

Dermatology Residency Program Director Information Regarding the Interview Process during the 2020-2021 Application Cycle

Released October 19, 2020

During the 2020-2021 application cycle for dermatology residency, nearly all programs will be conducting virtual-only interviews. Please refer to individual program websites for additional program-specific information. Given questions about the process for interview invite release and virtual interviews, we would like to provide additional information to help guide applicants through the unusual process this year.

Coordinated interview invite release

For the 2020-2021 residency application cycle, a number of dermatology residency programs will be participating in coordinated interview invite release. Participating programs will not release more interview invites than interview slots available. Programs not participating have also been asked to do the same, and have been asked to post date of interview invite release on their websites.

Timeline for participating programs only

November 24-November 25, 2020: first round of interview invites released

November 30, 10a ET: applicants begin scheduling interviews; must respond by December 1

December 2, 5p ET or later: additional interview invites released

Please refer to the [list of participating programs](#), which will be continuously updated. Importantly, most dermatology residency program directors are in favor of a coordinated interview invite release, however, each program has a different timeline for application review and interviews; therefore, programs not participating in the coordinated release this year should in no way be construed as unwilling to participate, but rather unable to given their specific timeline.

Interview formats and recruiting activities

There is no standardized virtual interview format for dermatology. Programs will use a variety of webconferencing platforms and formats that could include breakout rooms, personal meeting rooms, panel interviews (with more than 1 faculty or resident). Timing of interviews (schedule and interview length) will also vary by program, but in general dermatology programs hold multiple brief interviews for each candidate (10-20 minutes). Most programs have expressed that they will interview similar number of applicants this cycle compared to prior years. There is no coordination among programs with regards to types of interview questions (e.g. structured, behavioral, open-ended etc).

Additional activities, such as social activities, virtual tours, and/or meet-and-greets with residents will be scheduled by programs and may occur on the date of interview or at other times throughout the interview season. Information regarding logistics and formatting of interviews and other recruitment activities will be provided by each program at or near the time of interview invite.

Interview etiquette

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Dress code: Dress professionally, but also comfortably, given that you may be sitting in front of your screen for several hours. Historically, the majority of applicants have worn suits, but other professional attire is acceptable. We encourage applicants to consider other elements of their visual appearance (hairstyle, make-up, etc) to be consistent with what they would typically wear in clinic or other similar professional settings. Most importantly, you should feel like yourself on the day of the interview.

Virtual backgrounds: We recommend that applicants set up their computer/tablet and camera in an area that is well-lit with a fairly non-descript background (like a solid wall). Alternatively, a solid light-colored sheet can be draped behind your set-up. If you feel more comfortable using your school's standard virtual background or a simple virtual background, please do so, but recognize that virtual backgrounds can occasionally be distracting with movement. If a program would like you to use a specific background, it will be specified in the interview invite.

Equipment: We do not recommend that applicants purchase additional equipment for virtual interviews (such as lighting). There are simple inexpensive ways to set up your workstation to maximize light in the room, so do not feel obligated to purchase additional lighting. Please see included resources for tips on how to set up your computer or tablet and webcam for optimal lighting and placement. Using a phone is not recommended, but could be done if needed. Ensure that you have stable internet access during the virtual interviews, and inquire with your medical school or home dermatology program if you need a private space with reliable internet access to participate in interviews as many will be able to help.

Technical issues: We recommend that programs have interviewee phone numbers available so that if there is a connection issue on either end, the virtual interview can be conducted by phone either with or without the video component. Please ensure that you have provided an up-to-date phone number. Additionally, should you be concerned about aspects of the interview day with respect to technical or other anticipated issues, please reach out in advance to program coordinator(s); we all recognize this is a stressful process, particularly given all of the changes this year, and are here to ensure the process runs smoothly for everyone.

Additional tips (adapted from Dr. Ginette Okoye):

- Ensure your computer or tablet is fully charged prior to your interviews.
- Download the application to be used ahead of time and practice logging in (if possible) to avoid technical difficulties at the time of interview.
- Camera should be at eye level; use books or other props as needed.
- If possible, use an external microphone or headphones/earbuds, but this is not strictly necessary.
- Find a quiet space indoors where you will not be interrupted. As mentioned above, reach out to your home program or medical school if you need a space to participate in interviews.

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- If you use a virtual background (your school's, for example), make sure it is formatted well so the image is not distorted. Alternatively, use a blank neutral-colored wall or a solid neutral-colored sheet draped as a backdrop. Be mindful about what is showing on the screen behind or around you as it can be distracting and elicit additional questions.
- If possible, position your set up so that the lighting is in front of you and not behind you (makes your image darker).
- Get fully dressed for the interview as you would for an in-person interview, but ensure you are also comfortable.
- Do not have food or drink visible, but make sure to sip water before and in between interviews.
- Look at the camera as much as possible, rather than the screen, to simulate "eye contact" with the interviewer. Consider posting a photo of a family member or friend behind your camera at eye-level so that you can focus on that to simulate eye contact.
- Practice being still during your interviews, while maintaining good posture.
- Turn off your phone or put on "do not disturb." Move your phone out of sight if you will be tempted to look at it.
- If you take notes during the interview, let the interviewer know so they understand why you may look down during the interview. Use paper for notes instead of your phone. (It is also not necessary to take notes if you would prefer not to.)
- Be patient with programs if there are technology glitches or if faculty have a difficult time with the platform. This is new for everyone!
- Don't schedule other activities too close to interviews, just in case there are issues with timing on either side, so that you are not anxious should this occur.
- Practice with a friend, colleague, or family member to get feedback on your background environment, lighting, etc.
- Be mindful about programs' privacy as well – it is never appropriate to record a video of an interview, and this could disqualify you from a program. Do not post specific information about programs and their interviews on social media – remember, many program directors and residents are also on social media and will see everything you post.

Resources regarding virtual interviews:

[AAMC Preparation Guide for Applicants Participating in Virtual Interviews](#)

[4 Tips on Video Interviews for 2021 Residency Applicants](#)

[Residency, Med School Interviews Go Virtual: What to Know](#)