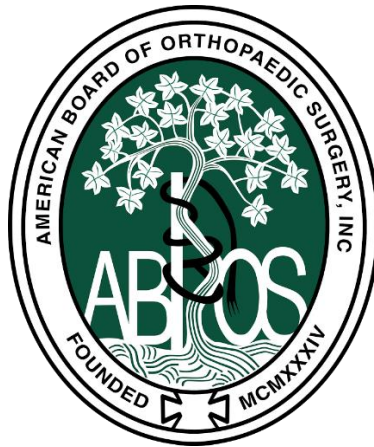


**AMERICAN BOARD
OF
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY, INC.**



**Rules and Procedures for the
Surgery of the Hand
Subspecialty Certification and Recertification
Examinations**

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IMPORTANT: The enclosed Rules and Procedures are specific to initial Subspecialty Certification in Surgery of the Hand, and Subspecialty Recertification in Surgery of the Hand for Diplomates who only need to recertify their Surgery of the Hand Subspecialty Certification.

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I.

INTRODUCTION

Rules and Procedures

These Rules and Procedures set out the terms and conditions of The American Board of Orthopaedics Surgery's (ABOS) process for subspecialty certification and recertification in Surgery of the Hand. The ABOS reserves the right to make changes in its rules and procedures at any time and without prior notice.

Definition

Surgery of the Hand is the special field of medicine that includes the investigation, preservation, and restoration by medical, surgical, and rehabilitative means of all structures of the upper extremity directly affecting the form and function of the hand and wrist.

General Information

The ABOS is not an educational institution, and subspecialty certification in Surgery of the Hand is not to be considered a medical degree. Nor does it confer legal privileges or license to practice the subspecialty of Surgery of the Hand. Standards of certification are clearly distinct from those of licensure. The possession of a Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand from the ABOS does not indicate total qualifications for practice privileges nor does it imply exclusion of others not so certified. There is no requirement or necessity for a Diplomate of the ABOS to hold a Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand in order to be considered qualified to include aspects of surgery of the hand within the practice of orthopaedic surgery. A Diplomate of the ABOS should be considered qualified to practice in all areas of Orthopaedic Surgery and should not be excluded from subspecialty practice because he or she has chosen not to seek subspecialty certification. The ABOS has never been concerned with measures that might gain privileges or recognition for its Diplomates in the practice of surgery of the hand or in the practice of orthopaedic surgery. It is neither the intent nor the purpose of the ABOS to define requirements for membership in any organization, staff of any hospital, or who shall or shall not perform Surgery of the Hand procedures.

The ABOS intends the Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand only for those surgeons who have demonstrated qualifications beyond those expected of other orthopaedic surgeons by virtue of additional education, a practice characterized by a significant experience and activity involving the care of patients with problems involving the hand and upper extremity and performing surgery in the area of surgery of the hand, and contributions to this field of medicine.

PLEASE NOTE: A Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand is valid only when held in conjunction with a current General Orthopaedic Board Certification issued by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery.

II.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION

An applicant for initial subspecialty certification in Surgery of the Hand:

- A. Must be a Diplomate of the ABOS and have been in the active practice of Surgery of the Hand for at least two years following the completion of orthopaedic education.
- B. Must have a current, full, and unrestricted license to practice medicine in the United States, a United States jurisdiction, or a Canadian province, or be engaged in full-time practice in the United States Federal Government, for which state licensure is not required.
- C. Must demonstrate professional competence and adherence to acceptable ethical and professional standards. The applicant should not publicize him or herself through any medium or form of public communication in an untruthful misleading or deceptive manner. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide documentation that he/she is an ethical and competent practitioner.
- D. May not have had a reduction, restriction, suspension, termination, or resignation at the request of a hospital of all or any portion of an applicant's surgical staff privileges, or pending action to do so, will normally result in a deferral until such action is finally resolved and the applicant's practice has stabilized sufficiently for it to be evaluated.
- E. Will be rendered ineligible for the examination for the Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand by: limitation, suspension, or termination of any right associated with the practice of medicine in any state, province, or country due to violation of a medical practice act or other statute or governmental regulation; by disciplinary action by any medical licensing authority by entering into a consent order; by voluntary surrender while under investigation; or by suspension of licensure.
- F. Must be actively engaged in the practice of Surgery of the Hand as indicated by holding full operating privileges in a hospital or surgery center.
- G. **Initial Certification** applicants must have completed one full year of education in an ACGME accredited Surgery of the Hand fellowship program or a Canadian Orthopaedic Association accredited Surgery of the Hand fellowship program.
- H. **Initial Certification** applicants must submit a patient list of surgery of the hand managed during a consecutive 12-month period within the two years preceding application. Surgery of the hand includes only those procedures performed on the upper extremity distal to the elbow. The case list must include at least 125 cases fulfilling at least five of the following categories. If the applicant cannot reach the 125 case minimum within the 12-month period, the applicant can extend that collection period up to 15 months to reach 125 cases.

