



Association of Professors of Dermatology
Residency Program Directors Section

Recommendations regarding away electives

December 14, 2022

Given recent changes to the residency application process to create a more sustainable and equitable process, the APD has considered options for limiting away dermatology electives for upcoming residency application cycles.

In alignment with recommendations from the Organization of Program Director Associations (OPDA), the APD considers away electives important for many medical students. These rotations afford medical students the opportunity to gain additional exposure to dermatology educational experiences and programs and to assess different learning environments. Away electives allow students to interact with faculty outside of their home institution, which can foster mentorship and other networking opportunities. In particular, for students without a dermatology residency program at their home institution, away electives provide a unique opportunity for dermatology clinical experience and connection with academic dermatology faculty.

For programs, away electives provide an opportunity for faculty to assess students' performance in clinical environments and among teams as well as to highlight the culture and learning environment of their program. These experiences can contribute to the holistic evaluation of candidates applying for residency. As such, it is generally advised that these electives are completed early in the fourth year of medical school, prior to interview invitations. The utility of later rotations varies among programs.

However, it is important to state that away electives are not required to receive an interview invite, nor do they guarantee an interview for a given program. It remains program-specific whether a formal interview offer is extended to all rotating students or whether interviews are conducted during an away elective. The APD recommends all programs are transparent with their policies regarding away electives and interviews.

Recommendations for students

Given the high costs associated with dermatology away electives and the continued potential for inequity that may impact outcomes of the dermatology residency match, the APD recommends the following guidelines to optimize dermatology exposure, education and evaluation for dermatology residency candidates in their fourth year of medical school:

- Most students should limit their experiences to up to 2 external "away" electives
- Students without a home dermatology program may consider completing up to 3 electives at external programs

Recommendations regarding away electives

Proposed December 9, 2022

Recommendations for programs

- Programs should consider funding opportunities for students that are underrepresented in medicine or from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - o These may come in the form of program-specific funded electives, organizational/institutional funding, or mentorship awards/grants (eg AAD Diversity Mentorship Program or SOCS Observership Grant). Faculty can enroll as potential mentors through these organizations.
- Faculty mentors are advised to counsel students to adhere to the recommendations above and to recognize that away electives are not required to match in dermatology and may not confer an advantage.