

Alignment Check Index (ACI)

Background for creating the ACI: The current residency application process provides applicants with a number of resources to guide their decision about which residencies to apply to. These include program specific websites, APGO Residency Directory, AMA FREIDA, Doximity Residency Navigator, Residency Reddit, and AAMC Residency Explorer program in addition to mentor/advisor recommendations. While these platforms provide general retrospective data including academic expectations, research experience, and general information such as salary and benefits, they do not provide a prospective look at what individual programs might be seeking in each up-coming residency application cycle and how much emphasis each program places on different metrics utilized in assessing potential applicants for interviews and ranking. Additionally, there are many students who may not have access to mentoring to guide them on recommendations as to which programs to apply to or to interview at. This is one factor which might lead applicants to apply excessively to programs, and therefore limiting programs' ability to holistically review their applications.

Description of the ACI: The Alignment Check Index (ACI) is a tool that was created to add to the existing tools by allowing applicants to perform a REALISTIC assessment of their alignment with residency programs and their values to decide the most appropriate programs to which to apply along with the in all the existing resources. Residency programs provide a weight to the following six domains which have been identified by program directors as most important to residency selection and applicants perform a self-assessment on those domains:

1. Academic metrics (ie. USMLE Step Scores, clerkship grades, AOA, GH, etc.)
2. Work Experience (ie. Non-career related work, manager experience, etc.)
3. Community Service/Advocacy (ie. Volunteerism, blood drive, outreach clinic, etc.)
4. Research Experience (ie. Local/national meeting presentation, first authorship, etc.)
5. Teaching Experience (ie. Tutor, curriculum design, Teach for America, etc.)
6. Background/Lived Experience (ie. URM, First generation MD, single parent, etc.)

Programs will choose a weight percentage of emphasis in each category, adding up to a total of 100%. The variations in percentage weights reflect the values a residency program places on these domains. These are the same domains that applicants will enter information to determine their alignment with programs. Upon completion of their self-assessment, applicants will receive a list of programs from highest alignment to lowest alignment to use along with other available tools (E.g. Program websites, APGO Residency Directory, AMA FREIDA, Doximity Residency Navigator, Residency Reddit, and the AAMC Residency Explorer program) and mentor/advisor recommendations when deciding upon which programs to apply.

Applicants will not see the program percentage weight by category, but the ACI tool will generate a list from highest alignment to lowest alignment. This list will only be available to the applicant and not shared with programs as this tool is meant to be used to assess each individual applicant's alignment with programs of their interest. The ACI tool will be associated with the AMA-FREIDA website for free use by all applicants. Instructions and FAQs were created to help instruct both applicants, program directors, and student advisors on the how to utilize the ACI (See FAQs below).

Prior to utilizing the tool, we recommend applicants complete this worksheet while reflecting and reviewing their experiences. These are the questions they will be asked to complete on the tool.

Applicant ACI Worksheet

Academic Metrics (If your medical school does not use this scoring system, please provide your best estimate of where you align on the scoring system provided below)	Check one
Failed USMLE or Class rank < 25% of class	
No Clinical Honors; Class rank of 25-50%	
1-3 Clinical Honors; Class rank 50-75%	
4+ Clinical Honors; Top 25%, AOA, GH, Sigma Sigma Phi	
Work Experience (Include only non-medical-career related roles/jobs. Do NOT include paid research positions)	Check one
None	
Less than 6 months at job(s)	
6-12 months at job(s); Multiple diverse jobs	
Sustained work experience (>1 year); Leadership, supervisory roles, prior career	
Community Service/Advocacy	Check one
None or limited; Less than 6 months (Blood drive, health fairs)	
6-12 months participation in several activities	
Multiple activities spanning college or medical school demonstrating dedication to cause	
Meaningful participation: leadership, director, or supervisor; competitive fellowship (Peace Corps, Americorp)	
Research Experience	Check one
Limited research (i.e. local or regional abstracts, presentation, posters)	
Sustained research experience with scholarly productivity (i.e. national oral presentations; 1-3 publications)	
Significant research (i.e. funding/competitive fellowship, first authorship, dual degree with evidence of scholarly productivity, eg - >3 publications)	
Teaching Experience	Check one
None	
Limited teaching <1 Year (i.e. tutoring, TA in undergraduate course(s))	
Sustained teaching demonstrating passion for teaching; 1-4 years	
Prior career as an educator, curriculum design/development, national programs (eg, Teach for America)	
Background and Lived Experiences (Please select All applicable items)	Check all that apply
Neither parent attended college	
Financially disadvantaged	
English as a 2nd language	
Not born in the United States	
Raised by a single parent	
URM; racial/ethnic background is underrepresented in the medicine relative to the general population	
From a rural background	
I am a single parent	
Worked my way through college	

ACI FAQs for Program Directors

1. *Is my program required to complete the ACI?*

No. While the purpose of the ACI is to provide guidance for applicants on which programs they have the most alignment with, this is a voluntary process for program directors to provide an opportunity for applicants to make an educated decision on whether to apply to their program based upon the program's values and the applicant's experiences and traits. If a program chooses not to participate in the ACI and enter their weights, the program name will still be included on the list the applicant receives with "Not participating in ACI".