The number in the right-hand column indicate the minimum number of cases to qualify a candidate as one of the required five categories.

Bone and joint	20
Nerve	20
Tendon and muscle	20
Skin and wound problems	14
Contracture and joint stiffness	10
Tumor	10
Congenital	3
Microvascular	3
Non-operative	4

* Non-operative cases are those which require significant evaluation, such as pain problems. No more than six non-operative cases will be accepted.

There is a list of acceptable CPT codes for the Surgery of the Hand Subspecialty Case List available on the ABOS website at

www.abos.org/subspecialties/surgery-of-the-hand/cpt-codes/

- I. Applicants must submit the prescribed application form and all the specified supporting documentation and pay the established fees.
- J. Applicants must pass the ABOS’s Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand Examination.
- K. Candidates who cannot fulfill the practice requirements may petition the Credentials Committee of the ABOS for individual consideration. This consideration will take into account contributions and dedication to the discipline of Surgery of the Hand such as teaching, publication, administration, Surgery of the Hand public service (e.g. team physician), and research. This petition must be submitted in the form of a letter with the application materials.

III.

PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION

The dates and places for the Surgery of the Hand Subspecialty Certification and Recertification Examinations and the deadlines for submission of applications and fees are posted on the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery website (www.abos.org). Examinations dates and schedules may be changed at the discretion of the Board.

A. Application

1. The Surgery of the Hand Subspecialty Certification and Recertification applications (and Scribe case list collection program for initial hand only) are available online beginning August in the year prior to the year of taking the examination. The deadline to apply is February 1st of the examination year.
2. To apply for this examination, go to the ABOS's website at www.abos.org and follow the Application Instructions under the Subspecialty Certification, Hand option. Printed applications are not available.
3. No Diplomate will be admitted to the examination until the ABOS has determined that the specified requirements have been met, reviewed all supporting credentials, and been approved.
4. An approved application will be valid for the examination year in which the application was approved. If a candidate is unsuccessful, he/she may repeat the examination by submitting a new application and again receiving approval to sit.

B. Notifying the ABOS of Application Changes

1. It is the responsibility of all applicants to notify the ABOS office of any change of address, practice association, or hospital/surgery center affiliation.
2. If an applicant changes practice location or practice association or acquires new hospital/surgery affiliations, new references will be requested of the applicant by the ABOS.
3. An applicant is also required to notify the ABOS of the denial of any request for hospital and/or surgery center privileges; of any action to restrict, suspend, or terminate all or any portion of surgical staff privileges; of any request by a hospital to resign all or any portion of surgical staff privileges; and of any action by a governmental agency which would result in the restriction, suspension, or probation of the applicant's license or any right associated with the practice of medicine.

C. Requests for Examination Accommodations

The ABOS reserves the right to make changes in its rules and procedures for its examination and certification at any time and without prior notice. These rules and procedures supersede all rules and procedures prior to May 4, 2020.

When applying for either part of the certifying examination, a candidate requesting an accommodation in the administration of a certifying examination must submit his or her request on the request form available at www.abos.org along with the required documentation of the disability and need for the accommodation, by the application deadline. Documentation of prior accommodations for high stakes examinations should be included.

D. Examination

Applicants who are admitted to take the examination will receive an admission letter which will be posted in their portal on the ABOS website, and will include and a request for the examination fee. The deadline for receipt of the \$1,400 examination fee is May 15 of the examination year. Scheduling permits will be posted in July to those candidates who have been admitted and paid the examination fee.

E. Examination Content

The examination for the Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand is developed and administered by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery, the American Board of Surgery, and the American Board of Plastic Surgery. This is a multiple-choice, computer-administered examination. The examination contains 175 questions. Beginning in 2019, there will be 175 questions for the initial Subspecialty Certification in Surgery of the Hand Examination and 150 questions for the Subspecialty Recertification in Surgery of the Hand Examination.

