

PROPOSAL FOR A SECOND MATCH

Committee on the Unmatched Applicant:

From 1997 – 1999, an NRMP Committee on the Unmatched Applicant discussed a wide range of issues but focused primarily on the disorganization that characterizes the “scramble” for positions by applicants who do not obtain PGY-1 positions through the Main Residency Match. Of particular concern was the pressure to make uninformed decisions during the chaotic 24-hour period after applicants learned whether they had matched.

Several questions were identified as requiring attention in constructing a scenario for a second match:

- Are the issues the same for U.S. seniors and independent applicants?
- How would a second match be financed?
- How much additional time would be required?
- Would additional time be taken from the interview time for applicants or from the period between the current Match Day and July 1?
- What would matched applicants and filled programs do between the first and second matches?
- What would be the disposition of applicants who did not match in the first or second matches?

During its tenure, the Committee sought and received comments from medical schools, institutions, and programs. Those comments were generally favorable, within certain articulated constraints:

- Uniform rules of participation should be applied to U.S. medical school seniors and independent applicants.
- An effective and fair system should be in place for match violations.
- The calendar should not reduce the amount of time available for applicant interviews.
- Match Day should be no later than March 31/April 1.

The Committee also identified several principles essential to the conduct of a second match:

- A second match is not a new match, but rather the second phase of the same match with all agreements and contracts in place.
- Results from the first phase would not be released; all results would be released after the second phase.
- All unmatched applicants and unfilled programs would be required to participate but could choose not to submit a rank order list (ROL).

- In-person interviews would be discouraged.
- Reverted slots would return to the original program and, if unfilled, would follow the original reversion scheme.
- All options would remain available: couples, reversions, PGY-2 positions.
- There would be no third phase

Changes Since 1999:

Several major changes have occurred since the Committee last met. Most notably, the web-based Registration, Ranking, and Results (R3) System has been fully implemented, eliminating paper-based processing of match information, allowing simultaneous notification to applicants and programs of match results and unfilled positions, and ensuring that only NRMP registrants have access to Match Week information. In addition:

- The quota change deadline was separated from the rank order list deadline so that programs now finalize the number of positions to be offered in the Match by the end of January.
- The rank order list deadline was moved one week later to the third week of February.
- Match Day was moved from Wednesday to Thursday, adding an additional 24 hours to the Scramble.
- A new dynamic unfilled programs list provides applicants with real-time access to only those positions that remain available.
- Using ERAS, applicants can send multiple applications during the Scramble.
- A system is in place to process match violations.

A Second Match:

A second match would be much smaller than the first. Moreover, the match rate would be much lower in the second phase, which would include about 20 percent of the applicants but only 10 percent of the positions. It is likely that the second phase match rate would be substantially higher for U.S. seniors than for independent applicants:

2004 MAIN RESIDENCY MATCH

Applicant	Registered	Active	Matched PGY-1	Unmatched PGY-1
US Senior	15,237	14,609	13,572	1,037
Independent	15,903	10,637	6,360	4,818
Total	31,140	25,246	19,392	5,855

Positions	Offered	Filled	Unfilled
PGY-1	21,192	19,392	1,800
PGY-2	2,512	2,420	92
Total	23,704	21,812	1,892

Although implementation of the R3 System enabled the NRMP to eliminate one week from the time period between the rank order list deadline and Match Week, it is not possible to institute a second phase without lengthening the overall match schedule:

- **Two ranking periods are required**, one for all applicants and programs and a second for unmatched applicants and unfilled programs. Currently, the ranking function is available for 6 weeks. If a second match were implemented, the initial ranking period would be shortened to 4 weeks (from January 15 until mid-February), and the second ranking period would be 1 week (during the first week of March).
- After the first rank order list deadline, **five business days are required to “clean” the data** before downloading it from the R3 System to the Matchpro module, which runs the matching algorithm:
 - Applicants not eligible for ECFMG-certification must be withdrawn
 - Couples information must be checked
 - Tables used by Matchpro must be verified
- After the first “run”, **six business days are needed to prepare phase one results for release**:
 - Data must be uploaded from Matchpro to R3 and then verified.
 - Matched/unmatched information for applicants and filled/unfilled information for programs must be posted to the NRMP web site and sent via email to applicants and programs.
 - Applicants would be notified if, but not where, they matched so they know whether to participate in the second match.
 - Programs would know how many positions remained unfilled, but not the names of the applicants to whom they matched in the first phase.
 - Schools would be told whether their students were fully matched, partially matched, or unmatched.
 - Fully matched applicants and filled programs must be “flagged” in the R3 System so they cannot participate in a second phase.
 - Partially matched applicants must be “flagged” so they can rank only positions for which they are eligible.
 - Program quotas must be adjusted to reflect the results of the first phase.
- A second ranking period of about **one week** must be available for unmatched applicants and unfilled programs. Unmatched applicants would use ERAS to send applications to programs, and personal interviews would be discouraged.
- After the second rank order list deadline, an additional **five business days are required to “clean” the data for the second “run”**.
- After the second “run”, **at least 6 business days are needed to prepare for Match Week**. The data tables must be prepared. Match results must be verified and then posted to the web site and sent by email according to the current Match Week schedule.

