



GLOBAL SPINE DIPLOMA PROGRAM

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By registering for the Global Spine Diploma Program, you fully accept all Terms and Conditions of registration as detailed in this document.

Contents

- DEFINITIONS
- FORMAT OF TRAINING PROGRAM
- ELIGIBILITY
- REGISTRATION
- THE FEE
- CANCELLATION, REFUND POLICY, AND DEFERRAL POLICY
- DURING THE TRAINING PROGRAM
- RESULTS OF TRAINING PROGRAM
- LIABILITY DISCLAIMER
- APPEAL
- MISCONDUCT
- PERSONAL DATA
- APPLICABLE LAW AND JURISDICTION

DEFINITIONS

Participant(s): refers to the person(s) taking part in the training program.

Eligibility: The training program's eligibility details are described on the AO Spine website.

AO Spine: AO Foundation, AO Spine, headquartered at Clavadelerstrasse 8, Davos, Switzerland

Duration: The program consists of five Modules. The duration of each Module is eight weeks. In total, the learning pathway takes 12 months.

Training program: refers to the exercise designed to acquire the knowledge required to earn the Global Spine Diploma. The event is offered and processed online through a learning management system used by AO Spine.

Semester: The semester is a learning block divided into modules.

Module: Each semester contains either two or three different modules, each based on a specific set of pathologies and aligned with the AO Spine curriculum. Each module is set for a period of eight weeks.

Fee: refers only to the administrative and tuition fees associated with the Program.

The **administrative fee** is due during the application process and is nonrefundable.

The **tuition fee** is split into two installments. The first is due before the first semester starts, the second before the second semester starts. Neither administrative or tuition fee cover any travel or accommodation costs, or any additional expenses.

Refunds are provided according to the refund policy outlined in this document.



Learning management system: is the platform that is used to provide the training program, which is offered entirely online.

FORMAT OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

AO Foundation, AO Spine offer the AO Spine Program to gain knowledge in spine surgery.

The training program is based on the [AO Spine Curriculum](#) and contains five modules, each based on a set of pathologies. Modules are offered in sequential order.

At the start of each module participants are provided with the study plan containing an overview of self-study material for each week and the dates of the mandatory synchronous activities (e.g. online case discussions) scheduled for the module. Participants are moreover assigned to a small discussion group at the beginning of each module or semester. The expected time investment for self-study and mandatory activities is approximately 3–5 hours a week over the whole training program period.

Formative assessment tasks contribute to a summative grade and validate the success of training program participants.

All module chairpersons and faculty members supporting the training program are experts in their respective fields of spine surgery and support the participants in gaining knowledge by answering questions and steering weekly discussions.

ELIGIBILITY

Language

Each participant must be fluent in writing and understanding English. This is a prerequisite to participate in the Global Spine Diploma Program.

By applying and registering for the training program, you agree that any and all claims due to language and misinterpretations are excluded.

Curriculum vitae (CV)

Interested persons must be recent graduates of an orthopedic or neurosurgery program (within ten years of graduation) and provide their CV and their certificate of a completed orthopedic or neurosurgery surgeon training program to AO Spine for an eligibility check.

To be considered eligible, a person must also be an AO Spine member.

REGISTRATION

The link to apply for the training program is made available on the Global Spine Diploma Program website. Candidates are responsible for providing a complete set of application documents and paying the administrative fee before applications close.

The Program Committee and AO Spine staff evaluate eligibility. Prospective participants who pass the eligibility check are provided with a link to register for the training program and pay the first semester tuition fee. Participants are only enrolled in the training program if they have registered and paid the semester tuition fee within the given deadline.

Participants who are eligible to proceed to the second semester receive a link to register for the second semester and pay the second semester tuition fee. Participants are only enrolled in the second semester if they have registered paid the second semester tuition fee within the



given deadline.

THE FEE

An administrative fee of CHF 100 is required to verify eligibility. This must be paid during the application process. The fee is nonrefundable.

A tuition fee of CHF 2'500 is due in two equal instalments by semester (participants must pay one installment of the tuition per semester).

