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Section A: Guidelines for Residency Selection

The PGME Office strongly recommends that residency programs adopt best practices in resident application and selection as described in the article "*Identifying and Promoting Best Practices in Residency Application and Selection (BPAS) in a Complex Academic Health Network*". BPAS has been endorsed by the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC) and the postgraduate offices across Canada. More information about BPAS can be found in **Appendix A.**

A1: General Principles

1. Residency selection is a responsibility of each residency program and should be based on pre-defined goals for the residency program and discipline.

2. Each postgraduate training program will establish its own processes and procedures for the selection of residents consistent with the principles and guidelines outlined in this policy.

3. Selection criteria and processes should:
   - Reflect a balance of CanMEDS/ CanMEDS-FM competencies
   - Promote inclusive excellence across a diverse population of applicants
   - Be objective, fair and transparent to all applicants
   - Be free of bias and discrimination
   - Respect the obligation to provide for reasonable accommodation needs where appropriate.

4. It is highly recommended that a designated committee oversee the residency selection process from file review to final ranking and consist of faculty assessors from all major training sites, as appropriate. Involvement of residents in the selection process is recommended.

5. The process for file review, interviews and final ranking of candidates must be clear and transparent to all applicants, assessors and members of the Residency Program Committee.

6. Criteria used for filtering, selection for interview and ranking must be clearly defined and explicitly stated on program and CaRMS websites (as applicable).

7. All assessors must be trained in the selection process in which they are involved.

8. The selection process must not require applicants to have completed electives exclusively in a particular discipline and/or an elective at McMaster University.

9. All residency programs and the PGME office must respect published national dates and deadlines. In cases where selection does not involve the CaRMS match (e.g. selection of trainees for certain subspecialty programs, selection of internationally sponsored trainees), programs and the PGME office must respect provincial or national timelines for the timing of offers, where applicable.

10. Selection processes for positions based at Regional Campuses and/or Clinical Education Campuses must adhere to the following principles:

    a. The selection process must occur in collaboration with the regional educational leadership, faculty and residents.
    b. The selection criteria must clearly indicate any specific criteria for admission to residency positions based at regional sites.
    c. Candidates must meet the selection criteria for the home program and the regionals sites.
    d. Confidentiality must be maintained if residents have applied to more than one site within a discipline as not to potentially bias selection decisions.

A2: File Review

11. The Residency Program Committee (or sub-committee) must determine the selection criteria and process for file review. Faculty file reviewers must receive guidance and instruction on the criteria to be used and the process for determining eligibility for interviews.

12. There must be defined criteria for all applicant streams (i.e. CMG, IMG, externally-sponsored residents).

13. Criteria used for initial filtering of applications must be transparent to candidates.

14. Programs must communicate the criteria for selection in the program description on the CaRMS website and on the program's own website.

15. Programs may consider a range of criteria in making their selection decisions for interviews including but not limited to: Medical School Performance Report (MSPR), scores on standardized tests, interest in and aptitude for the discipline, reference letter, experience in research or other scholarly activities, extracurricular activities, and personal qualities.

16. Individual file reviews should be done independently by more than one assessor.

17. Interviews for candidates in CaRMS matches must be offered through the CaRMS Interview Portal.

A3: Interview

18. The interview process and questions must be standardised across all candidates and assessors within each program.

19. During the interview process, multiple independent objective assessments, when used, result in the most reliable and consistent applicant rankings.

20. All postgraduate training programs must abide by guidelines published by CaRMS. Interviews should be free of intimidation and cannot include personal questions about family, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, age, finances, and cannot include questions regarding other applications or anticipated ranking of programs.

    Refer to the CaRMS website for [Interview Guidelines for Programs](#):
    - General match participation principles
    - Applicant rights
    - Preparing for interviews
    - Interview tips
    - Sample questions (i) Appropriate Questions (ii) Inappropriate Questions

    The Human Rights and Equity Services office of the University can review standardized interview questions. They can be reached at extension 27581 or at equity@mcmaster.ca.

A4: Ranking

21. Ranking decisions made after the interview process must be transparent and follow pre-defined criteria, including the weighting used for individual components of assessment.

    22. Candidates must be ranked in the appropriate order based on the assessment and not based on the perception of where the candidate will rank the program.

Section B: Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

23. All individuals participating in the selection process must respect and maintain the confidentiality of applicant files, discussion and decisions related to the selection process.

