**Psychiatry SLOR – Tips and Tricks for Match 2025**

Based on feedback from letter writers, letter readers, and students, the ADMSEP Task Force has produced an updated version of the Psychiatry Standardized Letter of Recommendation (SLOR). 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.

**What’s new in this SLOR?**

* Condensed sections – the feedback we received noted that the old form was “hard to read”, and “hard to follow.” We hope that this condensed format will improve flow and overall readability.
* Word document format – this should allow letter readers to upload onto institutional letterhead and provide a wet signature.

**How is a Standardized Letter of Recommendation (SLOR) different from a Standardized letter of Evaluation?**

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 strengths-focused.

**Is the SLOR mandatory for psychiatry?**

While the SLOR is not mandatory, applicants are encouraged to identify one or more letter writers to use the SLOR template. The template is designed to ensure letter writers are commenting on attributes most important to program directors (Russo, 2022).

**Why are there character limits?**

The character limits were designed to ensure letter writers stay concise and all students receive the same amount of space. 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 *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.

**Why would anyone comment about extra support that an applicant may need in a letter of recommendation?**

The SLOR doesask for a quality or skill that may be an area of growth for the applicant. We recommend using this area to describe an area for future growth the student seeks, e.g., more exposure to a specific subspecialty of interest or a robust psychotherapy training program.  The SLOR also asks “*how much guidance this applicant may need as they begin residency in comparison to their peers.*”  One approach to this is to quote if any, relevant comments from the clerkship preceptors regarding the level of supervision the student requires.  Most comments are quite positive; if the student struggled during the psychiatry clerkship and needed undue supervision, then Psychiatry may not be the best specialty choice for them.

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

Initially, writing letters in the SLOR format may have a learning curve. We are hopeful that 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. Please sign up if you would be willing to provide feedback: [https://forms.office.com/r/u1Ktg01XdL [forms.office.com]](https://forms.office.com/r/u1Ktg01XdL%20%5bforms.office.com%5d)

The SLOR will certainly be imperfect in these first iterations, but, like Emergency Medicine and other specialties, if we refine our SLOR every year based on feedback from the ADMSEP, AADPRT, AAP, and PsychSIGN members, 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