Transitional Programs
PGY-1

These programs require a separate application in addition to your specialty application.

In 2019, Transitional Year (PGY-1 only) positions increased for the third year in a row; 1,252 were offered in 2019, an increase of 166 positions over 2018 and a 49.4 percent increase since 2016. (NRMP.org)

NRMP Data
Source: Results and Data: 2016 Advance Data Tables (NRMP publication)

Number of positions offered: 1,252
Number of positions filled by US Applicants: 62.9%

Letters of Recommendation

- Number of letters recommended: 3
- Chair/Chief’s letter required? No
- Number of letters from within the specialty N/A
- Number of letters from external institutions N/A

Personal Statements

Transitional programs are looking for thoughtful, sincere personal statements that relay enthusiasm for medicine. The statement should demonstrate attention to detail and organization. It should be clear that the applicant put effort into the statement. Write humble essays which contain information about interests and career plans. Program directors read the personal statement to make sure that the applicants are level headed and sincerely interested in learning about general patient care during their transitional year, so avoid taking unusual measures to be noticed, as it runs the risk of alienating some percentage of readers. A poorly written personal statement may lower your rank or prevent you from receiving an interview. A well-written personal statement is unlikely to raise your ranking but it will help you in receiving an interview and give you a chance to have a meaningful discussion during your interview.

In many cases, you do not need to write an entirely new personal statement for transitional applications. Often, it is enough to substitute the final paragraph of your advanced program personal statement with a paragraph that outlines enthusiasm for transitional training. A classic strategy for this paragraph is to outline the benefits of transitional training for your chosen career path.

Application Timing

- When do programs begin reviewing applications?
As soon as ERAS opens in September

- When do programs begin offering interviews? As soon as ERAS opens in September

Every program has a different process for reviewing applications, but many programs begin reviewing applications shortly after the applications become available. You can minimize the risks of being lost in an incomplete application pile by getting the bulk of your application completed by mid-September. Providing a cohesive application in which the personal statement, letters of recommendation, the CV and the interview are concordant regarding interests and career plans is to your advantage. Planning the content of these items in this manner provides programs with a strong sense of candidate professionalism and sophistication regarding career interests. You can help letter writers contribute to this concordance by asking prospective letter writers in person if they would write a letter and then, when the answer is in the affirmative, sit and discuss your career plans and accomplishments. Doing this over a final or draft personal statement and CV helps a lot.

Interview Advice

Scheduling

- It is not always possible to schedule interviews by geography to save money on travel, because students do not have control over when invitations are offered. Do not attempt to reschedule interviews multiple times. Always be polite in discussions with administrators at a program.

Interview day

- Be on time. Be polite. Display humble behavior (avoid anything that may be interpreted as arrogance). Prepare for your interviews by learning about the program through the web or other information materials. Ask questions that reflect you’ve studied the program (i.e. do not ask questions that are easily answered by the website or program materials). Do not talk poorly of your own institution as this is a “red flag” to the interviewer. Such students come across as either “not loyal” or extremely needy.

Post-Interview Advice

Is it common practice for applicants to contact their #1 program to let them know they are ranking them first?

- Yes, but it will not affect rank. It is not expected that you communicate about your intentions. It is unlikely to change your rank, but does make your application stand out in ranking discussions. If you are going to tell a program it is number one on your rank list, make sure that it is the only program you are saying this to (it is unprofessional to tell more than one program that you are ranking them first, and program directors do talk with each other).