

**The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc.®**



**HAND SURGERY EXAMINATION (HSE)  
FOR RECERTIFICATION**

**2019 BOOKLET OF INFORMATION**

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## HAND SURGERY EXAMINATION (HSE) IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

HSE Online Registration available	<b>December 1, 2018</b>
<b>Deadline - HSE Registration Finalized</b>	<b>February 1, 2019</b>
Registration Finalized with Late Fee	<b>February 2 – 8, 2019</b>
Hand Exam Withdrawal Date with Partial Refund	<b>March 1, 2019</b>
<b>Hand Surgery Exam for Recertification</b>	<b>April 1 – 30, 2019</b>
Hand Exam Results available on the Board's website after secure login	<b>June 2019</b>
Hand Subspecialty Certificates mailed	<b>August 2019</b>

## **Board Office Policies and Reminders**

- Diplomates with incomplete materials will be notified via email.
- The Board Office is unable to accept faxed or emailed documents in lieu of required uploads to the Registration. Contact the Board Office for assistance.
- Payment of Examination Fees is accepted only by credit card – VISA, MasterCard or American Express.
- Notification of change in address, telephone number, email, etc. must be updated on the Board’s website under “My Profile” after secure login.
- Note all Board deadline dates to avoid penalties or exclusion from the examination.
- Stay current on all Board requirements via the Board’s website.

**If you need assistance, please contact the Board Office at [hand@abplasticsurgery.org](mailto:hand@abplasticsurgery.org).**

THIS BOOKLET OF INFORMATION SUPERSEDES ALL PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED BOOKLETS OF INFORMATION OF THE BOARD CONCERNING REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND MAY BE MODIFIED AT ANY TIME.

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### **Advisory Council Members**

The members listed below were nominated from the American Association of Plastic Surgeons (AAPS), the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), the American Association for Hand Surgery (AAHS), the American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH), the American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons (ASMS), the American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery (ASRM) and the American Society of Craniofacial Surgery (ASCFS).

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## **Board Staff**

Melissa A. Karch, Administrator  
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Gwen A. Hanuscin, Examination and Projects Coordinator  
Melissa M. Hill, Oral Examination Coordinator  
Cassandra Kosiowski, Examination Associate  
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## **Mission Statement**

The Mission of The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. is to promote safe, ethical, efficacious plastic surgery to the public by maintaining high standards for the education, examination, certification and continuous certification of plastic surgeons as specialists and subspecialists.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this Booklet of Information is to describe the Board's Hand Subspecialty Recertification Program and, in particular, to describe the registration process and the knowledge-based examination. This Booklet of Information supersedes all previously published information of the Board covering requirements, policies and procedures and may be modified at any time.

## **Change in Mailing Address, Telephone Number, Facsimile and/or Email**

Keep your contact information current with the Board through your Physician Profile on the Board's website, [www.abplasticsurgery.org](http://www.abplasticsurgery.org). Email is the primary source of communication between you and the Board.

**All inquiries regarding Hand Subspecialty Certification or Recertification should be addressed to the Board Office at [hand@abplasticsurgery.org](mailto:hand@abplasticsurgery.org) or 215-587-9322.**



# Hand Surgery

## Definition

Hand surgery 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

In 1982, the American Boards of Orthopaedic Surgery, Plastic Surgery, and Surgery were asked by the American Association for Hand Surgery and the American Society for Surgery of the Hand to consider special recognition of those diplomates of these Boards who had demonstrated special qualifications in hand surgery. An Ad Hoc Committee was formed which included representatives from the three Boards and the two Societies. In 1984, the Ad Hoc Committee was reorganized as a Joint Committee and empowered by the Boards to explore further the feasibility of the certification process. The Joint Committee recommended that the three Boards apply to the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) for authorization to offer a Hand Subspecialty Certificate.

The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. is not an educational institution and the certificates it issues are not to be considered degrees. The Hand Subspecialty Certificate does not confer legal privileges or license to practice medicine or the specialty of hand surgery. Standards of certification are clearly distinct from those of licensure. Possession of a Hand Subspecialty Certificate 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 American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. to hold a Hand Subspecialty Certificate to be considered qualified to include hand surgery within the practice of plastic surgery. Under no circumstances should a diplomate be considered not qualified to practice within an area

of a subspecialty solely because of lack of subspecialty certification.

