

CFMS Member Memo – November 10th (Version 2)

Dear Students,

These last few weeks have brought about many new developments and announcements for the 2021 and 2022 R1 Matches. On November 2, 2020, CaRMS Online opened for the 1st iteration of the 2021 R-1 Match and announced the implementation of a Structured Reference Form for Family Medicine programs, which was then announced to have been postponed on November 9, 2020. In addition, on November 10, 2020, the AFMC released their latest update of the Learner News. We would like to share these updates with you in the context of our advocacy work. Please find the official news release [here](#) with quotes italicized.

2021 R1 Match

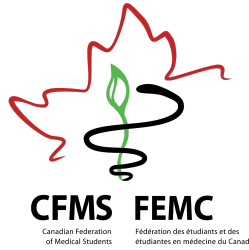
LETTERS

a. Letters of Reference

- i. A structured Letter of Reference will be submitted by each referee. This does NOT apply to the 2021 R1 Match. The Family Medicine Structured Reference Form that was developed by the FM program directors will NOT apply to the 2021 R1 Match. A Structured Letter of Reference for all specialties will be considered for the 2022 R1 Match, and there are ongoing discussions about this at the ARMC.*
- ii. A Letter of Reference from the institution to where the applicant is applying must not be a criterion for file review and ultimately, for file ranking.*
- iii. There will be no requirement for a Letter of Reference from the discipline to which the applicant is applying.*
- iv. Each program may request a maximum of three (3) Letters of Reference from an applicant. If approved, this will require a change to policy and process to ensure that compliance is enforceable.*

b. Letter of Support (Lettre d'appui)

- i. The Letter of Support is used exclusively by the Quebec French Language Faculties of Medicine and is primarily used in lieu of a letter of reference when applying to these Faculty's residency programs.*
- ii. Given that the Letter of Support is a standardized form as it exists presently and enjoys support from all stakeholder groups from these Faculties, no change is suggested to the content or structure of the Letter of Support.*
- iii. A Letter of Support from the institution to where the applicant is applying must not be a criterion for file review and ultimately, file ranking.*
- iv. There will be no requirement for a Letter of Support from the discipline to which the applicant is applying.*
- v. Each program may request a maximum of three (3) Letters of Support from an applicant. If approved, this will require a change to policy and process to ensure that compliance is enforceable.*



c. *Personal Letter*

i. *Each program should clearly provide on their website:*

- *Direction to applicants regarding content they are looking for in the personal letter, including the questions/topics they would like addressed.*
- *A maximum word count.*

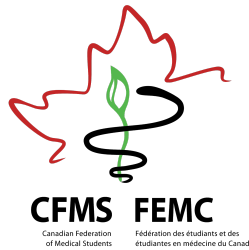
ELECTIVES

- a. *Any elective experience approved by the applicant's UGME program may be included as part of the applicant's R1 CaRMS application (MSPR, Letter of Reference / Letter of Support, personal letter, CV, transcript, etc.).*
- b. *Electives / clinical experiences that are not approved by the applicant's UGME program are not to be included anywhere in the applicant's R1 CaRMS application.*

The announcement of the reference letter requirements for the 2021 R1 Match aligns with our advocacy for a limit to the number of required reference letters, as well as limiting specialty or site specific letters. We have heard your concerns surrounding equity in the match process, recognizing the limitation in both location and time for electives this year. In consultation with the Class of 2021 Advisory Group, composed of Class of 2021 leadership at each of our member schools, we advocated on your behalf to the AFMC and other stakeholders to adjust application requirements to reflect a more equitable playing field. Furthermore, we advocated for letters to remain as similar as possible to previous years given that many students have already started asking for letters and referees are expecting that requirements will be similar to the past. Although these requirements ensure that schools are unable to request specific letters, it does not preclude you from using any of the letters that you may have.

Furthermore, we would like to reiterate that electives and clinical activities that are not approved by your UGME office will not be counted, in support of the equity principles outlined in the [Canadian Residency Virtual Promotion Guide](#). Although we recognize the desire to stand out as an applicant, during such a tumultuous time, it is vital that we work collaboratively to minimize inequities that would otherwise be amplified by the changes to the R1 Match process.