This scenario assumes that all applicants wait until after the conclusion of the second phase to learn where they matched. It also assumes that programs would not receive the names of any matched applicants until the second phase concludes.

Even with a two-phase match, some applicants will be unmatched or partially matched and some programs will be unfilled, necessitating a “scramble” beginning on Tuesday of Match Week.

Two-Phase Match Schedule:

August 15	Registration opens for applicants
September 1	Registration opens for programs
December 1	Registration deadline (\$50 late fee for registration after this date)
January 15	Rank function opens for phase 1
January 30	Quota deadline for programs
February 11	Rank order list deadline for phase 1
March 1	Applicants notified whether (but not where) they matched Programs notified whether (but not with whom) they filled
March 2	Rank function opens for phase 2
March 8	Rank order list deadline for phase 2
March 29	Phase 2 applicants notified whether they matched
March 30	Phase 2 programs notified whether they filled Phase 2 unfilled positions posted to web and emailed
March 30 - 31	Scramble
April 1	Match Day

Issues:

- All unmatched and partially matched applicants and all unfilled programs could be “required” to remain in phase 2; however, the NRMP could not force them to enter and certify rank order lists. It would be extremely difficult to monitor compliance, and it is likely that some participating applicants and programs would reach agreements in the period between the first and second matches, or that programs would offer their unfilled positions to applicants who had not participated in the Match at all.
- Applicants who became eligible for ECFMG certification between the first and second “runs” would not be placed back into the Match.
- Only aggregate data for both matches would be reported (i.e., the Results and Data Book); no information would be made available from the first iteration.
- Partially matched applicants would be told the geographic location of their match from the first “run” so they know in which cities they should rank programs in the second match. Applicants who ranked only one program in a particular city would know to which program they matched in the first “run”.
- In phase 2, all couples would be “uncoupled” and allowed to re-couple if they desire to do so; an unmatched partner of a couple would be told the location of the matched partner’s position so the unmatched partner could rank positions in the appropriate city;
- ERAS would be used to send applications during the pre-Match interview cycle as well as after the first and second phases for unmatched and partially matched applicants.
- Because of schedule overlaps, unmatched Canadian and IMG applicants could not participate in both the CaRMS second iteration and the NRMP second match.

Those applicants would be required to withdraw from one of the matches, and CaRMS and NRMP would exchange applicant names to eliminate dual participation.

- If the NRMP phase 1 rank order list deadline preceded release of AOA match results, osteopathic applicants would not be able to participate in the NRMP.
- Currently, dually-accredited programs can place in the NRMP any positions unfilled in the AOA Match even after the quota deadline. If the NRMP phase 1 ROL deadline preceded release of the AOA Match results, the NRMP would have to decide whether to allow quota increases prior to running phase 2 to accommodate positions not filled in the AOA Match.
- A policy decision would have to be made about whether to allow reverted positions in phase 1 and, if so, in which program they should be placed for phase 2.
- There would be no third phase. At the conclusion of the second phase, all remaining unmatched applicants would “scramble” for unfilled positions.
- **The effect of a two-phase match on applicant behavior is unknown. For example, U.S. seniors might submit shorter ROLs for their chosen specialty, preferring to wait until phase 2 to list “safety” programs; as a result, many positions may be filled in phase 1 by independent applicants, leaving more unmatched seniors at the conclusion of phase 2.**

January 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 <i>Open ROL</i>	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 <i>Final Quota</i>	31

February 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Close ROL	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 Run Match	20	21
22	23	24	25 <i>Close ROL</i>	26	27	28
29						

March 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Matched?	2 Open ROL	3	4 <i>Run Match</i>	5	6
7	8 Close ROL	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 <i>Matched?</i>	16 Run Match	17	18 <i>Match Day</i>	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29 Matched?	30	31			

April 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Match Day	2	3

Key:

Italics = Actual 2004 Match schedule

Bold = Proposed schedule

Bold Italics = Actual 2004 and proposed schedule