

ERAS Application

What Is ERAS? (Gus M Garmel, MD) ERAS = Electronic Residency Application Service
ERAS has its supporters and detractors, yet it appears likely to stay. Don't be afraid of ERAS; it is simply an electronic "postal center" for incoming and outgoing data that make up your application. Find out from your medical school how much time you will be given to input personal information and how this time is scheduled. Make sure you are available for your scheduled time. Pay attention to application deadlines, typographical, and grammatical errors.

ERAS sounds pretty confusing. Can I trust it? (Peter DeBlieux, MD; Sam Keim, MD; Carey Chisholm, MD) Overall EM program directors have been pleased with most features of ERAS, and have not had significant technical problems. The workstation information for the 2000 match will be available at the ERAS web site (<http://www.aamc.org/about/progemph/eras/start.htm>) around the end of June. You will be given the second part (your common application form) from the Dean's office.

What components comprise the ERAS application? (Gus M Garmel, MD) Medical school honors/awards – include AOA and miscellaneous student awards or honors
Work experience
Volunteer experience
Research experience
Publications (CORD web site: bibliographic citation guidelines for EM residency applicants)
Language fluency (other than English)
Hobbies & interests
Other accomplishments – try not to reply "none" for any of these categories
Personal statement – This is your chance to capture the reviewer's interest with your personal "story" of how you became interested in EM, how and where you grew up, why you are interested in a particular geographic region, or other personal information that might be distinguishing. This also serves as your writing sample. It should be fluid, well-written, and without errors. Don't personalize it for one specific program, as other programs might receive this 'personalized' personal statement.
CV – much of this information may be found throughout your application
Dean's letter – many schools give students the opportunity to review its content for accuracy
Medical school transcripts – If possible, consider including or omitting undergraduate transcripts if you went to the same undergraduate and medical schools.
Board scores
Letters of recommendation – Usually 3 or 4 letters are preferred, from EM faculty, non-EM faculty, and/or faculty that know you well. EM faculty will likely use the Standardized Letter of Recommendation (SLOR). Make certain that your SLORs, LORs, and EM rotation evaluations have been received and reviewed. Consider bringing additional copies of each to distribute during your interview in the event they were not received.
Certification – confirms that the information is true and no material omissions have been made

ERAS Made Easy (Pam Dyne, MD) The Electronic Residency Application Service, (ERAS), is the method by which application to emergency medicine residency is accomplished. ERAS was developed by the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) to make the process of application to residency more efficient. The service uses the Internet for rapid delivery of residency applications, medical school transcripts, Dean's Letters and faculty recommendations from you and your school to program directors. It also allows your USMLE transcript to be transmitted at your request. ERAS was implemented for Emergency Medicine residency programs during the 1997-98 application cycle and has revolutionized the way in which information is transmitted and received. ERAS is easy to use but it is important for you to be well informed about the process. The ERAS web page includes a manual with detailed instructions outlining the entire process. You will want to read the manual and refer to it throughout the process.

The ERAS system includes three major components: MyERAS: This is the web-based residency applicant work area. Applicants complete an ERAS application, select programs, and assign supporting documents on-line. Dean's Workstation (DWS): The Dean's office scans each student's transcript, Dean's Letter, letters of recommendation, and photo and transmits the documents via the Internet to the ERAS PostOffice. These documents are then electronically distributed via the PostOffice to the programs that you have designated as recipients. Program Director's Workstation (PDWS): Residency programs download documents from the ERAS PostOffice into the ERAS Program Director's Workstation. PDWS software automatically sorts and directs each document to the correct applicant's file folder. Program Directors use the PDWS software to review and print applicant files. E-mail messages can be sent to applicants for reminders of incomplete file status, interview information, etc.