2. *Can I place an equal weight on each of the 6 domains?*

While the ACI provides an opportunity for programs to choose the importance of each of the domains that complement the values of their program, and it is expected that each program will have different weights for different domains, it is the program's discretion to determine how to weigh each of the domains. When determining weights, consider how you perform the initial screening of the applicants.

3. *Can I change the emphasis placed on the domains?*

Each year, prior to the opening of the application season, programs will be asked to complete the ACI information at the same time they update their data in FREIDA. Once this is completed, this information CANNOT be changed for an application season. Programs will have the opportunity to change the emphasis at the beginning of each season.

4. *Do I have to fill out the ACI or can my Program Manager complete the ACI?*

It is strongly recommended that the Program Director complete the ACI after performing an internal assessment of the program's values and desired values for incoming residents for that season. If you wish for your program manager to fill out that information, make sure they have the accurate information to enter for your program.

5. *Why would I want to change my ACI emphasis from year to year?*

While programs may desire to keep their emphasis on each of the domains the same from year to year, many programs may wish to change the emphasis based upon the needs of their program. For example, if there is a strong desire to increase the amount of academic research amongst residents in their program, they may desire to increase the weight on applicants with strong research experience for the upcoming application cycle.

6. *Will I see an applicant's alignment with my program?*

No. This is a self-assessment for applicants to use as one more tool in exploring programs. Programs will NOT receive any indications of whether an applicant had a high or low alignment with their program.

7. *What is the advantage for programs to participate in the ACI?*

While a voluntary program, the advantage to programs is that the use of the ACI may make applicants aware of programs that they align with they might not have otherwise identified as a program of interest.

ACI FAQs for Applicants

1. *Am I required to use the ACI to apply to a residency program?*
No. The ACI is a tool, provided to applicants to perform a self-assessment of their experiences, achievements, and characteristics and how they align with the values of potential programs of interest.
2. *What information will I receive about programs once I enter my self-assessment?*
You will receive a list of all programs with numbers ranging from 0 to 100. Lower numbers indicate lower alignment and higher numbers indicate higher alignment.
3. *How do I know if a program is participating in the ACI?*
Programs not participating in the ACI will be included in the list you receive as “Not participating in the ACI.”
4. *If the program shows up low on my list, can I still apply to that program?*
Yes. The ACI is only a tool to be used as an additional tool to help inform your decision. While it is expected that the applicant will be less likely to receive an interview offer if there is low alignment, it is completely the decision of the applicant to choose to which programs they apply.
5. *Will programs see my ACI results?*
No. Programs will not see ACI results. This is merely a self-assessment tool, with results provided to applicants as they decide to which programs to apply.
6. *If I don't like the results I receive from the ACI, can I change my inputs?*
While you can change your inputs, this is not advised. The purpose of the ACI is to provide the applicant an opportunity to perform a REALISTIC self-assessment based upon their experiences, achievements, and characteristics and compare these to what programs are interested in.
7. *Will I see programs weights in the 6 domains as I complete the ACI?*
No. Programs will enter these weights prior to the beginning of the application season. Applicants will enter their data, and the ACI tool will perform the alignment computation.
8. *What is the advantage to me as an applicant to use the ACI tool?*
The ACI is an additional tool to use in exploring programs. It is an opportunity to get additional information on how you might align with programs.

ACI FAQs for Advisors

1. *Why should I encourage my advisee to use the ACI?*

The ACI is tool that encourages applicants to perform a REALISTIC self-assessment of their experiences, achievements, and characteristics and how these align with potential residency programs to which they are considering applying. This may lead to applicants not over applying to programs to which they have a low alignment, benefiting both the applicant with realistic expectations and reducing the number of over applications so that programs can perform holistic reviews.

2. *If the program shows up low on the applicant's list, should they still apply to that program?*

The ACI is only one tool to help applicants with exploring residency programs. Advisors can consider incorporating this new information in addition to continuing to use all the considerations they always have in advising applicants.

3. *Will applicants see the emphasis that programs place in each of the 6 domains?*

No. Programs will enter these weights prior to the beginning of the application season. Applicants will enter their data, and the ACI tool will perform the alignment computation.