

FAQs: Ophthalmology

Given Step 1 is now Pass/Fail, what advice would you give to a first-year medical student about what they can or should be doing early on to be competitive in your specialty?

- Passing Step 1 now levels the playing field. It places even more importance on building a strong, well-rounded application to Ophthalmology. If possible, get involved with an Ophthalmology Interest Group. Contact the Ophthalmology Residency Program Coordinator, Program Director, or their Medical Student Director for opportunities to connect with Ophthalmology residents, participate in departmental scholarly activities, and shadow in the eye clinic. Seek out service opportunities in the community. Study hard and strive to be in the top quartile.

Would you ever take someone with a Step 1 failure?

- We would need to understand the circumstances surrounding the poor performance on Step 1 exam. However, failing Step 1 places an applicant at a critical disadvantage with most institutions.

What advice would you give about getting letters of recommendation in your specialty?

- Two of your three letters should be strong Ophthalmology letters.

What is the value of doing audition rotations in your specialty?

- A rotation is very helpful to determine if a program and its culture is a good match for the applicant and vice versa.

To what extent does research, publications, or presentations affect one's ability to match in your specialty?

- Involvement in research, publications, posters, presentations are all commonplace for an applicant to Ophthalmology. Lack of involvement would place you at a disadvantage.

Is a Step 2CK score needed before you will invite someone for an interview?

- No

What does the perfect applicant look like in your specialty?

- In addition to proven academic, clinical and scholarly excellence, we look for applicants who demonstrate character, integrity, and service.

Does a student need to Honor in your specialty to match?

- It helps but is not required.

The students have significant elective time during their 3rd year for career exploration.

a. What electives would you recommend to a student who knows they are interested in your specialty?

- Schedule an Ophthalmology elective as early as possible in order to secure research and presentation opportunities, request letters of recommendation, and solidify your commitment to the arduous application process. In addition, consider additional Ophthalmology electives at other institutions to gain a broader perspective of Ophthalmology training elsewhere.

b. What electives would you recommend to a student who is undecided but considering your specialty?

- A 2-week elective in Ophthalmology should be long enough to help you decide if this is the career for you.

Is there anything else I haven't asked that you feel an applicant to your specialty ought to know?

- Ophthalmology is extremely competitive. Statistics for the Ophthalmology match are available online at www.sfmach.org. The keys to a successful match include a well-rounded application without "red flags," strong reference letters, and humble sincerity during the interview.