The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. has never been concerned with measures that might gain special privileges or recognition for its diplomates in the practice of hand surgery or of the primary specialty of plastic surgery. It is not the intent nor has it been the function of the certificate or of the Board to define requirements for membership on the staffs of hospitals or to determine who shall or shall not perform hand surgery. The Board intends the Hand Subspecialty Certificate to represent those surgeons who, by virtue of additional fellowship training, practice characteristics that reflect a major commitment to hand surgery, and contributions to this field, have demonstrated qualifications in hand surgery that deserve special recognition.

# ***Hand Subspecialty Recertification***

## **Purpose**

The purpose of Hand Subspecialty Recertification is to demonstrate to the profession and the public, through periodic evaluation, that a specialist has maintained continuing qualifications at a currently acceptable level in hand surgery.

## **The Hand Surgery Examination for Recertification**

The Hand Surgery Examination for Recertification has historically been developed and administered by the Joint Committee on Hand Surgery of the American Boards of Orthopaedic Surgery, Plastic Surgery and Surgery. The first recertification examination was administered in 1996 and subsequent examinations are administered annually. As of 2018, ABPS develops its own Hand Recertification Exam to be administered as an Internet Based Exam. The ABPS works closely with plastic and hand surgery specialty societies in the development of content for the exam. The Hand Surgery Examination for Recertification consists of multiple-choice questions designed to evaluate the diplomate's cognitive knowledge of clinical hand surgery applicable to those in practice for greater than 7 years.

## **Requirements for Recertification**

1. Must have been certified in hand surgery by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery or American Board of Surgery for seven or more years at the time of submission of the registration form for recertification and such certification must not have been revoked.
2. Must have a **valid** Primary Plastic Surgery Certificate and be current on all Continuous Certification requirements for those diplomates participating in the Continuous Certification program of the Board.
3. Must have a current, **valid**, full and unrestricted license to practice medicine in a state, territory, or possession of the

United States or by a Canadian province which is not the current subject of any disciplinary action or sanction including, but not limited to, revocation, suspension, qualification or other sanction, and must continue to be licensed throughout the certification process.

- Must submit a photocopy of this license and all registration certificate(s), bearing a valid expiration date with the registration material through the time of the examination.
- Restrictions or sanctions to any medical license must be reported to the Board Office within 60 days of the restriction.
- Restrictions will delay the diplomate's progress through the examination process.

**NOTE:** If practicing in a country other than the United States or Canada, a valid unrestricted license, translated into English, from that country is required and must be uploaded online. Foreign licenses will be accepted if the physician's license to practice medicine in a state or territory of the United States or Canada has not been suspended or revoked and has not lapsed or been surrendered in one or more jurisdictions to avoid sanctions by the jurisdiction's licensing authority.

4. Must be actively engaged in the practice of hand surgery as indicated by holding full operating privileges in a hospital or be involved in the teaching of hand surgery and/or relevant research activities.
  - Letters of verification of current hospital medical staff privileges in hand surgery and/or plastic surgery must be provided to the Board from all medical staff office(s) of each institution. Start and end dates of privileges must be listed.
  - **Accreditation Certificate(s) from Outpatient Surgical Facilities:** Certificates or currently-dated documentation verifying the accreditation or accreditation in process of all non-hospital surgical facilities where the diplomate operates must be

provided. **It is expected that all procedures under IV sedation or general anesthetic are performed in accredited centers.**

5. Must receive satisfactory Peer Review Evaluations regarding surgical qualifications by the current **Chief of Staff, Chief of Surgery, or Chief of Plastic Surgery** in the primary hospital and by **two hand surgeons**, local or regional, who are familiar with the diplomate's current work in hand surgery. Peer evaluations submitted within one year with the Continuous Certification Exam registration may be acceptable to satisfy this requirement.
6. Must maintain an ethical standing in the profession and moral status in the community acceptable to the American Board of Plastic Surgery and in conformity with the Code of Ethics of the Board. Moral and ethical practices that do not conform to the Board's Code of Ethics may result in rejection of an registration or in deferral of examination until such matters have been resolved satisfactorily. Any sanctions or restrictions to any state medical license must be reported at the time of registration and throughout the process.
7. Must submit the prescribed Registration Material, all required documents and pay the established fees.
8. Must successfully pass any and all examinations prescribed by the American Board of Plastic Surgery.

### **Continuous Certification in Plastic Surgery via the Hand Surgery Examination (HSE)**

The Hand Surgery Recertification Examination, as of 2019, will now mirror the Continuous Certification (previously MOC-PS) Hand Modular Examination to satisfy the examination requirement to renew both Hand Surgery and primary Plastic Surgery certificates.

