

# 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.

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## DEFINITIONS

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

**Eligibility:** Each 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 journey will take 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 pathology aligned with the AO Spine curriculum. Each pathology module is set for a period of eight weeks.

**Fee:** refers only to the rates (consisting of an administrative and tuition fee).

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

The **tuition fee** is split into two installments, each due before the start of each semester. Neither of these fees will cover any travel or accommodation costs, or any additional expenses.

A refund will be provided according to the refund and deferral outlined in this document.

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

### FORMAT OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

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

The training program is based on the **AO Spine Curriculum** and contains five modules, each based on one pathology.

Participants will be assigned to one of two streams; the only difference is the order of the modules. At the start of each module they will be provided with the study plan containing an overview of self-study material per week, and the dates of the mandatory activities (e.g. webinars and online case discussions) taking place during each module. The expected time investment for the self-study and mandatory activities amounts to approximately 3–5 hours a week over the whole training program period.

A peer-reviewed case discussion and an assessment at the beginning and the end of the module validate the success of the training program participant.

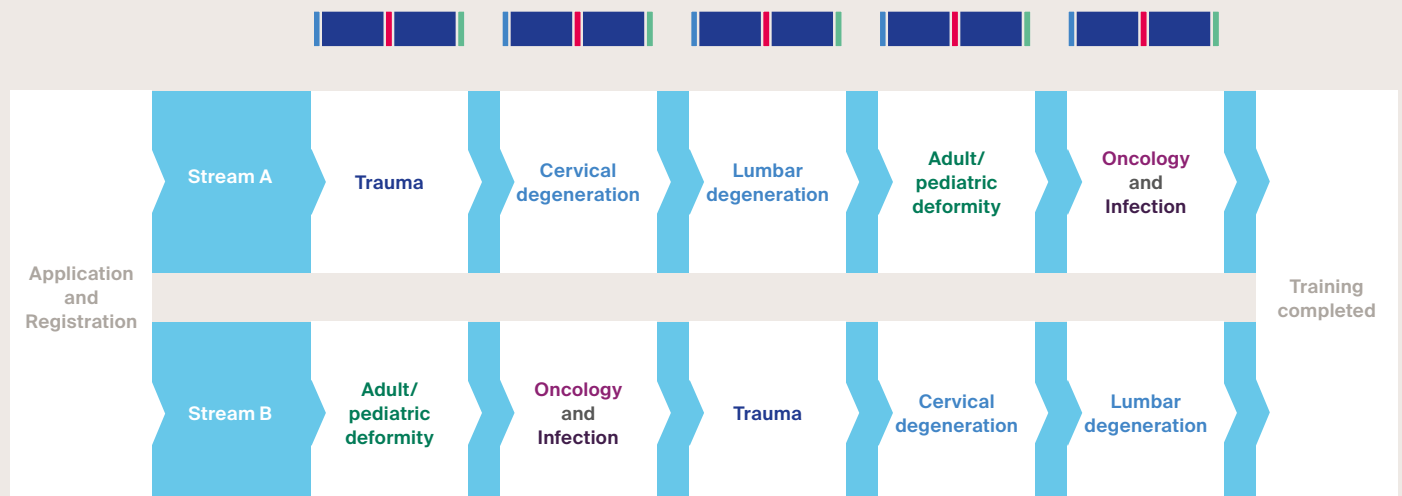
All module chairpersons and faculty members supporting the training program are experts in their respective fields of spine surgery and support the participants in gaining knowledge by answering questions and steering weekly discussions.

## Global Spine Diploma Program

**Syllabus:** 12 months of training activities.

Participants are assigned to one of two streams, each with five modules.

**Key:** ■ Introduction from module chairperson ■ Creation of case and discussion in group ■ Formative assessment



Allocation and order of standard modules is subject to change according to the number of participants enrolled.

## ELIGIBILITY

### Language

Each participant must be fluent in writing and understanding of 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 and provide their CV and their certificate of a completed orthopedic or neurosurgery surgeon training program to AO Spine for the eligibility check. Further, to be considered eligible, a person must be an AO Spine member.

