



ERAS Support Services at ECFMG

Policy on Original Documents for Letters of Recommendation (LoRs) and Medical Student Performance Evaluations (MSPEs)

(Posted July 12, 2006; revised June 25, 2007, June 15, 2009, July 14, 2009)

In concert with the existing policy established for all U.S. medical graduates applying for residency programs and to maintain the integrity of documents reviewed by program directors via ERAS, ERAS Support Services at ECFMG requires that all letters of recommendation (LoRs) and Medical Student Performance Evaluations (MSPEs) submitted as part of an ERAS application be **original** documents. ERAS Support Services does **not** require original medical school transcripts; original medical school transcripts should **not** be submitted.

ERAS Support Services will not delay the processing of an ERAS application if an ERAS applicant cannot supply an **original** MSPE or LoR. However, the document will be annotated, as described below. U.S. program directors have been advised not to discount or otherwise disfavor any ERAS application based on a copy annotation.

Original Documents

LoRs must be written on official institutional letterhead of the letter writer and manually signed by the letter writer in an **ink color other than black**. For enhanced authentication, applicants should request that the letter writer affix an institutional seal to the LoR.

LoRs not written in English must include an official English translation; that is, an English translation prepared by and certified to be correct by a medical school official (for example, a Dean or Registrar), a government official (for example, a Consular Officer), or a professional translation service. The translation must appear on official stationery and must bear the **original** signature and title of the medical school official, government official, or representative of the translation service. If the translation service is a private company, the letterhead stationery must identify the company as a translation service.

A Note About Letters of Recommendation

International medical students/graduates are urged to submit LoRs that are as up-to-date as possible and that are meaningful in content. They should carefully select who they request to write LoRs on their behalf. The letter writer should be a physician who is familiar with the applicant's clinical abilities and knowledge, as well as his/her interpersonal skills. A program may request that one of the LoRs be written by the department chair in that program's specialty at the applicant's medical school. International medical students/graduates may also want to consider asking for LoRs from clerkship directors and colleagues in the specialty to which they are applying, as well as other medical school faculty. Ideally, the applicant should meet with the letter writer and discuss specific instructions before the letter is composed and submitted. The letter writer should also be provided with a copy of the applicant's CV for reference purposes.

Submitting LoRs that are substantive in content will ultimately provide the program director with information pertinent to the residency selection process.

The MSPE must be written on medical school letterhead with the medical school seal affixed, and signed by the designated medical school official. If the document is not in English, an official English translation (as defined above) must accompany the MSPE. If an applicant cannot obtain an MSPE, he/she can indicate this at the appropriate place on the MyERAS application.

The term “Dean’s letter” is no longer used. Applicants are urged to approach their respective Dean’s office to acquire an MSPE. The content of the MSPE should provide an “evaluation” of the applicant’s performance during the course of his/her medical school years, relative to his/her peers. The MSPE should not act as a “predictor” of future performance but provide information about academic performance.

Documents Submitted to ECFMG for Scanning

ECFMG will make a **visual inspection** to determine if the LoR or MSPE is an original or a copy. ECFMG will not conduct a primary-source verification of these document types. If an applicant cannot submit an original document, and the submitted document(s) is (are) determined by ECFMG to be a copy, ERAS Support Services at ECFMG will stamp the document(s) to read as follows:

COPY–Originals Required For This Document Type ERAS Support Services

The annotation stamped on the document will be viewable by program directors. Official English translations accompanying submitted documents will be marked as copies if the underlying documents are determined to be copies.

Note that the requirement for original documents will not cause processing delays nor will documents be rejected if copies are submitted. Additionally, this is an ECFMG requirement only. **Programs have been instructed not to disregard an ERAS application based on the above annotation.**

Documents Submitted to ECFMG Electronically

ERAS Support Services at ECFMG is working with international medical schools that submit supporting documents on behalf of their medical students/graduates to implement an optional process through which schools can submit these supporting documents electronically to ECFMG. These documents include MSPEs and LoRs.

MSPEs received electronically from the medical school **are considered to be original documents.**

ERAS Support Services has instructed all medical schools participating in the electronic submission of LoRs to **submit only those LoRs that they determine to be original documents** in accordance with the ECFMG original document policy outlined above.