- The Hand Surgery Recertification Examination must be completed within the current 10-year Continuous Certification Cycle.
- **Registration forms are required for both the primary Plastic Surgery and Hand Surgery Examination processes.**
- Expiration of the diplomate’s primary plastic surgery certificate automatically causes expiration of the Hand Subspecialty Certificate (HSC).
- If primary certification is expired or revoked, admissibility to the HSE process can be reinstated with the renewal of the primary certification by completing all Continuous Certification requirements.
- Hand Subspecialty Recertification can be obtained through the ABPS, ABS or ABOS.
- All Recertification Examinations can be taken up to three years prior to the expiration date on the certificate.

**EXAMPLE TIMELINE– HAND SURGERY EXAM  
IN LIEU OF CONTINUOUS CERTIFICATION EXAM**

PRIMARY CERT DATE	PRIMARY EXP DATE	HSC DATE	HSC EXP DATE	HAND RECERT EXAM	NEW PRIMARY CERT. EXP DATE	NEW HSC EXP DATE
2009	2019	2010	2020	2017, 2018 or 2019	<b>2029</b>	<b>2030</b>

## **Restrictions to Medical Licensure**

It is the diplomate's responsibility to report, within 60 days, all disciplinary actions to medical licenses from any and all state medical licensing boards. The following sanctions by any state medical licensing board where the diplomate holds a license are considered a restricted license and will delay a diplomate's admissibility to the examination process:

1. Limitation on practice or parts of practice
2. Probation
3. Probation with monitoring
4. Probation with supervision
5. Suspension

Other sanctions to a diplomate's medical license such as reprimands, fines, citations, community service or a stayed suspension must also be reported to the Board and will be considered by the Ethics Committee before a diplomate is admissible to the HSE for Recertification.

## **Notification of Admissibility to the Recertification Examination**

Once the requirements have been met and a registration form for Recertification has been approved, diplomates will be sent an email notification that the Approval Letter is available for download from the Board's website.



# **Taking the Hand Surgery Examination (HSE) for Recertification**

## **Internet-Based Testing – New Exam Format**

Beginning in 2018, the Hand Surgery Examination for Recertification is now administered in an Internet-Based testing format, rather than a Computer-Based Test which traditionally involved traveling to a testing center. The Exam can be taken on any computer with internet connection and is no longer limited to one day with a four hour window.

The Hand Surgery Exam will now incorporate additional content relevant to each question. After answering a question, the diplomate will be directed to the supporting rationale. After reading the rationale, the diplomate will be offered an additional opportunity to answer the question if incorrectly answered on the first attempt. Scoring for the exam is based on the final response. *This change dramatically reduces the amount of study time required ahead of testing.*

### **Accessing the Exam**

After submission and approval of the HSE registration form, diplomates will be listed as registered with the Board Office for the examination. The examination platform will be accessed through the Board's website, after secure login.

Email notifications and reminders will be sent in the weeks and days leading up to the assessment window. The Board recommends diplomates sign in and complete the tutorial exam on any device they plan to use to complete the questions. This should be done well in advance of the testing window.

The Exam can be accessed at any point throughout the administration period, April 1-30, 2019, and diplomates can exit and re-enter as many times as necessary to complete the Exam. However, once a question is viewed, it must be answered. Previously viewed questions are not accessible. The Exam must be completed by April 30, 2019. No extensions or exceptions will be granted.

The Hand Surgery Exam for Recertification is a secure exam by attestation. The test taker will verify identity and review an Examination Security Agreement as well as the ABPS Exam Honor Code. Diplomates may access outside resources while taking the exam, however sharing questions or answers with peers is prohibited.

### **Examination Content**

The examination consists of 200 multiple-choice questions. Starting in 2019, the HSE for Recertification will be the same exam form as the Hand Module for the Continuous Certification program. Each examination contains a Core module with 50 questions on the core topics of plastic surgery practice. The remaining 150 questions will emphasize Hand Surgery.

### **Preparation for the Hand Surgery Examination for Recertification**

Under the new format, the Board has incorporated the study material into the examination itself. However, based on diplomate feedback, the American Society for Surgery of the Hand will make a study guide available for purchase which is an excellent resource to prepare for the examination.

### **Withdrawal from the Examination**

The Board Office must receive a letter or email from the diplomate indicating the intent to withdraw from the examination **by March 1<sup>st</sup>** (at least 30 calendar days before the **first** date of the examination period which is April 1<sup>st</sup>). Diplomates who fail to complete the examination will not be granted another opportunity to do so until the following April.

