

The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc.®



HAND SURGERY CONTINUOUS CERTIFICATION 2024 BOOKLET OF INFORMATION

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HAND SURGERY CONTINUOUS CERTIFICATION IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

Hand Surgery Continuous Certification Form available <i>must be submitted and approved in order to renew hand certification</i>	January 1, 2024
Deadline – Hand Surgery Continuous Certification Registration Due	April 30, 2024
Hand Surgery Continuous Certification Registration Due with Late Fee	May 1 - 6, 2024
Hand Surgery Self-Assessments – Internet-Based Administration	April 1 – 30, 2024
Self-Assessment Results available	July 2024
Hand Subspecialty Certificates mailed in the year of certificate expiration	August 2024

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 online Registration. Contact the Board Office for assistance.
- Payment of 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 log in.
- Note all Board deadline dates carefully to avoid penalties or exclusion from the assessment administration.
- Stay current on all Board requirements via the Board’s website.

If you need assistance, please contact the Board Office at 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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The members listed below were nominated from the American Association of Plastic Surgeons (AAPS), the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the Aesthetic Society, 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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Sarah S. Praul, Credentialing Specialist and Examination Associate

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 Continuous Certification Program, the registration process, and the knowledge-based assessments. 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. Email is the primary source of communication between you and the Board.

All inquiries regarding Hand Subspecialty Certification or Continuous Certification should be addressed to the Board Office at 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 hospital credentialing 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 Surgery Subspecialty Continuous Certification

Purpose

The purpose of Hand Subspecialty Continuous Certification 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.

Hand Surgery Continuous Certification

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. In 2018, ABPS developed its own Hand Recertification Exam to be administered as an Internet Based Exam. In 2021, the Hand Recertification Exam transitioned to annual Self-assessment Activities within the ABPS Continuous Certification Program. The ABPS works closely with plastic and hand surgery subject matter experts in the development of content for the assessments. The Hand Surgery assessments consist of 30-question multiple-choice assessments designed to evaluate the diplomate's practice-based knowledge of clinical hand surgery and core plastic surgery topics.

Requirements for Continuous Certification in Hand Surgery

1. Must have received the Hand Surgery Sub-specialty certificate by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery or American Board of Surgery. Such certification must not have been revoked, suspended, or placed on probation.
2. Must participate in the Hand Module of the ABPS Continuous Certification program which includes annual assessments in Hand Surgery and a Professionalism Registration form.
3. 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. The license must not be subjected to any disciplinary action or sanction including, but not limited to, revocation, suspension, probation, 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.
 - 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 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 for the Continuous Certification Program of the primary Plastic Surgery Certificate may be acceptable to satisfy this requirement if they are dated within one year of the expiration of the Hand Sub-specialty certificate.
 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. Adverse Actions to the Diplomate's primary certificate will also be applied to the Diplomate's Hand Sub-specialty certificate.
 7. Must submit the required documents and pay the established fees.
 8. Must successfully pass all assessments prescribed by the American Board of Plastic Surgery for each cycle length.

Hand Surgery Recertification via Continuous Certification

Hand Surgery Recertification has been replaced by the ABPS Continuous Certification Program. Diplomates who receive an initial Hand Sub-specialty certificate from the ABPS will automatically be entered into the ABPS Continuous Certification program. Hand Sub-specialty Diplomates must complete the Hand Module of the Self-Assessment Activity to satisfy the Knowledge Assessment requirement of the Continuous Certification program. Successful completion of eight assessments within a ten-year cycle will renew the certificates in both Hand Surgery and primary Plastic Surgery.

- Expiration of the diplomate's primary plastic surgery certificate automatically causes expiration of the Hand Subspecialty Certificate.

If primary certification expires, admissibility to the Hand Surgery Continuous Certification process can be reinstated with renewal of the primary certification by completing all outstanding Continuous Certification requirements of the primary certificate.

Renewal of the Diplomate's Hand Sub-specialty certificate, after the first cycle, through ABPS can only be performed by successful completion of the ABPS Continuous Certification requirements. The ABPS will not accept completion of the recertification exam through ABS or ABOS.

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 are considered a restricted license and will suspend a diplomate's participation in the Continuous Certification process.:

1. Limitation on practice or parts of practice
2. Probation
3. Suspension
4. Revocation

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 allowed to continue in the Hand Recertification and Continuous Certification processes.

Certificate of Recertification

The Board will issue a Hand Subspecialty Certificate for Recertification to diplomates who successfully complete the recertification process. **Certificates issued in 2024 or after will be valid for a 5-year certification period.** The recertification expiration date will be five years from the date of the successful completion of the Continuous Certification program.

Status of Certification

Starting in 2024 the ABPS will migrate to undated certificates. The original primary Hand Sub-specialty certificate will be the only printed certificate that the ABPS will provide. The current status of the Diplomate's primary and Hand Sub-specialty certificates will be reported on the Board's website. Diplomates can locate their status and pending requirements by logging into the Board's website and navigating to their individual tracking page. The ABPS will send frequent reminders to Diplomates regarding their pending requirements so Diplomates must make sure that they update their contact information at least on an annual basis.

Transitioning to Longitudinal Learning

Adult learning research has demonstrated that adults retain knowledge better if they are exposed to the material repeatedly over spaced intervals, called Longitudinal Learning, compared to single point in time examinations. Accordingly, the 24 Boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) have migrated to Longitudinal Learning formats. The ABPS Self-Assessment pilot program with the ABMS was approved in 2021. The last 200-question Recertification Exam was administered in April 2021. The longitudinal assessment format is now fully integrated into both the primary plastic surgery and the Hand subspecialty Continuous Certification programs.