## REGISTRATION

Each year in fall, the link to apply for the training program will be made available on the Global Spine Diploma Program website at [www.aofoundation.org/spine/education/global-spine-diploma/global-spine-diploma-program](http://www.aofoundation.org/spine/education/global-spine-diploma/global-spine-diploma-program)

As soon as the eligibility check is successfully passed, AO Spine staff will provide the prospective participant with a link to register for the training program.

Only when the registration fee for the first semester is paid within the given deadline will the participant be enrolled in the training program.

To proceed with the second semester, the participant will receive another link for paying the registration fee. Again, once this is paid within the given deadline, the participant will be enrolled to the modules for the second semester.

## THE FEE

An **administrative fee** of CHF 100 is required to verify eligibility. This must be paid during the application process, and by the end of the process at the very latest. The fee is nonrefundable.

The **tuition fee** is required upon registration for the first and second semester through AO Spine and must be received by AO Spine within 14 days after confirmation of eligibility at the latest.

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 commonly known from many university courses, but most continuing medical education courses do not allow deferral.

Since the Global Spine Diploma Program has a limited number of places and enrolment is only once a year, **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 at a future enrollment opportunity. 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](mailto:globalspinediploma@aospine.org)) and will be subject to the following refund policy:

Fee Refund	Withdrawal Date
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](mailto: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 by the steering committee, withdrawal for exceptional circumstances will result in the following semester fee refund:

Fee Refund	Withdrawal Date
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.

### Satisfactory progress

Each program module requires the following to achieve academic credit for the module:

- Participation in the online discussion forums
- Online attendance online at tutored webinars and case discussion sessions
- Submission of cases for discussion and assessment
- Completion of the formative assessment component of the module

Engagement with program peers and faculty is just as important as self-study. The online synchronous and self-directed activities are an essential part of the learning process. Due to work or other commitments, it may not be possible for a participant to attend all the tutored sessions, but participation in at least 70 percent of the module activities is required to achieve academic credit, along with satisfactory completion of the formative assessment.

The learning management system will indicate progress during the module on individual accounts, visible only to the participant and faculty.

Any difficulties engaging in the program should be discussed with the faculty member.

Progression to the next module does not depend on achieving academic credit for a module, but any uncredited modules will need to be completed satisfactorily before receipt of the Global Spine Diploma. This will require enrolment in a subsequent program to complete the uncredited module(s) and payment of an individual registration fee specific to the module(s).

An interview with the module chairperson will be conducted with the participant to provide feedback and advice on areas for improvement following unsatisfactory performance in a module.

Failure to achieve academic credit for two or more modules in any semester will result in **dismissal from the program**.

## DURING THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Once the participant is enrolled in the training program, he/she will be allocated to small groups for the mandatory activities.

For each semester, the participant will join different modules based on one pathology each. For each module, he/she will be provided with self-study material such as book chapters, AO Spine training videos, journal articles, etc., and weekly tasks, such as joining a weekly group discussion of the topic of the week.

In parallel, the participant is required to join two activities at set times: a webinar and a case discussion. Dates of these activities will be provided well in advance latest during the first week of the training program.

The training program will be 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

During each training program module, participants will be required to create a case based on a predefined topic. This case will be provided to the module faculty and a dedicated peer. Both will review the case and provide feedback. In addition, a pre- and post-assessment must be taken at the start and at the end of each module.

Each participant must take part in both assessments in order to proceed to the next module.

In addition, a minimum 70 percent attendance rate must be proven to proceed in the training. For details, refer to the above-mentioned satisfactory progress.

## 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 post-examination 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

## Dismissal

A participant will be dismissed from the program with forfeiture of the semester fee and any academic credits under the following circumstances:

- Any of the above-mentioned acts of misconduct
- Failure to achieve academic credit for two or more modules in any semester
- Disrespectful interaction with peers or faculty
- Breach of conditions of use of the program website

## PERSONAL DATA

Participants' personal data is registered with AO Foundation, AO Spine in line with the European Union General Data Protect 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](mailto: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.



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