24. Individuals involved in the selection process must declare any potential conflict of interest to the Program Director or delegate.

25. Faculty who have supplied a reference letter for the candidate must not participate in the discussion of the candidate during the selection process.

Section C: Guidelines for Retention of Application Files

The CaRMS-AFMC service contract specifies that the CaRMS application information can only be used and retained by universities for the purpose in which it was intended and collected (i.e. selecting applicants for the application and matching process). If a resident is selected for a residency position at McMaster, their CaRMS application information will become a part of their University registration file, which will be retained by the University permanently.
All other CaRMS applications (i.e. applicants who were not selected for an interview or applicants not selected after interview) must be destroyed immediately post match. This includes any printed, saved files (computer based), or any other tool used to share and save CaRMS application documents (shared drives, drop boxes, etc.). All documents must be disposed of through a secure manner (i.e. confidential waste if printed, deleted from all files and deleted folders on a computer, shared drive, etc.).

Programs are advised to retain all formal documents (i.e. templated scoring forms used by assessors, etc.) created during the selection process by the program for purposes of assessment, selection and decision for all applicants including those not selected for a residency position for a period of 12 months. After one year (date of decision), the documentation must be destroyed (for all non matched applicants) unless there is a specific legal reason why the program information must be retained (i.e. it is relevant for the purposes of anticipated or ongoing litigation) in a secure manner (i.e. confidential waste if printed, deleted from all files and deleted folders on a computer, shared drive, etc.). Informal notes made during the process of file review, interview and ranking should be disposed of immediately after the ranking list is submitted to CaRMS and/or the selection process is completed.

Important Notes:
i) All CaRMS applications are kept by CaRMS indefinitely.
ii) Application files can only be used for the reason they were collected and may not be used for any other purposes.

Appendix A - Best Practices in Application and Selection (BPAS)

Transparency
1. Programs must define the goals of their selection processes and explicitly relate these to overall program goals.
2. Programs should define explicitly in which parts of the application/interview process relevant attributes will be assessed.
3. Programs should explicitly and publicly state the processes and metrics they use to filter and rank candidates, including on program and CaRMS websites.
4. Programs should maintain records that will clearly demonstrate adherence to process (for example, for audit purposes).
5. If programs systematically use information other than that contained in application files and interviews, this must be consistent, fair and transparent for all applicants.
6. Programs using such information must have a process to investigate and validate such information prior to considering it for selection processes.
7. Programs should have a specific practice regarding retention and protection of records that is consistent with locally applicable policy, regulations and laws.

Fairness
8. Each component (e.g. application file documents, interview performance, etc.) of the candidate's application should be assessed independently on its own merits, using information contained only in that component.
9. Programs must abide by the Guidelines for management of Conflict of Interest in Admissions decisions.

Selection Criteria
10. Programs must establish a comprehensive set of program-specific criteria that will allow thorough assessment of all candidates.
11. Selection criteria must include elements specific to each specialty that are validated to predict success in that field (for example, hand-eye coordination for procedural disciplines).

Process
12. Criteria, instruments, interviews and assessment/ranking systems must be standardized across applicants and assessors within each program.
13. Assessments should be based on demonstrable skills or previous behaviours, both of which are known to be predictive of future behaviours.
14. Applicant assessment should be based on multiple independent samples and not on the opinion of a single assessor.

15.   Programs should regularly assess the outcomes of their process to determine if program goals and BPAS principles (e.g. Diversity) are being met.

Assessors
16.   Selection teams must be comprised of individuals with a breadth of perspectives that reflect program goals.
17.   Assessors must be trained in all aspects of the process relevant to their contribution, including the program goals, selection process, assessment criteria, and assessment/ranking systems.

Assessment Instruments
18.   Programs must strive to incorporate objective assessment strategies proven to assess relevant criteria.

Knowledge Translation
19.   Best practices should be shared among different specialties and programs.
20.   Innovations in Application and Selection should be done in a scholarly manner that will allow eventual peer-reviewed dissemination.

Ranking
21.   Programs must have a process to receive (and, when appropriate, investigate, validate and then produce for consideration to the selection committee) information from any source that alleges improper behaviour of candidates.
22.   Programs should establish clear criteria for determining 'do not rank' status.
23.   Programs should rank candidates in the appropriate order based on assessment and not based on whom committee members think will rank the program highly.
24.   Ranking must be done using pre-defined and transparent processes.

Additional Resources - CaRMS Website – Best Practices in Application Selection