

# Changes in Scoring Systems for Pre-application Exams Have Made it Harder to Become a Dermatologist

PARKER, CO, UNITED STATES, May 13, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dermatology residency is the most highly competitive program and has become increasingly difficult for acceptance. Three sets of exams are required to become able to be board certified in the specialty. Recently, the United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) switched the first of these exams to pass/fail

(P/F). Transitioning to P/F aimed to reduce stress on students, by focusing away from numerical scores. As the P/F scoring has taken effect, there has been a synonymous shift in dermatology application strategies.



Shifts in dermatology residency application strategies occurred after licensing exams changed to pass / fail.”

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In a comprehensive review reported in [SKIN: The Journal of Cutaneous Medicine](#)<sup>®</sup>, the authors analyzed dermatology residency match charting outcomes and exam performance from the National Resident Matching

Program (NRMP). Match trends related to the P/F transition and evolving program director preferences were described to evaluate candidate strategies.

The transition to pass/fail scoring marked a pivotal shift in residency selection, prompting significant changes in applicant strategies and program evaluation criteria. Between 2018 and 2024, dermatology saw a sharp rise in applicants—particularly among DOs—without a corresponding increase in available positions and thus more competitive. Authors highlight that since the second exam remains numerically scored, it has become a critical factor in residency decisions, reflecting a broader shift toward holistic evaluation. Concurrently, research productivity has grown in importance following the P/F transition, while volunteer experiences have declined, likely impacted by application constraints and the lasting effects of COVID-19. Bottom line, the change in exam scoring has led to increasing competitiveness making the chance of successfully becoming a Dermatologist even more challenging.

[SKIN: The Journal of Cutaneous Medicine](#)<sup>®</sup> is a peer-reviewed online medical journal that is the official journal of The National Society for Cutaneous Medicine. The mission of SKIN is to provide an enhanced and accelerated route to disseminate new dermatologic knowledge for all aspects of cutaneous disease.

For more details, please visit [www.jofskin.org](http://www.jofskin.org) or contact [jofskin@gmail.com](mailto:jofskin@gmail.com).

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