F. Rules Governing Admissibility to the Examination

The ABOS, on the basis of its sole judgment, may grant or deny a candidate the privilege of examination whenever the facts are deemed by the ABOS to so warrant.

G. Taking the Surgery of the Hand Subspecialty Certification and Recertification Examinations in the Same Examination Administration

If a Diplomate qualifies for the initial Surgery of the Hand certification examination and is eligible to renew a General Orthopaedic Board Certification, the examination may qualify that individual for both an initial subspecialty certificate and general certificate renewal provided certain qualifications are met. These Diplomates should contact the ABOS offices and speak to their Certification Specialist for further information.

H. Fee Schedule

Application Fee - \$450

(Payable online with application submission by February 1 and non-refundable)

Deadline – February 1 of the year of the examination

Examination Fee - \$1400

(Payable online after notification of admission to exam)

Deadline – May 15 of the year of the examination

A candidate who wishes to withdraw must notify the ABOS office more than ten (10) business days before the scheduled examination to receive a partial refund of \$700. A candidate who fails to appear for an examination or who withdraws without giving more than

ten (10) business days' notice as defined above will forfeit the entire fee for examination.

IV.

FALSIFIED INFORMATION AND IRREGULAR BEHAVIOR

- A.** If it is determined that an applicant has falsified information on the application form, case list, or the materials submitted or has failed to provide material information, the applicant's patient list or the materials submitted may be declared ineligible for the examination and the candidate may be required to wait up to three years before being allowed to file a new application.
- B.** Examination applicants should understand that the following may be sufficient cause to bar them from future examinations, to terminate participation in the examination, to invalidate the results of an examination, to withhold or revoke scores or certificates, or to take other appropriate action:
 - 1. The giving or receiving of aid in the examination as evidenced either by observation or by statistical analysis of answers of one or more participants in the examination.
 - 2. The unauthorized possession, reproduction, or disclosure of any materials including but not limited to, examination questions or answers before, during, or after the examination.
 - 3. The offering of any benefit to any agent of the ABOS in return for any right, privilege, or benefit which is not usually granted by the ABOS to other similarly situated candidates or persons.
 - 4. The engaging in irregular behavior in connection with the administration of the examination.
- C.** The following are examples of behavior considered to be irregular and which may be cause for invalidation of the examination or imposition of a penalty:
 - 1. Referring to books, notes or other devices at any time during the examination. This prohibited material includes written information or information transferred by electronic, acoustical, or other means.
 - 2. Any transfer of information or signals between candidates during the test. This prohibition includes any transfer of information between the candidate and any other person at any time during the testing period including bathroom breaks.
 - 3. Any appearance of looking at the computer screen of another candidate during the examination.
 - 4. Allowing another candidate to view one's answer during an examination or otherwise assisting another candidate in the examination.

5. Taking any examination material outside of the examination room. All examination materials are the property of the ABOS and must be left in the room at the end of the examination.
6. Candidates should also understand that the ABOS may or may not require a candidate to retake one or more portions of the examination if presented with sufficient evidence that the security of the examination has been compromised, notwithstanding the absence of any evidence of a candidate's personal involvement in such activities.

V.

CREDENTIALS DECISIONS

A. Determining Admission to Examinations

1. The Credentials Committee meets at least once each year to consider applications for the examination. At this meeting, a decision about each applicant will be made either to approve admission to the next examination, to deny admission, to defer decision pending further evaluation or take other appropriate action.
2. A decision approving admission to an examination applies only until the next available examination and does not carry over from one examination until the next. A new application is required for each examination.

B. Deferral of Admission Decision

A decision about an applicant's admission to the examination may be deferred if information received by the Credentials Committee is insufficient for the Committee to make a judgment and/or warrants further investigation. Typically, the committee will defer such a decision for one year to gain further information. If information is still insufficient, the decision will be deferred for a second year to enable representatives of the ABOS to conduct a site visit. A deferral of not more than two consecutive years is not viewed by the ABOS as an adverse action; thus, no appeal of a decision of the Credentials Committee is permitted unless an applicant has been denied admission or has been deferred for more than two consecutive years.

C. Appeal of Admission Decision

An applicant denied admission to the examination, deferred more than two years or denied a request for an accommodation in the administration of the examination will be informed of the basis for such action and may request a hearing by an Appeals Committee of the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery. (See Section VII.)

