

Canadian Medical Students and the US Match:

If you are a Canadian Medical Graduate and would like to take part in the US Match you will need to learn about the process, the timelines, and the visa requirements. In 2016, according to CaRMS match statistics, 28 Canadian Medical Graduates (CMGs) applied to the US match. Of these, 50% matched, however 2 out of 14 were current year graduates, while the remainder were CMG graduates from prior years or VISA graduates. Historically, successful applicants for the US match have come from McGill or Toronto, likely owing to their larger pool of US students originating from the US.

Organization of the US match:

In the US, a large number of organizations are involved in the residency match:

FREIDA: a searchable database of all residency programs that will be offering positions in the current match year with detailed program information

ERAS (Electronic Residency Application Service): the agency that hosts applicant electronic residency applications and distributes them, along with attached supporting documentation, to NRMP-participating residency programs.

NRMP (National Resident Matching Program): the agency that receives applicant rank order lists and actually runs the match for most US residency positions

SFMatch (San Francisco Matching Program): the application agency and matching service for US residency positions in Child Neurology and Ophthalmology

AUA (American Urological Association): the application agency and matching service for US residency positions in Urology

CaRMS (Canadian Resident Matching Service): You will still need to apply to CaRMS as it serves as your "designated Dean's Office" for ERAS, providing you with an ERAS registration token and processing all of your residency application supporting documentation to the ERAS system

Application and Documents preparation:

In applying for the US match, you will need to first register for CaRMS. You will then need to apply for the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) through the CaRMS Online link. While ERAS is a separate system, CaRMS acts as the Dean's office for Canadian Medical Graduates and is able to forward the MSPR and Transcripts from your medical school to ERAS. Even though CaRMS will process your documents, you will need to submit two separate documents (one specified for

CaRMs and on specified CaRMS for ERAS). Please see the following link for more details: <http://www.carms.ca/en/residency/eras/>

Timelines:

You may participate in both the US and Canadian Match and submit a Rank Order List to both matches. It is said that the Canadian match occurs **before** (>95% of the time) the ERAS /NRMP match. CaRMS always occurs **after** the AUA and SFMatch. The match that runs first always takes precedence and you are legally bound to that program. You will automatically be withdrawn from the subsequent match if you are matched elsewhere first. In the most common situation of applying for CaRMs and the US Match (ERAS/NRMP), you will be withdrawn from the US Match if you match in the first iteration of CaRMs. If you fail to match to the first iteration of CaRMS and you match to the US match, you will be withdrawn from accessing second iteration Canadian match. If you are not successful in matching in either the Canadian or the US first iteration, you will still be able access the second iteration matches. The second iteration match in the US is the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) aka *Scramble* that occurs before the second iteration of the Canadian match.

CaRMS has instituted a three-week “national interview period” that most Canadian programs respect, usually near the end of January/beginning of February; your interviews will be concentrated during that period. The US application and interview process occurs **earlier** than for CaRMS (even though the matching process occurs later). Therefore you will need to plan your electives early to ensure you get appropriate letters of recommendation early. US interviews may occur as early as September. US interviews often occur on a rolling basis, meaning there is no set interview period.

Keep in mind, you may be limited in how many programs you apply to as you may have difficulty with obtaining sufficient time in your schedule to travel for interviews in the US. You must read the ERAS program descriptions carefully, as application deadlines and document requirements vary among programs. A list of the programs currently involved in the US match can be found at: <https://services.aamc.org/eras/erasstats/par/>.

USMLE:

Step 1 of the USMLE is required for matching to a residency in the US. Step 1 is normally taken after the 1st or 2nd year medical school and is a computerized multiple-choice test on the basic sciences. You will need to find time to study and write this exam, usually in the summer of 1st or 2nd year). The examination scores are very important for your matching success in the US. Many schools have Step 1 cut offs for their candidates to obtain an interview.

Step 2 is written after 4th year medical school and is taken in 2 separate parts. Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) is the computerized multiple-choice part and Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) is a pass-fail examination that assesses clinical skills in history taking and performing physical examinations on standardized patients. Step 3 is normally taken after 1st year of residency and is a 2-day examination that is conducted similarly to the examinations in Step 2.

Visa requirements:

A Canadian medical graduate accepted in the US match will generally need to apply for a J-1 visa, exchange visitor visa. This is a temporary training visa. And there is a requirement to return to Canada after your training for a period of 2 years. Keep in mind that US residencies are often shorter than their Canadian counterparts, which means that you may not be eligible to practice in Canada directly and may need to do additional residency training in Canada before being licensed. You can obtain a J-1 visa extension and pursue additional training / fellowship in the US which may then allow you to be eligible for licensure in Canada. The J-1 Visa is sponsored by the home country and can be a lengthy process to obtain, so begin inquiring early.

An H1B visa is a permanent license that one can obtain if you have passed all of the USMLE steps. Keep in mind that you will not be eligible to write USMLE Steps 2 and 3 until after you have graduated from medical school. Hence the H1b visa is not an option for current year medical graduates.

If your spouse is a US citizen, you may have other options available to you. If you are an American or Dual citizen, you will not need to worry obtaining visa at all. Do learn about the requirements specific for your situation.

More Questions:

Please contact us at the Learner Wellness Center if you have any further questions. Other useful resources include contacts at CaRMs (eras@carms.ca) and ERAS (eras-support@ecfm.org).

References:

CARMS section on the US Match: <http://www.carms.ca/en/residency/eras/>

NRMP: <http://www.nrmp.org>

Health Canada – J1 Visa: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/hhr-rhs/postgrad-postdoc/index-eng.php>