**Rank Order List (ROL)**

Students enter their rank order list (ROL) through Web Based R3 System (Registration, Ranking & Results). It is easy to use this method and the great advantage to you is that your ROL can be entered from most PCs and changed as many times as you wish, up until the deadline date. **Each time you enter your rank order, however, you must certify your list or you are not registered for the match.** Please be aware that if you change your ROL around the deadline hour it is possible that you will not be able to go back in to re-certify your list. If this happens you will not be in the match, therefore we highly recommend all RWJMS students have their ROL in by the day before the NRMP deadline.

Frequently Asked Questions about the R3 System can be found at the NRMP web site, at [http://www.nrmp.org](http://www.nrmp.org). We recommend that you read and are familiar with these.

**Completing the Rank Order List— NRMP**

- **Preliminary ROL**
  - List (in order) of most desired programs
  - You can mix specialties and/or types (C [Categorical], A [Advanced], P [Preliminary], T [Transitional]) of programs on this list
  - If you list Advanced Programs on this list, you should also:
    - Submit Supplemental ROLs (SROLs) **This is a “Must”**
    - Strongly consider ranking C, P, and/or T programs at the bottom of the list

- **Supplemental ROLs**
  - Lists of Preliminary and/or Transitional programs that correspond to each Advanced program
  - Submit separate SROL for each Advanced program on the PROL
  - Be comprehensive on the SROL – matching on PROL and not on SROL is possible

**Advice from Peers**

In January, you will receive information from the Student Affairs Office about using the NRMP website and establishing a rank order list (ROL). When you prepare to rank the programs at which you’ve interviewed, first consider which attributes you value the most about the program with which you hope to match. If, for example, the most important consideration for you is matching at a certain location, then programs in that region will likely be at the top of your list. Alternatively, if your major concern is matching at an academic program that will provide you with the best educational experience, then those programs will likely top your personal rank list. Be sure to **first** decide what attributes are most important to you, and then rank your programs accordingly.

There often is a temptation to rank your programs based on feedback that you receive from individual program directors. You should rank programs based on **your preference** for that program. You should never rank your programs based on feedback you
receive from various program directors. **Always reach for the stars when creating a rank list, even though you should also have a few safeties.**

Let’s say – for example – that you receive a verbal guarantee from a program director from a “middle-tier” residency program. Also, you have interviewed at several upper-tier programs and prefer to match at these programs over the “middle-tier” program. If you rank the “middle-tier” residency program higher than the “upper-tier” programs that you actually prefer – because of the feedback you received from the program director – and you end up matching at the “middle-tier” program, you will have robbed yourself of the possibility of matching at any of the “upper-tier” programs that you interviewed at. If, conversely, you rank the preferable “upper-tier” programs higher on your list, you then allow for the possibility of matching at the “upper-tier” programs to exist. This might seem like a subtle point. However, in speaking with previous RWJMS students who matched at top programs in every specialty, you’d be surprised to discover that this concept – of “reaching for the stars” – often made all the difference.¹

A big decision point for many students comes when they consider whether or not to exclude certain programs from their rank list. By the end of the interviewing trail, it will be obvious to you that not all residency programs are created equally. Nevertheless, making the choice to exclude a program from your rank list is a very serious decision. Before making it, really give a lot of thought to whether or not you will be absolutely miserable if you match at that program or if potentially matching at that program is literally “the end of the world” for you. If this is truly the case, exclude that program from your rank list. If, however, a particular program is ‘okay’, but you prefer many other programs to it, rank the program all the way at the end of your ROL so it will only be a back-up. Ultimately, wherever you end up matching for residency is a function of how competitive you are at any given program or in the specialty you are applying for, and it is always better to match at your 27th choice than to not match at any program at all. With that said, if you are applying in an extremely competitive specialty such as dermatology, consider ranking all of your programs to maximize your chances of matching somewhere.

Again, always remember that matching at any program is better than not matching at all. If you exclude several “less preferable, but desirable” programs from your rank list and you do not match, all of the spots at those “less preferable, but desirable” programs that you excluded from your rank list will have been saturated by the time you’re ready to scramble. Also, during the scramble, you may be forced to choose between an undesirable residency position in your specialty and a position in a different specialty altogether. Don’t let this happen to you.

Good news is that most students match to one of their top choices, in 2004 86.1% of US students got one of their top 3 choices; however do not let this statistic limit the length of your rank order list. It is very important NOT to be stingy with your rank list. For several years now, the NRMP has collected data² pertaining to the number of programs that a “matched” candidate ranked, as well as the number of programs that an “unmatched” candidate ranked. For the 2004 match, “matched” US candidates ranked – on average – 8 programs, whereas “unmatched” candidates ranked only 5.34 programs. Of course, being “unmatched” may inherently be a function of the competitiveness of field that you are

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¹ For a more detailed description and examples of the NRMP Match system algorithm see the following website: [www.nrmp.org/ res_match/about_res/algorithms.html](http://www.nrmp.org/res_match/about_res/algorithms.html)

² Check out this data at: [http://www.nrmp.org/res_match/about_res/impact.html](http://www.nrmp.org/res_match/about_res/impact.html)
applying to, since some fields are much more competitive than others.\(^3\) Nevertheless, there are always some RWJMS students that feel comfortable ranking only a handful of programs. Statistically, there are risks with such a strategy, and you should be cognizant of these. Further, if you intend on ranking 5 or fewer programs, be sure to consult with Dr. Rosenthal or Dr. Young as well to get more advice on your strategy.

**The Couple’s Match Process**

The most recent couple’s match data from the NRMP indicate that 575 couples entered the match in 2004, and enjoyed a 93.9% match rate, which is comparable to the 92.9% match rate of all graduating U.S. medical students.

The couple’s match process allows two students to enter the applicant pool as one unit by linking their rank lists together. You’ll have to pay a nominal fee to utilize this service, although you don’t have to be married to enroll. You and your partner decide which programs to link together. You can even mix and match various institutions within a geographic area.

If you are thinking about participating in the couple’s match, you need to have a frank discussion with your partner in which you honestly discuss each other’s academic profile. Then, once both you and your partner have finished the interview trail, you should each develop a rank list on paper, and check each list against the other, eliminating programs in locations that aren’t acceptable options for either of you. This will enable you to focus on the programs and locations that are mutually agreeable. Because a successful “couple’s match” entails both partners matching at their respective programs, it may be necessary for you to apply to and rank more programs than if either partner was applying individually in the regular match.

The NRMP website contains additional information about the couple’s match process, as well as a sample algorithm for students interested in applying in the couple’s match.\(^4\)

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\(^3\) Though unlikely, you can rank 8 dermatology programs and theoretically remain unmatched, simply because of the sheer competitiveness of this field.

\(^4\) See the following website: [www.nrmp.org/res_match/special_part/us_seniors/couples.html](http://www.nrmp.org/res_match/special_part/us_seniors/couples.html)