# ***Results and Policies***

## **Results**

The results of the examination will be mailed and posted to the Physician Profiles in June. The time period between administration of the examination and notification of results is necessary to allow for extensive analysis and to assure that individual results are reliable and accurate. Diplomates will receive a Result Letter and Performance Report.

Results of the examination will not be reported to the public until a week **after** the results mailing date to allow sufficient time for diplomates to access their letters. Please note that results are available to the diplomate online with secure login to the Board's website.

Diplomates will pass or fail on the strength of their performance on the examination. The score on the examination will be determined by the total number of alternatives answered correctly. Therefore, diplomates are encouraged to answer all items.

## **PASS**

If a diplomate passes the Hand Surgery Examination, he/she will be informed in writing. An email notification will also be sent once the Result Letters and Performance Reports are posted to the individual Physician Profiles on the Board's website, accessible with secure login.

## **FAIL**

If a diplomate fails the Hand Examination, he/she will be informed in writing. A diplomate who has received a failing result must repeat the entire Hand Surgery Examination.

## **Reporting to ABMS and Specialty Societies**

The Board supplies basic identifying data on diplomates who are successful in obtaining Hand Subspecialty Certification and Recertification to the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) for its Directory. The individual's biographic entry in the

*Official ABMS Directory of Board Certified Medical Specialists* will show Hand Surgery Certification and Recertification as well as Plastic Surgery Certification.

The Board also notifies the success of diplomates on the Hand Surgery Examinations to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the American Association for Hand Surgery (AAHS) and the American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH). Diplomates should notify the Board Office in advance if they do not wish to be included on the notification lists. Diplomates will have their biographic listings retained in the directory for Hand Surgery only if they have acquired Hand Surgery Recertification prior to the expiration of the Hand Surgery Certificate.

### **Special Situations - Appeals Policy**

The Board has established a policy relative to resolution of questions or disagreements regarding its decisions on admissibility, the form, content, administration or results of the examination and the revocation of certificates. If a diplomate has a concern in any of these areas, it should be expressed in writing to the Board Office. A copy of the Appeals Policy, which is available on the Board's website, will be sent to that individual.

### **Diplomates with Disabilities**

The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. has established a policy regarding examination of diplomates with disabilities. If a diplomate is requesting an accommodation based on a disability, the request should be expressed in writing to the Board Office at the time they submit the Registration Material. A copy of the Policy for Examination of Diplomates with Disabilities is available on the Board's website. The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will provide reasonable accommodations to diplomates with proven disabilities. It is expected that pre-existing disabilities were identified by the

candidate for previous Board examinations. Required documentation previously approved by the Board for an identified disability accommodation will usually be sufficient for the Hand Surgery Examination.

### **Irregularities**

The validity of scores on the examination is protected by every means available. The Board will not report a score which it has determined to be invalid, i.e., which does not represent a reasonable assessment of the diplomate's knowledge or competence sampled by the examination. The performance of all diplomates is monitored and may be analyzed for the purpose of detecting invalid scores.

If evidence by observation or analysis suggests that a diplomate's scores may be invalid because of irregular behavior, the Board will withhold those scores pending further investigation and the affected diplomate will be notified. Examples of irregularities affecting the validity of scores would include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) copying answers from another diplomate; 2) permitting one's answers to be copied; or 3) unauthorized possession, reproduction, or disclosure of examination questions or answers or other specific information regarding the content of the examination before, during, or after the examination. In such circumstances, upon analysis of all available information, the Board will make a determination as to the validity of the scores in question. If the Board determines that the scores are invalid, it will not release them, and notification of that determination may be made to legitimately interested third parties.

Diplomates or other persons who are directly implicated in an irregularity are subject to additional sanctions. For example, the Board may bar the persons permanently from all future examinations, terminate a diplomate's participation in an ongoing examination, invalidate the results of the diplomate's examination, withhold or revoke a certificate or take other

appropriate action. Diplomates or other persons subject to additional sanctions will be provided with a written notice of the charges and an opportunity to respond to such charges in accordance with the reconsideration and appeal procedures established by the Board.

### **Substance Abuse or Chemical Dependency**

Diplomates with a history of abuse of a controlled substance or chemical dependency will not be admitted to any examination unless they present evidence satisfactory to the State Medical Board that they have successfully completed the program of treatment prescribed for their condition. All restrictions on the state medical license must be lifted prior to the deadline for the Reply Form.

