

# Letter Writers Psychiatry SLOR – Tips and Tricks for Match 2026

The ADMSEP Task Force has produced a streamlined version of the Psychiatry Standardized Letter of Recommendation (SLOR) based on feedback from letter writers, letter readers, and students. Like its predecessor, this Psychiatry SLOR encourages letter writers to focus on specific aspects of an applicant's qualities, characteristics and readiness for residency training. *The SLOR's intent is to elicit applicant information felt most important in surveys of AADPRT and ADMSEP membership (Russo, 2022).*

## What's in this SLOR?

Condensed sections: the feedback we received noted that the old form was “hard to read” and “hard to follow.” This condensed format will improve flow and overall readability.

Word document format: this should allow letter writers to transfer onto institutional letterhead and provide a wet signature if they desire before uploading in pdf form to ERAS.

## How is a Standardized Letter of Recommendation (SLOR) different from a Standardized Letter of Evaluation (SLOE)?

A standardized letter of recommendation is intended to highlight specific student strengths within a uniform template. A standardized letter of evaluation is intended to evaluate students compared to peers and may be more comprehensive and less strength focused.

## Is the SLOR mandatory for psychiatry?

While the SLOR is not mandatory, applicants are encouraged to identify one letter writer to use the SLOR template. The template is designed to ensure the letter writer is commenting on attributes most important to program directors (Russo, 2022). The SLOR prompts were generated directly from a survey for program directors in AADPRT and medical student educators in ADMSEP.

## Why are there character limits?

The character limits were designed to ensure letter writers stay concise and all students receive the same amount of content. If needed, you may highlight the section of the document you are working on and see how many characters you have currently included.

## Are other specialties using standardized letters of recommendation?

Yes. While Emergency Medicine was the first to standardize their letters of recommendation in the 1990s, many other specialties are following suit. This includes dermatology, internal medicine, med-peds, neurological surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, orthopedic surgery, plastic surgery, and diagnostic radiology.

In addition, the AAMC's *Coalition for Physician Accountability's Undergraduate Medical Education-Graduate Medical Education Review Committee (UGRC)* publication recommended that “Structured Evaluative Letters (SELs) should replace all Letters of

Recommendation (LORs) as a universal tool in the residency program application process.” The current SLOR process will help us move towards this goal.

### **Will the SLOR take longer to write?**

Initially, writing letters in the SLOR format may have a learning curve. With increased experience using the SLOR, the new format will not require additional time. One goal of the SLOR is to prompt the letter writer to think more clearly about each candidate’s specific strengths and goals, making this input more meaningful.

### **Will you still be collecting feedback on this new SLOR? Is ongoing evaluation continuing to determine the outcomes of SLOR use?**

Yes. We continue to collect feedback on SLOR effectiveness and usability from students, letter writers, and residency program directors, and have described this feedback in *Academic Psychiatry* (Raml, 2024). Please sign up if you would be willing to provide feedback: <https://forms.office.com/r/RZKDHWu15j?origin=lprLink>. The SLOR will continue to be revised, and like Emergency Medicine and other specialties, if we refine our SLOR every year based on feedback, it will increasingly become a more meaningful and helpful part of the application.

Russo, R. A., Hameed, U., Ibrahim, Y., Joshi, A., Kerlek, A. J., Klapheke, M., Kovach, J. G., Raml, D. M., Schatte, D., Thomas, L. A., & Rakofsky, J. J. (2022). Psychiatry Residency Directors' Attitudes Toward and Uses of the Medical Student Performance Evaluation and Other Potential Tools for Residency Selection. *Academic psychiatry: the journal of the American Association of Directors of Psychiatric Residency Training and the Association for Academic Psychiatry*, 46(5), 622–626. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40596-022-01636-x>

Coalition for Physician Accountability. The coalition for physician accountability’s undergraduate medical education-graduate medical education review committee (UGRC): recommendations for comprehensive improvement of the UME-GME transition. <https://physicianaccountability.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/UGRC-Coalition-Report-FINAL.pdf>. Last accessed 22 May 2024.

Raml, D., Kerlek, A., Russo, R. *et al.* The Pilot of the Psychiatry Standardized Letter of Recommendation in the 2024 Match. *Acad Psychiatry* 48, 568–569 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40596-024-02037-y>