicant’s right to privacy and confidentiality** Program directors and other interviewers may freely express their interest in a candidate, but they shall not ask an applicant to disclose the names, specialties, geographic location, or other identifying information about programs to which the applicant has or may apply.
- **Accepting responsibility for the actions of recruitment team members** Program directors shall instruct all interviewers about compliance with Match policies and the need to ensure that all applicant interviews are conducted in an atmosphere that is safe, respectful, and nonjudgmental. Program directors shall assume responsibility for the actions of the entire interview team.

- **Refraining from asking illegal or coercive questions** Program directors shall recognize the negative consequences that can result from questions about age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and family status, and shall ensure that communication with applicants remains focused on the applicant’s goodness of fit within their programs.
- **Declining to require second interviews or visiting rotations** Program directors shall respect the logistical and financial burden many applicants face in pursuing multiple interactions with programs and shall not require them or imply that second interviews or visits are used in determining applicant placement on a rank order list.
- **Discouraging unnecessary post-interview communication** Program directors shall not solicit or require post-interview communication from applicants, nor shall program directors engage in post-interview communication that is disingenuous for the purpose of influencing applicants’ ranking preferences.

Ranking

There are many factors to consider when deliberating on ranking programs. Whether trivial or significant prioritize what matters to you. I took the approach of ranking programs along the way and conferring with select advisors once my ROL was completed. I certified my list soon after the NRMP website became available. Others take a mental break from the residency process for about a month and consider their rank list with fresh eyes. Every approach is valid. Do what is best for you.

Rank based on your true preference without allowing undue influence of agents of various residency programs sway your decision.

How many programs should I rank?

Work with your faculty mentor to make an informed choice.

Summary

Adapted from *APGO/CREOGS “Right Resident. Right Program. Ready Day One” Initiative*¹

Guidelines for Applicants in the 2020-2021 Application Cycle

1. Prior to submitting applications, each applicant should:
 - a. Speak with an advisor, at least one of whom is an OBGYN, and determine their individual needs
 - b. Consult resources about residency programs, including details about what each program offers, the residency environment, and how each program will meet the applicant’s learning and career goals. Applicants should use this information to ensure the right balance exists between their individual needs and goals and the program’s offerings
 - c. Apply only to programs that meet the applicant’s needs

2. Applicants should limit total applications to no more than 25-40 programs based on their competitiveness
3. Applicants should limit total interviews to no more than 12-15 programs and not hold interview spots they do not plan to attend
4. Applicants should cancel interviews they do not plan to pursue as soon as possible, but no less than 2 weeks prior to the interview date

By following these guidelines, the leaders of AGPO and CREOG hope for the best opportunity to have a fair and equitable match for all students applying during 2021. The leadership will continue to closely monitor the effects of the pandemic and communicate updates as the situation warrants.

Best of luck on your journey towards training to be an Obstetrician/Gynecologist. We look forward to partnering with you in your career!

Additional Resources / Helpful Links:

- APGO Right Resident, Right Program, Ready Day One: <https://www.apgo.org/rrr-webinars/>
- ERAS: <https://www.aamc.org/services/eras-for-institutions>
- NRMP: <https://www.nrmp.org>

Upcoming Webinars for Applicants:

August 26: [How Do I know Which Programs to Apply to?](#)

September 23: [Preparing your Residency Application](#)

October 28: [Virtual Interviews 101](#)

References

1. APGO Right Resident, Right Program, Ready Day One: [Cited 2020 August] [Available from <https://www.apgo.org/rrr-webinars/>]
2. Best Practices for Conducting Residency Program Interviews. [cited 2020 August]; September 2016: [Available from: <https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2020-05/best%20practices%20for%20conducting%20residency%20program%20interviews.pdf>]
3. Match Communication Code of Conduct. [Cited 2020 August]; [Available from: <https://www.nrmp.org/communication-code-of-conduct/>]