Procedures and timelines: Research programs and contact them for information. Make careful note of individual program requirements and deadlines. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure compliance. Contact your Dean's office. The Dean's office will provide you with processing instructions and a token (special code necessary for ERAS access). Schools will begin to generate and distribute ERAS tokens to applicants in early July. You will need this number to register with MyERAS. You can use any computer with access to the Internet to complete your application and to work within the ERAS system. One of the following browsers is required: Netscape 4.74, Internet Explorer version 5, AOL 5.0 or Opera 5.0, or higher. The system is PC and Mac-compatible. Your application, personal statement, and program selections are transmitted directly from MyERAS to the ERAS PostOffice. Your designated Dean's office transmits your other application materials, (ie. supporting documents). It is highly recommended that you obtain an e-mail address, as programs are likely to send you important information via e-mail. Register with MyERAS. Point your web browser to

www.myeras.aamc.org . You will need the token number that your dean's office provides to register and begin the application process. Steps in the process include: creating a profile, completing a common application form, working with supporting documents, selecting and applying to programs, assigning documents to specific programs, and finally, sending your application to programs. The system also allows for transmission of your USMLE transcript. A tracking system allows you to check the status of your ERAS application materials.

Fees: ERAS is free to the programs and the medical school Dean's offices. The fee for applicants to use ERAS is based on the number of programs selected for application. ERAS 2002 fees were \$60 for up to 10 programs; for 11-20 programs they were \$6 each, 21-30 programs \$12 each, above 30 programs \$25 each. National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) charges a flat \$50 fee to U.S. and Canadian applicants who request transmission of scores to programs, regardless of the number of transcripts requested. The NBME fee is included on your invoice and collected by AAMC. Prior to receiving an ERAS Token, International Medical Graduates (IMGs) are charged a fee of \$75, payable to ECFMG. This ECFMG Application Fee includes preparation and transmission of the ECFMG Status Report to all programs. ECFMG will provide a USMLE transcript for \$50, regardless of the number of transcripts transmitted.

Important Reminders About ERAS: Contact your Dean's office to check their schedule for ERAS processing. Don't expect your Dean's office to attach or transmit your files at the last minute. Processing may take a week or longer. Problems with transmissions could cause you to miss important deadlines so leave extra time around important deadlines. It is your responsibility to be sure that application materials are transmitted to programs before their deadline. An active e-mail address is essential so programs can contact you for information and invitations to interview. It is your responsibility to follow up with letter writers and to confirm that letters of recommendation reach your dean's office in time to meet program deadlines. Confirm that all programs that you are applying to participate in ERAS and that you understand and meet their requirements. Be sure to keep information provided in the "My Profile" section of the ERAS program current. In particular, contact numbers and addresses should be updated if they change to allow programs to contact you. Use the applicant document tracking system to check that documents are uploaded by your dean's office and downloaded by each program.

Special cases: If you have already graduated from a U.S. medical school, your application will be through the medical school from which you graduated. You will need to instruct the people writing letters of recommendation to send them to your old school's Dean's office. Contact your old school for further information. Graduates from foreign medical schools need to contact the ECFMG for their application materials and eligibility requirements. More information is available

at <http://www.ecfmg.org/erasinfo.htm> . Canadian medical students who wish to apply to U.S. residency programs must contact the Canadian Resident Matching Service for ERAS processing information (phone: 613-237-0075).

Good luck! A wealth of information on all aspects of ERAS is available at <http://www.aamc.org/eras> , complete with the user's manual, frequently asked questions and an email help service. Your Dean's office can add additional support.

When should I have my application ready? (Peter DeBlieux, MD; Sam Keim, MD; Carey Chisholm, MD) Your ERAS disk should be submitted by the 3rd week of September. Visit the ERAS site early (e.g. NOW) for details about the mechanics of the application process. Their web site is located at (<http://www.aamc.org/about/progemph/eras/start.htm>) . The new workstation for the 2000 match will not be available until late June. Dean's letters come out the first part of November...some AOA caliber students will begin to receive invitations before then. Most invitations will come between 7 November and 21 November, with another 20% going into the second week of December. Try to batch interviews in order to make geographic circuits and take advantage of Saturday layovers if flying. Get your car services. Allow extra time for travel due to inclement weather (that 5-hour drive could become an 8-hour "white knuckle special". Some locations will provide a place to stay, while others can make recommendations. Staying with residents is a double-edged sword; the person may not be truly representative of the majority of the program's residents. Also, you may not "click" and this may harm your chances. Ideally, arrive in time to see some of the city, and observe in the ED. Review the materials the program has provided to you, and know this information well. Prepare a list of "standard" questions and areas that you wish to investigate at every program, along with specific questions for that program. Write down answers as you go through the day. Your faculty advisor and current EM residents can be helpful in identifying key areas to investigate. Arrive for your interview ON TIME! As soon as possible after you leave that site, write down (or better yet, dictate into a tape recorder while you're driving) your overall impression and other items to investigate. Also be certain to get the names (spelling and title) of the folks that you spent time with (business card from faculty-- some programs provide you with a list). Be sure to interact with some residents (beware of the program that hides them away). I advocate sending a follow-up thank-you note about 1-2 weeks after the interview, although some programs may not wish to receive them (the secretary is a good resource to find out their preferences).

