



Creating Competitive Residency Applicants

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Objectives

- Identify critical PGY-1 preparedness gaps to target during rotations.
- Deliver constructive, narrative-focused evaluations that provide actionable feedback to correct student performance issues without unintentionally triggering application red flags.
- Advise students on strategic application positioning to maximize interview opportunities.

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Careers in Medicine

Choosing a medical specialty is one of the most significant decisions you'll make. **We can help.**



1. Understand Yourself

Self-exploration is essential to a satisfying specialty choice



2. Explore Options

Knowing about all career options that exist ensures well-informed decisions



3. Choose Your Specialty

Making a career choice that makes you happy is harder than you think



4. Prepare for Residency

Much is involved in a the transition from applying to arriving at residency

THE 4 PHASE MODEL ▸

<https://www.residencyexplorer.org/>

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Explore Specialties

Explore specialties, career paths, and training options to help you understand your options.



My Application Strategy

Build your application strategy by reviewing your likelihood of receiving an interview invitation and how well individual programs align with your interests, values, and training goals.



Explore Programs

Explore and compare individual programs within a chosen specialty to learn about their offerings, characteristics, and how competitive you may be based on historical data.



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Advisor Checklists and Do Lists

- <https://careersinmedicine.aamc.org/advisors-liaisons/checklists-and-do-lists>

ADVISING CHECKLIST

Third-Year Student

Goals |

- Begin refining specialty options
- Discuss decision-making strategies
- Begin designing fourth-year elective schedule
- Discuss preliminary preparations for residency application

Initial Advising Meeting

Advising Framework

Third-year students must integrate what they learn about themselves with what they learn about specialties through clinical rotations and extracurricular experiences. Help the student think through what they are looking for in a specialty and career, including which experiences may have been a good — or bad — fit as well as what other experiences or information they need to start narrowing their specialty options.

Provide contacts in the specialties they're considering. Help them gather more information, reality-check their options, and prepare for applying to residency. At the same time, ensure that they understand the timeline and process for applying for fourth-year electives.

Student Pre-Work

Prior to the advising meeting, have the student complete the Residency Preference Exercise (RPE) and a [Clinical Rotation Evaluation](#) for each of the clerkships they've completed so far.

For undecided students, have them complete the Specialty Indecision Scale (SIS) and write a personal statement for each specialty they're considering.

Items for Discussion

Academic progress

- Tell me about your biggest challenges so far this year.
- Tell me about the resources you're using to support your academic and personal needs.
- What rotations have you completed so far?
- Describe your performance so far in your clinical rotations.
- Tell me about the feedback you have received on your clinical evaluations.
- Tell me about your preparation for USMLE Step 2 and/or COMLEX Level 2.

Professional development review

- Tell me about the progress you've made toward meeting your professional development goals since our last meeting.

Decision-making: Specialty choice

- Which specialties are you considering?
- How have your rotations confirmed your interests?
- How would you characterize your competitiveness for the specialties you're considering?
 - Tell me about your extracurricular activities
 - Tell me about your mentors in each specialty
- What factors are most important to you in considering where you'd like to complete your training? (RPE)
 - Tell me about geographical or other restrictions you have that may impact your application strategy.

Decision-making: Undecided student

- What have you (dis)liked about your rotations? When did you feel most and least engaged?
 - providing inpatient versus outpatient care?
 - working with different age ranges?
 - working with one or more genders?
 - providing diagnostic-oriented care versus performing procedures?
 - dealing with breadth versus depth of patient problems?
 - providing short-term versus long-term or continuous care?
 - having direct versus indirect communication with patients?
 - shift work versus non-shift work
- What patterns or commonalities do you see, if any?
- What other information or experiences do you need that will help you narrow your options?
- What barriers or concerns do you have about choosing your specialty? (SIS)

Next Steps

List 1–3 professional development goals. These goals should meet the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) criteria:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Next Advising Meeting(s)

Advising Framework

About half-way through the third year, students must begin to build their fourth-year schedule, including identifying and applying for fourth-year electives. Using the framework above, continue to help the student think through what they are looking for in a specialty and career, including which experiences may have been a good — or bad — fit and what other experiences or information they need to start narrowing their specialty options. At the same time, ensure that they understand the timeline and process for applying for fourth-year electives.

Student Pre-Work

Prior to the advising meeting, have the student complete a [Clinical Rotation Evaluation](#) for each of the clerkships they've completed so far. If the student is really feeling "stuck," have them complete the Specialty Indecision Scale (SIS) and share their results with you or bring their results to the advising meeting. The students should also bring their curriculum vita (CV) to the meeting.

Items for Discussion

Scheduling

- What fourth-year electives would you like to pursue?
- How would you like to order your fourth-year rotations?

Implementation

- Tell me about your residency application strategy:
 - What factors are most important to you in considering where you'd like to complete residency training? (RPE)
 - What residency programs best meet your criteria?
- What questions do you have about the residency application and match process?
- Who will you ask to write letters of recommendation for you? What is your timeline for requesting these letters?
- What is your parallel plan if you fail to match into your preferred program or specialty?

Next Steps

List 1–3 professional development goals. These goals should meet the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) criteria:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____