VI. CERTIFICATES

A candidate who has met all the requirements and has passed the examination will receive a Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand issued by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery. This certificate will be valid through the expiration date of the candidate's ABOS General Orthopaedic Certificate. Those who hold a time-unlimited General Certificate will have their Subspecialty Certificate be valid for 10 years. A Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand is valid only when held in conjunction with a current general certificate issued by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery.

A. Certificate Revocation

At its discretion, the ABOS may revoke a certificate for due cause, including but not limited to:

1. The Diplomate did not possess the required qualifications and/or meet the requirements for examination, whether or not such deficiency was known to the ABOS or any committee thereof prior to examination or at the time of issuance of the certificate, as the case may be;
2. The Diplomate made an intentional and material misrepresentation or withheld information in the application to the examination or in any other representation to the ABOS or any Committee thereof;
3. The Diplomate made a misrepresentation to the ABOS or any third party as to his or her status as a Diplomate of the ABOS;
4. The Diplomate engaged in irregular behavior in connection with an examination of the ABOS (as described under Section IV. Falsified Information and Irregular Behavior), whether or not such practice had an effect on the performance of the candidate on an examination;
5. The Diplomate was convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction of a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude and, in the opinion of the ABOS, having a material relationship to the practice of medicine;

There has been a limitation, suspension, or termination of any right of the Diplomate associated with the practice of medicine in any state, province, or country, including the imposition of any requirement of surveillance, supervision, or review due to a violation of a medical practice act or other statute or governmental regulation, disciplinary action by any medical licensing authority, entry into a consent order, or voluntary surrender of license.

The ABOS reserves the right to make changes in its rules and procedures for its examination and certification at any time and without prior notice. These rules and procedures supersede all rules and procedures prior to May 4, 2020.

6. A Diplomate may appeal the revocation of his or her certificate pursuant to the procedures set forth in Section VII.

B. Certificate Reentry

Should the circumstances that resulted in the revocation, surrender, or expiration of the Diplomate's certificate be corrected, the former Diplomate may petition the Credentials Committee to allow him or her to complete the steps necessary to become certified or recertified. A Diplomate whose certification has expired or been revoked must sit for and pass the Oral Examination, unless the Diplomate is not in active surgical practice. If a Diplomate is not in active surgical practice the in which case the Diplomate should contact the ABOS Office

VII.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

- A. An individual who has received an unfavorable ruling from the ABOS regarding the individual's eligibility for, or status of, certification, may appeal such determination by mailing a notice of appeal to the ABOS office within 60 days of the date such ruling was mailed to him or her. *Exception:* The decisions by the Examinations Committee that a candidate has failed this examination may be appealed only in the manner and to the extent provided in G. below.

Decisions by the Credentials Committee that an candidate's admission to the examination has been deferred is not viewed by the ABOS as an adverse action and no appeal of the decision is permitted unless a candidate has been denied admission or has been deferred for more than two consecutive years.

- B. Upon receipt of a notice of appeal, the concerned Board committee shall consider any information submitted therewith by the individual in support of his or her appeal and make such further investigation as it deems appropriate. If the committee then decides in a manner favorable to the individual, it shall so notify the individual. If the committee does not so determine, it shall notify the individual and the President of the ABOS.
- C. The individual shall then have the right to an appeal hearing to decide whether the determination of the concerned Board committee shall be confirmed, modified, or overruled in accordance with the hearing process described in this appeals procedure.
 1. The President of the ABOS shall appoint an ad hoc appeals committee consisting of three directors of the Board who did not participate in making the determination being appealed, one of whom shall be designated by the President as chairman of the appeals committee.
 2. In the event that the subject matter of the appeal involves complex issues of fact or issues not solely dependent upon medical, surgical, or professional standards, the President of the

American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery, at his or her sole discretion, may appoint a hearing officer to conduct the appeal hearing and to submit a full written report and a recommended decision to the ad hoc appeals committee. The Hearing Officer appointed at the discretion of the President shall be an impartial physician, lawyer or other professional.

3. The Chairman of the Appeals Committee shall convene a hearing before the appeals committee or the hearing officer, if one is appointed, within a reasonable time after their respective appointments, but not less than 60 days after the appointment of the appeals committee and the hearing officer, whichever is later.