We recognize that the wording in a.i. may be confusing as it states that applicants will submit a structured letter, and then it subsequently states that this will not apply to the 2021 R1 Match. This is because the recommendations approved by the AFMC Board were proposed at a time when there were plans to implement a structured letter. However, we were able to advocate for this to be delayed in the interim. For all intents and purposes, there will be no structured letters for the 2021 R1 Match. The wording in a.iv also mentions a "change in policy" if approved. This wording was part of the recommendations prior to being approved by the AFMC Board, and should have been removed once the recommendations were approved.



Family Medicine Structured Reference Form

We heard and supported your concerns regarding the announcement of the new Family Medicine Structured Reference Form for the 2021 R1 Match. These included concerns regarding the timing of the announcement, the content of the form, and the lack of stakeholder engagement. Concerns were first raised to us last Wednesday. In collaboration with the Class of 2021 Advisory Group and the FMEQ, we worked quickly and effectively to communicate student concerns to the Family Medicine Program Directors and push for additional notice and opportunity for feedback, including a formal letter sent to the Family Medicine program directors on Sunday. This resulted in the postponement of the Family Medicine Structured Reference Form until after the 2021 R1 Match, which was announced on November 9th.

Although we recognize the rationale of the Family Medicine Program Directors and the pressure to review large numbers of files during the R1 Match process, we believe that allowing additional time for stakeholder engagement will result in a form that is better for both programs and applicants.

Program Promotion

The Canadian Residency Virtual Program Promotion Guide was released on September 15th 2020

The National Web calendar of events is a centralized calendar of events that lets learners learn more about residency programs across the country.

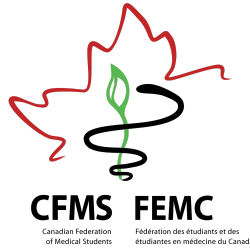
A web tool specifically for program promotion will be launched later in November. Current state of discussions on 2022 visiting electives

We continue to support the development of the CANPrePP portal and the use of the [National Web Calendar of Events](#) in the interim. We have heard of some programs that are requesting documents such as CVs in advance of program promotion sessions, and others who are taking down the names of those who participate. We would like to reiterate the importance of equity in the program promotion process, as outlined in the [Canadian Residency Virtual Promotion Guide](#). It is critical that students do not feel pressured to attend sessions and that attendance and/or engagement at such sessions are not used in the application decision-making process. Should you be made aware of such instances, please relay those concerns to us and we will raise them anonymously to ensure that these practices are addressed as soon as possible.

2022 R1 Match

Visiting Electives:

There are no visiting electives for the Class of 2022 at this time. The schools are eager to resume visiting electives, however no decision around recommendations for the resumption of visiting electives has been made at this time. This topic will be continue to be discussed by the AFMC Committee on Undergraduate Education.



We continue to advocate for the importance of visiting electives for career planning and exploration, recognizing the limitations that public health may impose on their practicality. Our discussions with stakeholders support that no decisions have been made for visiting electives at this time and discussions are ongoing. We recognize that there are concerns regarding potential inequity in visiting elective opportunities. We support the exploration of alternatives to minimizing inequity rather than the cancellation of visiting electives entirely.

Safety in Clinical Environments:

With the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in various areas across the country, we encourage students to continue to stay safe and follow public health guidelines. We are continuing to advocate for the importance of protecting the safety of students training in clinical settings. This is supported by the [Ten Guiding Principles for Medical Education](#) passed by the AFMC Board which includes adequate access to PPE.

The unprecedented times we find ourselves further emphasizes the importance to support physician/learner wellness. We encourage students to access resources provided by your Student Affairs office, your provincial medical association, the CFMS, and the CMA.

As always, should you ever have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at president@cfms.org or communications@cfms.org.

Sincerely,

Henry Li
MD Class of 2021, University of Manitoba
CFMS President 2020-2021

Vivian Tan
MD Class of 2021, Dalhousie University
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