

AO Spine Global
Diploma Exam
**Frequently asked
Questions**



1. What exactly is the AO Spine Global Diploma?

The AO Spine Global Diploma Exam is a summative assessment of knowledge and decision-making with respect to treating patients with spinal disorders. It enables candidates to demonstrate that they have attained a level of knowledge expected of a specialist spine surgeon after 5 years of practical experience. The content of the entire examination (written and oral) is based on the AO Spine Curriculum.

It is **not** intended to certify competence of technical skill or ability to perform surgical procedures. It is **not** a compulsory or regulatory certificate of competence or excellence.

2. What are the benefits of the AO Spine Global Diploma?

- Benefit from AO Spine's global reputation as the leading global academic community in spine care
- Worldwide credibility guaranteed
- Unique digital badging is available to highlight your accomplishments online
- It's an excellent opportunity to have your theoretical knowledge in spine surgery accredited at an international level
- Gain recognition by having proof that your theoretical knowledge has been assessed to the latest standards

3. Who can register for the AO Spine Global Diploma?

In order to be eligible for the Diploma, you will need to fulfil two criteria:

- be an AO Spine member and
- be an orthopedic surgeon or a neurosurgeon with more than 5 years of practice in the spinal field. You should provide evidence of specialist qualifications in orthopedics or neurosurgery (i.e. medical card) and the CV with the proof of practice in spinal surgery for at least 5 years since qualifying as a specialist orthopedic or neurosurgeon

Important: Members of the AO Spine Faculty Management task force, AO Spine Curriculum task force, or surgeons who have been involved in the written or oral exam preparation, are **not** eligible for the 2020 Global Diploma Exam

4. How can I prepare for the AO Spine Global Diploma?

Both the written and oral parts of the AO Spine Global Diploma are based on the AO Spine Curriculum: <http://bit.ly/AOSpine-curriculum>

5. How much does it cost?

The administrative fee of CHF 100 applies upon applying for the exam eligibility check of the candidate, and is non-refundable.

The regular Diploma Exam fee is CHF 900* (VAT included), and includes both the written and oral examinations. A special introduction Diploma exam fee of CHF 600 is offered to the candidates for the 2020 exam instead of the regular fee of CHF 900.

If you have any questions about refunds and cancellation fees, e.g. in case of failure at the exam, please read the Terms & Conditions for more details or check questions 23 and 24 in these FAQs.

*Fees do not include transport, accommodation or registration for the Global Spine Congress or AO Davos Courses.

6. Are there any important dates or deadlines?

The application process will open on November 1, 2019 and close on November 14, 2019 at 17:00 Central European Time (CET).

To receive the Diploma, candidates will need to pass written and oral examinations.

Written Exam

The written exam will take place on February 18, 19, and 20, 2020 under proctored conditions in test centers around the world. Candidates are able to choose one of these three days to take the written exam.

Oral Exam

The oral exam will take place on Thursday, May 21, 2020, at the Global Spine Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, or Saturday, December 5, 2020, in Davos, Switzerland. Candidates can express a preference for either venue but will be allocated to one or the other by the Steering Committee to manage the numbers attending. It is not necessary to register for the GSC or AO Davos Courses 2020 to participate in the exam, but the candidates will be responsible for arranging and paying for their own travel and accommodation expenses to attend the oral exam.

7. What is the refund policy?

For detailed cancellation and refund policies, please read the Terms and Conditions.

8. Are scholarships available?

No, there are no scholarships available.

9. What are the criteria to receive the diploma?

The examination is taken in two parts: a proctored test set of 45 multiple-choice questions, and a face-to-face case-based discussion with pairs of examiners using standardized clinical case scenarios per pathology. To receive the Diploma, the candidates must pass both exams.

10. What are the criteria for registration?

Candidates for the examination must apply via the AO Spine website and provide the following information by email:

- their CV demonstrating practice in spinal surgery for at least 5 years
- evidence of specialist qualifications in orthopedics or neurosurgery (e.g. medical card)
- only AO Spine members are eligible to register

Applications will be assessed by the Steering Committee within two weeks of submission of the candidate's application.

For the application process, candidates need to pay a non-refundable administrative fee of CHF 100.

The deadline for the application is November 14, 2019 at 17:00 Central European Time (CET).

Eligible candidates will be notified and invited to register for the written examination by paying the non-refundable special 2020 examination fee of CHF 600.

For the written examination, 100 places are available on a first come, first served basis. If there are more eligible candidates than places available, eligible candidates will be able to add their names to a waiting list.

11. How will I know if I have been accepted for the AO Spine Global Diploma Exam?

Applications will be assessed by the Steering Committee within a maximum of two weeks after the application has been submitted.

Eligible candidates will be notified and invited to register for the written examination by paying the non-refundable special 2020 examination fee of CHF 600.

12. Conflict of interest

The names of the candidates presenting for the oral component will be made known to the examiners in advance, and vice-versa. Any concern about a potential conflict of interest by a candidate or examiner must be notified immediately to the Steering Committee in time to allow suitable arrangements to be made if necessary.

13. Where does the written exam take place?

The written exam will take place in test centers around the world. Candidates are able to choose their exam appointments from one of the three exam dates, February 18, 19, or 20, 2020.