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ERAS: Personal Statement Is there any easy way around the "personal statement"?

(Peter DeBlieux, MD; Sam Keim, MD; Carey Chisholm, MD) Write this over a one-month time period. Draft it, leave it, then return and repeat the process. Share with others for critique, including your faculty advisor. Avoid small font (use 12 point). What strengths will you bring to the residency? Why do you think that you are a good career match? One page maximum. Avoid being bland or overly creative. Type, do not hand write! NO "SPELING" OR "GRAMER" ERRORS! ERAS does not have a spell check for the common application form, although your personal statement is importable as an ASCII file (non-formatted). To do this write your personal statement using your standard word processing program, spell check it, and then save as an ASCII file.

Pitfalls in writing your personal statement (Gus M Garmel, MD) Don't use terms in your personal statement like Emergency Room, ER Doc, ER Medicine, ER Physician, ER Resident, or Triage Doctor. These terms upset some individuals, particularly those with early roles in the development and establishment of our specialty. Emergency Medicine does not occur in a "room," but is much broader in scope. You will appear better informed about our specialty if you

refer to it using the terms Emergency Medicine, Emergency Department (ED), Emergency Medicine Physician, Emergency Medicine Specialist, Emergency Medicine Residency, and Emergency Medicine Resident.

ERAS: CV What about my "CV"? (Peter DeBlieux, MD; Sam Keim, MD; Carey Chisholm, MD) ERAS has taken away the traditional CV venue. However, you need to prepare a CV to present to any faculty who are writing letters of recommendation for you (I recommend that you prepare a packet containing your CV, personal statement, over letter, USMLE score(s) and latest transcript). Organize the information so that it is easy to find and flows logically. Provide as much detail as you feel comfortable. DO NOT pad your CV (or related sections of ERAS)!!! Many of us will inquire about specific activities that are listed (e.g. "describe your involvement with the homeless shelter" or "where do you go SCUBA diving"). Note proper terminology for stages of research publications (in preparation, submitted, in revision, in press). NEVER misrepresent data in your application! You may be expected to present copies of publications at the time of your interview. I personally recommend that you include a section in your application about personal interests. Yours may click with the program director's. A CV may be attached as one of your letters through ERAS. The program director also has the option to display the information you have entered in the ERAS "common application form" in a CV format. You may view this by selecting that option from the print menu when you have completed the ERAS Application.

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ERAS: Residency Programs At how many programs should I apply to and interview?

(Peter DeBlieux, MD; Sam Keim, MD; Carey Chisholm, MD) This depends on the number of variables; how academically competitive you are as a student, how competitive are the programs you are applying to, how many programs accept you for an interview, and how much exposure you've had to EM. I would advocate interviewing at a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 to 15 programs depending on the variables listed. This may require an application to 20 or more programs to secure the necessary number of interviews. For example, as a student in the top third of your graduating class of a 220 on the USMLE Steps I & II you may be a competitive candidate to many programs. If you apply to ten programs and accept interviews at three of the most competitive programs, there is a distinct possibility that you may not match to any program. See enough programs to be certain that you are an informed consumer, regardless of your exposure to EM. Utilize web sites to explore programs in depth, past the paper brochures. Time and money are issues, although securing the best-fit program is critical, and the extra spent now will be water under the bridge 10 years from now. Don't skimp!