Payment of fees must be made in Swiss francs (CHF). Payment by credit card is recommended to avoid delays in registration and to guarantee availability.

CANCELLATION, REFUND POLICY, AND DEFERRAL POLICY

Deferral of a course is postponement of commencement after accepting a place, usually for a year. This is common in many university courses, but most continuing medical education courses do not allow deferral.

Because the Global Spine Diploma Program has a limited number of places, deferral is not permitted once a place has been offered.

If an applicant does not accept the place or does not pay the first semester fee, they are free to reapply for a place in the program. A place following reapplication is not guaranteed.

Withdrawal before commencement

Once an applicant has been offered a place in the program, the first semester fee must be paid in full.

Withdrawal after payment of the fee and before commencement of the semester must be declared in writing to the AO Spine program manager (e-mail: globalspinediploma@aospine.org) and will be subject to the following refund policy:

<u>Fee Refund</u>	<u>Withdrawal Date</u>
90 percent	More than 90 days before the program commencement date
75 percent	Between 61 and 90 days before the program commencement date
50 percent	Between 31 and 60 days before the program commencement date
25 percent	Less than 30 days before the start of the program

Withdrawal after commencement

Notification of intent to withdraw from the program after commencement must be submitted in writing to the AO Spine program manager (e-mail: globalspinediploma@aospine.org) and include the reason for withdrawal.

The semester fee will be forfeited unless the withdrawal is due to exceptional circumstances which were unforeseen prior to commencement. If this is the case, a participant may apply for a semester fee refund.

The following reasons should be accompanied by supporting documentation which state why it is not possible to continue with the program:

- Medical illness which began or worsened after commencement
- Change in employment arrangements since commencement
- Personal or family reasons which are beyond the participant's control
- Other hardship situations

Withdrawal because of a change of mind or dissatisfaction with the program will not be considered as exceptional circumstances.

If approved, withdrawal for exceptional circumstances will result in the following semester fee refund:

<u>Fee Refund</u>	<u>Withdrawal Date</u>
90 percent	During the first week of module 1
75 percent	During the rest of module 1
50 percent	During module 2
25 percent	During module 3

Withdrawal will mean no readmission to the program other than by reapplication.

DURING THE TRAINING PROGRAM

During the 12-month training program the five modules are offered in a set, sequential order. The order may vary between cohorts. Module content opens week-by-week. Once open, it remains open for the duration of the program. Participants must complete assessments and activities during the module to receive academic credit.

Engagement with program peers and faculty is just as important as self-study. In addition to self-study of materials such as book chapters, AO Spine training videos, journals articles etc, participants are therefore also required to contribute weekly posts to their discussion group and join live case discussions during a module. Dates of these activities are provided well in advance. The allocation to small discussion groups is largely by region and occurs once the participant is enrolled in the training program.

The training program is offered fully online. Therefore, it is important that participants ensure that they have access to a stable internet connection in order to guarantee a well-functioning online environment. It is the participant's responsibility to ensure good internet connection so that he/she can participate in the training program and live activities according to the schedule. By applying and registering for the training program, you agree that you are responsible for your information technology (IT) equipment and Internet connection, and that all and any claims due to technical misunderstandings or misinterpretations are excluded.

RESULTS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Satisfactory progress

Each program module requires participants to receive at least 60% of academic credit by meeting the following criteria:

- Weekly participation in the online discussion forums
- Submission of one case as an assignment for assessment. This case is evaluated by the module faculty and may also be discussed by discussion group peers.
- Satisfactory completion of the module's weekly formative assessments

To receive academic credit, participants are, moreover, required to be in good academic standing by completing the module's activity including accessing the self-study material and attending at least one live case discussion session per module. Due to work or other commitments, it may not be possible for a participant to attend the live case discussion sessions or complete all module activities, but completing at least 50 percent of the module's activities is required for participants to be considered to be in good academic standing.

The learning management system indicates progress (academic standing) and summative grades on individual accounts, visible only to the participant and faculty.