Self-Assessment Activity

In 2019, the ABPS introduced its Longitudinal Learning Assessment, referred to as "Self-Assessment." This annual Self-Assessment is available the entire month of April and contains 30 questions in the diplomate's chosen module. **To satisfy the requirement for the Hand Surgery subspecialty certificate, the Diplomate must select the Hand module each year as part of ABPS Continuous Certification.** Diplomates must successfully complete eight assessments within the 10-year certification cycle.

The Board understands that a majority of diplomates were in the middle of their 10-year certification cycles when the ABPS completely transitioned to the annual Self-Assessment requirement in 2021.

Diplomates with certificates expiring between 2021 and 2026 are required to successfully complete all available Self-Assessments before their Hand Sub-specialty certificate expires to satisfy the knowledge assessment component of their Continuous Certification cycle. Once transitioned to five-year certification cycles, four self-assessments will be required.

New Testing Format

The annual Self-Assessment questions will be available in an Internet-Based Testing format, rather than a Computer-Based Test which traditionally involved traveling to a testing center. The questions can be completed on any device with internet connection and is no longer limited to one day with a four-hour window.

The Self-Assessment incorporates relevant educational content for each question, essentially a built-in study guide. After answering the question, all diplomates will be directed to the supporting rationale. The diplomate will be offered an additional opportunity to answer the question if incorrectly answered on the first attempt.

Accessing the Self-Assessment

The Self-Assessment can be accessed at any point throughout the administration period April 1-30 and diplomates can exit and re-enter as many times as necessary to complete. The questions must be completed by April 30th. **No extensions or exceptions will be granted.**

The Self-Assessment will be accessed through a link on the diplomate's Tracking Page. Clicking this link will direct the diplomate to the testing website.

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 the specific device they plan to use to complete the questions. This should be done well in advance of the testing window.

Self-Assessment Content

The ABPS Continuous Certification Self-Assessment activity includes 4 subspecialty modules, Comprehensive, Hand, Craniofacial and Cosmetic. **To maintain their Hand Sub-specialty certificate, Diplomates must choose the Hand module.** Each annual assessment consists of 30 multiple choice questions. Each assessment includes 24 questions specific to the sub-specialty module, and 6 core contemporary questions common to all modules.

Assessment and examination questions prepared by The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. (hereinafter "Board"), and said items are protected under the copyright laws of the United States and other countries. The assessment and examination items may only be used for such purposes as are designated from time to time by the Board. The assessment materials cannot be used for other purposes without explicit permission. The Board reserves all other rights. Copying, by any means, of all or any part of such assessment or examination items or the unauthorized use in any way whatsoever of said items is strictly prohibited.

Results and Policies

Results

Scoring for the assessment is based on the final response.

When the diplomate completes all 30 Self-Assessment questions, a **preliminary** score will be shown immediately. At the end of the self-assessment administration window, psychometric analysis of all Diplomate scores will determine the final passing score. This is formally reported to the diplomates in July each year. Diplomates will receive a Result Letter and Performance Report.

Though the passing score is determined by the final response, the initial first responses will be analyzed to identify knowledge gaps. The Board will provide an individualized performance report, linking the Diplomate to society and other outside educational resources based on the topics in which the diplomate performed poorly.

Failing or Missing an Administration

Diplomates must accrue at least eight successful scores within the current 10-year certification cycle to complete the cognitive component of the Continuous Certification Program. The diplomate will have up to two opportunities to replace an unsuccessful assessment.

If a diplomate does not complete the Self-Assessment within the administration window, those questions will be inaccessible until the following year's Assessment administration window. All past due Self-Assessments will be available in April of each subsequent year, with the ability to complete all missing years during one administration window.

If a diplomate does not successfully complete eight Self-Assessments before the expiration of the certificate, the certificate will expire.

Reporting to ABMS and Specialty Societies

The Board supplies basic identifying data on diplomates who are successful in obtaining initial Hand Subspecialty Certification and renewed Continuous Certification 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 Sub-specialty Certification and 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 successfully completed Hand Surgery Continuous Certification prior to the expiration of their current Hand Surgery Certification cycle.

Special Situations – Appeals/Dispute Resolution Policy

The Board has established a policy relative to resolution of questions or disagreements regarding its decisions on admissibility, the form, content, administration 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/Dispute Resolution Policy is available on the Board's website.

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. 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 Assessments.

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 license restrictions because of a history of abuse of a controlled substance or chemical dependency will not be admitted to any examination until they present evidence satisfactory to the particular 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 resumption of the ABPS Continuous Certification program.

Certificates

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 candidate in the Hand Sub-specialty certification 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 and expiration 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 refute 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, suspension, or probation of any certificate issued by the Board. The diplomate will be provided the Dispute Resolution and 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 Continuous Certification 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

We are here to help!

Hand Surgery Continuous Certification Fees

Hand Surgery Continuous Certification Registration Fee	\$500.00
Annual Continuous Certification Fee	\$410.00
Continuous Certification Form Late Fee	\$160.00
Missing/Incomplete Items Fee	\$130.00
Additional Certificate Fee	\$145.00

- ❖ Most fees must be submitted by credit card only. Additional 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.**

Diplomates currently certified in Plastic Surgery by the ABPS may use the Board's "Certified By" logo. This logo is available to qualified Diplomates on the Board website under their tracking page.



CERTIFIED BY
The American Board
of Plastic Surgery Inc.™

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

