Match: Which specialties place most residents through SOAP

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Brendan Murphy
Senior News Writer

For eligible unmatched applicants to residency programs, the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) can be a chance to land a residency position that went unfilled.

On the Friday before Match Week, all Main Residency Match applicants receive an email notification of their SOAP eligibility. In 2022, SOAP will take place March 14–17, and as was the case in 2021, there will be an added fourth round of SOAP to account for any possible disruptions to the Match caused by the process being largely virtual.

SOAP is a service of the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP). Data obtained from the NRMP offers insight on which specialties offered positions and which applicant types found success through the SOAP process.

FREIDA™, the AMA Residency & Fellowship Database® (registration required), enables unmatched students to research residencies from more than 12,000 programs both during and following SOAP. Access is free, but extra benefits—such as such as a dashboard that helps users save, rank and keep notes on each program—are available to AMA members.

Learn how veterans of the Match recommend that students approach SOAP.

Categorical positions in SOAP

Categorical positions—a full-length residency training position—didn’t make up the bulk of those offered or filled through the SOAP process last year, but there were several hundred full-length training positions filled.

The most common categorical specialties filled through SOAP were:

URL: https://www.ama-assn.org/residents-students/match/match-which-specialties-place-most-residents-through-soap

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Internal medicine—368.
Family medicine—340.
Pediatrics—38.
Pathology—17.
Neurology—13.

Just over half of SOAP positions were PGY-1 only—meaning that those applicants will have to match with advanced postgraduate year 2 (PGY-2) position during SOAP or participate in the Match the following year for a PGY-2 position.

Those residents will begin their training by spending a year in a more general discipline before entering their chosen specialty in year two of residency. The most common PGY-1 (only) positions were preliminary surgery and preliminary medicine. There are relatively few PGY-2 positions typically available in SOAP.

Read about the three things you should do if you don’t match after SOAP.

**Applicant types**

Most years, the applicant breakdown in SOAP leans heavily toward international medical graduates (IMGs), and 2021 was no different.

The most common applicant participant by type included:

- Non-U.S. citizen IMGs—5,876.
- U.S. citizen IMGs—3,700.
- Senior students at U.S. allopathic medical schools—2,125.
- Senior students from U.S. osteopathic medical schools—964.
- Previous graduate of U.S. allopathic medical schools—999.
- Previous graduate of U.S. osteopathic medical schools—428.

In total, 1,773 positions were filled through SOAP. Of those positions, U.S. allopathic seniors accepted about half of them, osteopathic medical school seniors accepted 27%, and IMGs as a group accepted 18%.

During SOAP, offers are extended to students from participating programs in a series of rounds. In 2021, there were four SOAP rounds:

- In the first round, 1,113 positions were accepted.
In the second round, 426 positions were accepted.  
In the third round, 192 positions were accepted.  
In the fourth round, four positions accepted.

At the end of SOAP, 119 positions remained unfilled.