Difficulties engaging in the program should be discussed with AO program management in the first instance.

Progression to the next module and the second semester

Progression to the next module does not depend on achieving academic credit for a module, but any uncredited modules need to be completed satisfactorily before receipt of the Global Spine Diploma certificate. This requires enrolling in one or more module(s) in subsequent semesters and completing the uncredited module(s). Enrolment is subject to the payment of a registration fee specific to the module(s). Uncredited module(s) must be completed within 24 months of commencing the Program.

Because the Global Spine Diploma Program has a limited number of places, deferral during the Program is not permitted except in exceptional circumstances which were unforeseen prior to commencement. In exceptional circumstances a participant may apply for deferral:

- Medical illness which began or worsened after commencement
- Change in employment arrangements since commencement
- Personal or family reasons which are beyond the participant's control
- Other hardship situations

Failure to achieve academic credit for two modules in any one semester by the end of any one semester will result in dismissal from the program. Participants who have been dismissed from the Program are free to reapply for a place in the program. A place following reapplication is not guaranteed.

LIABILITY DISCLAIMER

AO Foundation, AO Spine endeavor to offer participants fair learning conditions. AO Foundation, AO Spine make no guarantee and will not be liable for any technical problems or other disturbances during the training period, nor will AO Foundation, AO Spine offer reimbursement or opportunities to retake the training program in the event of such disturbances.



APPEAL

No appeal process is available. This is expressly agreed upon by participants upon acceptance of these terms and conditions. In no event will AO Spine be held liable for the results of the assessments. Each candidate shall be exclusively liable for his/her assessment results.

MISCONDUCT

By registering, participants agree to respect that misconduct includes, but is not restricted to:

- a) Introduction into any training program of any materials other than those specifically made available for said training program
- b) Any attempts to tamper with the IT/training program to remove materials or content (including the use of recording devices) from the program
- c) Any attempt to release content from any training program module to a third party/commercial organization
- d) Any attempt to communicate with another candidate during the assessment
- e) Any attempt to gain access to or read the work of another participant
- f) Any attempt to gain or pass on information about the contents of the assessments in advance of the date of the assessments
- g) Impersonation or attempted impersonation of a participant
- h) Bribery (of another participant, assessment official, or actual or simulated patient)
- i) Unacceptable or disruptive behavior during the live activities
- j) Falsification or alteration of any results document or qualification
- k) Any other form of cheating or conduct likely to give an unfair advantage to the participant or others
- l) Failure to abide by the rules and regulations of the training program
- m) Aiding or abetting any of the above
- n) Any use of the AO branding in reference to the diploma by a candidate without having passed the training program

PERSONAL DATA

Participants' personal data is registered with AO Foundation, AO Spine in line with the European

Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and may also be transferred and shared with third-party suppliers working with the organization of the training program (namely Totara, learning management system partners and staff). The information provided during the application and registration process is used for the training program registration, and delivery of the certificate, and statistical purposes. Personal data will be held temporarily in the customer data files of AO Foundation, AO Spine. It may be used for the administration of the results and statistical purposes only by AO Foundation, AO Spine or any AO Foundation, AO Spine partner involved in the training program certification process. Furthermore, we remind the candidates that they expressly accepted the [General Terms and Conditions of the AO Foundation](#) and especially the [AO data privacy policy](#) including all applicable legislation when signing in at the [AO website](#).

Each candidate has the right to access, amend, and oppose any use of his/her personal data.

The AO Foundation and AO Spine comply with the GDPR, and all personal data will be treated accordingly. A candidate may request to have his/her personal data destroyed by sending an e-mail to globalspinediploma@aospine.org.



APPLICABLE LAW AND JURISDICTION

Participation in the Global Spine Diploma Program and any claims in connection with this program shall be governed by the material laws of Switzerland. Place of jurisdiction is Zurich, Switzerland.

© 2024 AO Foundation, AO Spine. All rights reserved. Errors and omissions excepted. First published November 2020; revised February 2023, October 2024 for January 2025.