

Students Applying to Psychiatry: 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).*

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.

Why use a SLOR?

The template is designed to ensure your SLOR letter writer is commenting on attributes most important to program directors (Russo, 2022). There is a wide variance in letter quality and relevant information in traditional letters of recommendation (TLOR). The SLOR will ensure key information is communicated succinctly to residency program directors. Additionally, some residency programs are requesting that one letter of recommendation be in SLOR format.

Who should I have write a SLOR?

SLOR section prompts: *“Provide a brief description of your relationship to the applicant: clinical supervisor (observership, clerkship, elective, Sub-I) vs. research mentor; the duration of time together; level of oversight (one-on-one each day vs. team-based with resident supervision); volume of patient care if relevant.”*

As such, you will want to select a letter writer with whom you have had significant time and experience. While this would be recommended for all your letter writers, a strong relationship with your SLOR letter writer will be particularly highlighted in this format.

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 *The 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 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/RZKDHUu15j?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>