### **Inquiries as to Status**

The Board considers a diplomate's record **not** to be in the public domain. When an inquiry is received by the Board regarding a diplomate's status with the Board, a general, but factual, statement is provided which indicates that person's status within the process of certification. The Board provides this information **only** to individuals, organizations, and institutions with a reasonably valid "need to know" for professional reasons.

### **Certificates**

The Board will issue a Hand Subspecialty Certificate for Recertification to diplomates who successfully complete the recertification process. **Certificates are valid for a 10 year period.** The recertification expiration date will be ten years from the date of the successful completion of the Recertification Examination unless the examination was taken before the previous certificate expired. In the latter instance, the recertification expiration date will be ten years from the expiration date of the previous certificate.

Certificates issued by the Board shall be in such form as the Directors may from time to time determine. Certificates are



signed by the Chair, Secretary-Treasurer and Executive Director of the Board and shall have placed upon them the official seal of the Board. Additional certificates are available upon written request. A fee for each certificate ordered must be included with the request (refer to Fee Schedule on the Board's website). The diplomate's name should be listed, as it should appear on the certificate.

### **Advertising**

A diplomate in the HSE process may advertise as "Board Admissible" or "Board Eligible" for the subspecialty certificate once a registration form is approved by the Board confirming admissibility to the examination. ABPS diplomates who have obtained a Hand Subspecialty Certificate may advertise themselves as follows: "ABPS Certified in the Subspecialty of Hand Surgery." Those with an expired Hand Subspecialty Certificate may only list the certification on their Curriculum Vitae or advertising materials if the dates of certification are specified.

### **Revocation of Certificates**

Any certificate issued by the Board shall be subject to revocation at any time if the Board, in its judgment, determines that a diplomate was not properly qualified to receive it or has become disqualified since its receipt. The diplomate shall be advised if revocation of certification is contemplated and shall be given an opportunity to reply to allegations bringing about such action. The diplomate will be given an opportunity to rebut such allegations according to the directions and operations manual of the Board.

The Board may revoke the Hand Subspecialty Certificate of any diplomate who, after opportunity for full and fair hearing by the medical staff or other appropriate body of a hospital, state or county medical society, government licensing body, professional specialty society or a court of law, has been found guilty of or pleaded guilty to a felony, professional

incompetence, professional misconduct, unethical conduct or harmful, deceptive, or fraudulent advertising. Refer to the ABPS Code of Ethics.

The Board shall have the jurisdiction and right to determine whether or not the evidence and information placed before it is sufficient to constitute grounds for the revocation of any certificate issued by the Board. The diplomate will be provided the Appeals Policy of the Board, and the Policy will be observed in pursuing resolution of the issues placed before the Board.

Each Hand Subspecialty Certificate issued by the Board shall be subject to revocation in the event that the physician so certified shall have made any misstatement of material fact, or failed to make any statement of material fact, in the registration form for Hand Subspecialty Certification or Recertification or in any other statement or representation to the corporation or its representatives or shall have otherwise acquired the certificate by deception. Upon revocation, the Hand Subspecialty Certificate shall be surrendered and returned to the Board Office.

**For questions or concerns, please contact the Board  
Office staff at [hand@abplasticsurgery.org](mailto:hand@abplasticsurgery.org).  
We are here to help!**

# Hand Surgery Examination Fee Schedule

Registration Fee	\$ 500.00
Registration Late Fee	\$ 160.00
Exam Withdrawal Fee	\$ 200.00
Missing/Incomplete Items Fee	\$ 130.00
Additional Certificate Fee	\$ 145.00

- ❖ All examination fees must be submitted by credit card only. Additional certificate fees may be accepted by check. Foreign currencies, including Canadian, are unacceptable. Fees are non-refundable.
- ❖ Fees are subject to change by the Board. The fee schedule applicable to the current examination will apply regardless of when the diplomate is approved for admission to the examination.
- ❖ The Board is a nonprofit organization, and the fees of diplomates are used solely for defraying the actual expenses of the Board. The Directors of the Board serve without remuneration.

THIS BOOKLET OF INFORMATION SUPERSEDES ALL PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED BOOKLETS OF INFORMATION OF THE BOARD CONCERNING REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND MAY BE MODIFIED AT ANY TIME.



The Registered Trademark Logo of the American Board of Plastic Surgery depicts Gaspare Tagliacozzi (1545-1599) of Bologna, considered to be the father of modern plastic surgery. His contributions are summarized in the treatise he authored in 1597, "De Curtorum Chirurgia per Insitionem." The founding year of the Board, 1937, is included on the Logo. **The Board's trademarked logo is not permitted for use on diplomate or candidate websites.**

### A Member Board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)