D. Prior to the Hearing

1. The concerned Board committee shall provide the Executive Medical Director with such written information concerning its decision as it deems appropriate; a list of witnesses, if any, whom it expects to call to testify; copies of any written material which it considered in making the determination appealed (but only if it intends to present such material at the hearing); and a list of information and documents which the individual is required to produce at the hearing. This material, together with written notice stating the time and place of the hearing, shall be sent to the individual by the Executive Medical Director not less than 30 days prior to the hearing. Not less than seven days prior to the hearing, the concerned Board committee shall provide the Executive Medical Director and the individual with copies of any written reports, affidavits, or statements of experts which the concerned Board committee intends to present at the hearing.
2. Not less than seven days prior to the hearing, the individual shall provide the Executive Medical Director and the concerned Board committee with such written information concerning his or her position as he or she deems appropriate; a list of witnesses, if any, whom he or she expects to call to testify; and copies of any written reports, affidavits, or statements of experts which he or she intends to present at the hearing.
3. The Executive Medical Director shall submit the written material referred to in this Section D. to the members of the appeals committee or to the hearing officer, if one has been appointed, prior to the hearing. Copies of this material must also be submitted to the individual and to the concerned Board committee no later than the time when submitted to the Appeals Committee or the Hearing Officer.

E. The Hearing

The hearing, whether conducted before the Appeals Committee or a Hearing Officer, shall be a hearing de novo. The concerned Board committee and the individual shall have the right to present all relevant information and evidence in support of their respective positions, and neither the concerned Board committee nor the individual shall be limited to the information and evidence considered by the concerned Board committee in making its original determination or its reconsideration of the original decision.

1. The concerned Board Committee shall have the burden of proving at the hearing that the determination being appealed should be confirmed. The standard of proof to be applied by the Appeals Committee and the hearing officer in deciding whether the information and evidence presented at the hearing is sufficient to warrant confirmation of the determination being appealed is by the preponderance or greater weight of the evidence.
2. At the hearing, the concerned Board Committee and its legal or other representatives shall present such relevant information and evidence as it deems appropriate to support its previously made determination. However, the committee shall not have the right to present any information or evidence not previously provided as required in Section D.1. The Committee may call, examine, and cross-examine witnesses.
3. The individual must be present at the hearing. The individual shall have the right to be represented at the hearing by legal counsel or any person of his or her choice. He or she may present such relevant information and evidence as he or she deems appropriate in support of his or her position. However, the individual shall not have the right to present any information or evidence if not previously provided as required in section D.2. The failure of the individual to produce information or documents requested by the concerned Board committee as required in Section D.2. shall be grounds for upholding and confirming the determination of the concerned Board Committee. The individual may call, examine and cross-examine witnesses.
4. The individual and the concerned Board Committee may submit written statements at the close of the hearing. A written record of the hearing shall be made available to the individual at one-half the cost of its preparation.

F. After the Conclusion of the Hearing

1. If the hearing has been conducted before a Hearing Officer, the Hearing Officer shall prepare a written report based upon the information and evidence presented, including the findings of fact determined by the Hearing Officer and a recommended decision as to whether the determination being appealed should be confirmed, modified, or overruled. The Hearing Officer shall submit the written report to the appeals committee and send copies to the individual and the concerned Board committee. The individual and/or the concerned Board committee may file objections to the report and recommendations of the hearing officer with the appeals committee within ten days after receipt of the report. The opposing party shall then have ten days to file its response to such objections with the Appeals Committee.
2. The Appeals Committee shall make its decision following the hearing. If the hearing has been conducted before a Hearing Officer, the appeals committee will first receive the written report and recommendations of the hearing officer and the objections and responses filed thereto by the parties. If a majority of the members of the appeals committee determines, on the basis of the information and evidence presented, including, when applicable, the report and recommendations of the hearing officer, that the determination of the concerned Board committee should be confirmed or modified, the

appeals committee shall so declare. If a majority determines that the concerned Board committee's determination should be overruled, the appeals committee shall so declare. The appeals committee shall inform the individual and the concerned Board committee of its decision in writing within a reasonable time following the hearing, explaining the basis for its judgment. The decision of the appeals committee shall be final and binding.

- G. A candidate who fails the examination may request in writing that his or her examination be rescored by hand to verify the accuracy of the results as reported to him or her. Such a request is to be made within 60 days of his or her being notified of the results of the examination. The request must be accompanied by a check for \$100 payable to the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery to cover the cost of hand scoring. There shall be no further appeal of a failure on this examination.