14. How can candidates book their appointment for the written exam at the test center?

All accepted candidates will receive a link to register for their appointment at an available Pearson Vue test center nearby their location.

15. Where does the oral exam take place?

The oral exam will take place on Thursday, May 21, 2020, at the Global Spine Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, or Saturday, December 5, 2020, in Davos, Switzerland. Candidates can express a preference for either venue but will be allocated to one or the other by the Steering Committee to manage the numbers attending. It is not necessary to register for the GSC or AO Davos Courses 2020 to participate in the exam, but the candidates will be responsible for arranging and paying for their own travel and accommodation expenses to attend the oral exam.

16. How much time do I need to allocate for the exams?

The duration of the written exam will be 90 minutes. We suggest candidates should arrive at the test center at least 30 minutes before the set time for the written exam to register and receive a proper introduction.

The duration of the oral exam is two hours. However, candidates will be held in isolation from the start of the day of the exam until they have participated in the oral component which lasts for two hours. We suggest that candidates should reserve the full day for the oral exam (May 21, 2020 or December 5, 2020).

17. What is the pass mark for the exam?

The pass mark for the AO Spine Global Diploma Exam is set by the Steering Committee using criterion-referenced methods based on the Angoff method.

The standard of the examination is the knowledge of a spine surgeon who has been in practice for at least five (5) years.

18. When will I receive my diploma?

Successful candidates will be invited to a Global Diploma Exam Ceremony at the Global Spine Congress 2020 in Rio de Janeiro, or AO Davos Courses 2020 in Davos. If you are unable to attend the ceremony, the certificate will be mailed to you.

19. Do you offer digital diploma badges to add to my digital profiles?

Unique digital badging is available to highlight your accomplishments online. Candidates cannot use the AO branding unless in reference with the Diploma if both exams have been passed.

20. Who are the examiners?

The board of examiners for the AO Spine Global Diploma Exam consists of experienced examiners who have been selected by the Global Diploma Steering Committee. All examiners are current or former examiners for a surgical college or equivalent certifying organization for surgical specialty recognition in their country.

21. Where are the test center locations?

Available test centers will be listed on the partner's website (Pearson Vue) shortly after the confirmation of candidates' acceptance for the AO Spine Global Diploma Exam.

Attention: we will not be able to provide test center locations before 3 Jan.

22. What is the examination process for the Global Diploma Exam?

The examination is organized in two parts: a multiple-choice questions-based test, and a face-to-face session with pairs of examiners using standardized clinical case scenarios based on our curriculum pathologies.

To receive the diploma, the candidates will need to pass both exams.

a. Written Diploma examination

The written exam will take place at globally available test centers under proctored conditions. It contains 45 multiple choice questions (MCQ) in English language. The duration of the written exam is 90 minutes. Breaks are not permitted during this time.

The written diploma exam will need to be taken between February 18–20, 2020.

b. Oral Diploma examination

The oral exam will be a face-to-face case-based discussion of standardized clinical case scenarios in trauma, deformity, tumors and infection, and degeneration. The duration of the oral exam for the candidate is two (2) hours. Candidates will be held in isolation from the start of the day of the exam until they have participated in the oral exam component. It will be conducted in English and will take place on Thursday, May 21, 2020 at the Global Spine Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, or Saturday, December 5, 2020, in Davos, Switzerland.

23. What happens if I don't pass the written exam?

Candidates who are unsuccessful in the written exam will not be invited to take the oral exam, but may retake the written exam at the next opportunity by paying the special 2020 examination fee of CHF 600 again.

The administrative fee of CHF 100 and the registration fee of 600 CHF for the 2020 registration is not refundable if the candidate fails to pass the written exam component.

24. What happens if I don't pass the oral exam?

Candidates who are unsuccessful at the oral test may retake the oral exam at the next opportunity by paying a reduced examination fee without having to re-sit the written MCQ exam.

The administrative fee of CHF 100 and the registration fee of 600 CHF for the 2020 registration is not refundable if the candidate fails to pass the oral exam component.

25. What are the language requirements?

If English is not your first language, it is essential that your English language skills are good enough for you to undertake an intensive and challenging exam in English.

26. Is it mandatory to obtain the AO Spine Global Diploma to become faculty at AO Spine educational events?

No, the AO Spine Global Diploma Exam is not a mandatory exam in order to be eligible as AO Spine faculty.

27. What is the format of the MCQs, and how were they developed?

The MCQs for the written part of the Global Spine Diploma examination are single-best answer type. Each question contains a clinical scenario or situation and asks the candidate to choose the best answer from four options. The authors were asked to address a specific competence in the AOSpine Curriculum and provide a justification for the best answer, along with a literature reference.

The questions were developed using a three-round Delphi technique involving a panel of senior spine surgeons with expertise in each of the AOSpine Curriculum pathology domains and representing all five AOSpine geographic regions. The process was overseen by a medical educator from the AO Foundation Education Institute and a member of the AOSpine Education Commission with a qualification in surgical education.

28. Who do I contact if I have any questions or if anything is unclear?

If you have any questions, please contact AO Spine via e-mail at: globalspinediploma@aospine.org



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