
LEAD Continuous Certification Program Manual

Lifetime Certificate Holders



American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®

445 Fillmore Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-3404
415.553.7800
www.abfas.org
January 2025

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Nondiscrimination Policy. In accordance with applicable federal laws, the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery® does not discriminate in any of its policies, procedures, or practices based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

Americans with Disabilities Act. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery® will make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities provided the candidate submits a written request and all required documentation 60 days before the start of the next quarter. Candidates will find additional information including how to apply on the ABFAS website.

Introduction to LEAD

In January 2022, ABFAS transitioned its ten-year Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program to **LEAD: Longitudinal Education and Assessment for Diplomates**, a process of continuous certification. The new program encompasses the existing MOC requirements for continuing education, hospital privileging, and licensing, but replaces the self-assessment exam with a longitudinal assessment. With LEAD, Diplomates will answer a set number of questions per quarter and get immediate feedback on their performance.

All Diplomates issued a lifetime or time-limited certificate must participate in the Continuous Certification program to maintain certification.

Note: Diplomates of the American Board of Ambulatory Foot Surgery (a section of the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery) are not required to participate in LEAD Continuous Certification.

LEAD Program Goals

ABFAS' mission is to protect public health. Prior to certification, we focus on ensuring high standards in foot and ankle surgery. Post-certification, we augment our mission by also supporting Diplomates in keeping their knowledge, judgement, and skills current over the course of their careers—and LEAD represents a powerful new tool to help ensure the continued success of ABFAS Board-Certified foot and ankle surgeons. The public benefits by ABFAS Diplomates participating in LEAD.

Concepts of LEAD

1. Promoting continuous, lifelong learning
2. Improving Diplomates' experience with the certification process
3. Providing an assessment that is relevant to Diplomates' practices
4. Incorporating principles of adult learning theory
5. Enhancing validity of assessment results through continuous assessment
6. Improving relevance by providing feedback opportunities

LEAD consists of assessments for learning (formative assessments) whereby Diplomates will receive instantaneous feedback on questions, keeping their skills sharp and protecting the public by ensuring rigorous standards.

LEAD Program Requirements

Requirements Overview

1. Maintain an active, unrestricted podiatric license in the United States or Canada.
2. Maintain active surgical privileges at either a hospital or surgical center. *
3. Obtain 100 continuing education credits in each five-year period per ten-year cycle.
4. Complete a longitudinal assessment consisting of the fundamental diagnostic skills, medical knowledge, and clinical judgment to provide quality care during every ten-year cycle.
Diplomates must participate for 12 quarters within each five-year period per ten-year cycle.

*Diplomates holding administrative or inactive status do not need to meet this requirement.

Detailed Requirements

Maintain a valid, unrestricted podiatric license in the United States or Canada.

All Diplomates must maintain a valid and unrestricted license within the United States or Canada. ABFAS will collect license validation information for each Diplomat for the state(s) in which they practice. Currently, ABFAS updates this information in conjunction with each state's licensing cycle. Diplomates must report to ABFAS any change in their licensing status.

Be surgically active and maintain active surgical privileges at a hospital or surgical center. Diplomates must request their hospital/surgery center to submit proof of active surgical privileges in each category. The documentation must contain a signature of a hospital/surgery center official if possible or be on the letterhead of hospital/surgery center. Please scan and send the proof of privileges to privileges@abfas.org, or fax to 415.553.7801. [Appendix A](#) contains a template Diplomates can provide to their hospitals.

Note: If a Diplomat is no longer actively performing foot and/or ankle surgery but still practicing podiatry, the Diplomat may be eligible for "Certified: Surgically Inactive" status. The Diplomat still needs to meet other Continuous Certification requirements, but the Diplomat's hospital privileges do not need to be surgical. Please contact info@abfas.org, or call our office at 415.553.7800 for more information.

Obtain 100 continuing education credits in each five-year period per ten-year cycle.

During the LEAD registration process, Diplomates will attest to participating in 100 hours of Category 1 or CPME-approved continuing education (CE) credits in each five-year period per 10-year cycle. All continuing education must be pertinent to the practice of podiatric medicine and/or surgery and cannot include practice management. Risk management credits are allowed. Category 1 activities are those that have been approved by an accredited sponsor. An Accredited Sponsor may include, but is not limited to, CPME, AMA, and AOA. Diplomates may attest to continuing education credits only for programs in which they actively participated. There is no need to submit documentation, but ABFAS reserves the right to ensure Diplomates' attestation are accurate.

Complete a longitudinal assessment consisting of the fundamental diagnostic skills, medical knowledge, and clinical judgment to provide quality care during every ten-year cycle.

Diplomates must participate in LEAD for 12 quarters within each five-year period per ten-year cycle.

Communication

ABFAS will primarily use email to communicate to Diplomates about the LEAD program. To ensure Diplomates receive timely notifications, Diplomates should:

1. Add lead@abfas.org to their email inbox safe sender list. Instructions are [available online](#).
2. [Log in](#) to their ABFAS profile and, if necessary, update their personal information, including their email address.

Standard notices

At the start of a Quarter, Diplomates will receive an emailed LEAD newsletter notifying them that the quarter is open.

Diplomates will receive a reminder email at the start of the final month of each quarter if they did not complete the current quarter’s assessment.

Diplomates will receive a final reminder email at the start of the final week of each quarter if they started but did not complete the current quarter’s assessment.

At-risk

ABFAS will send additional notices to Diplomates who are approaching their cycle end date and are at risk of not fulfilling LEAD requirement(s).

LEAD Assessment Overview

Format

The LEAD assessment is available each quarter and consists of 20 multiple-choice questions, including those based on visual presentations. Following each question are at least four possible answers. Each question has only **ONE** best answer. Diplomates will have three minutes to answer each question, and the questions will assess existing knowledge relevant to foot and ankle surgery.

Beginning January 2025, Diplomates will select a focus area each quarter to tailor their LEAD questions to content relevant to their practice or interest. The system will prompt the Diplomate to select a focus area the first time they log in each quarter before accessing the assessment.

Assessment Focus Areas:

- General Foot and Ankle Surgery Concepts
- Diabetic Limb Salvage
- Trauma
- Reconstruction

All Diplomates will receive questions each quarter covering core concepts related to foot and ankle surgery. The [assessment content map](#) below details the major topics covered on the LEAD assessment.

Please note: *Once you select a focus area, you cannot make changes until the next quarter. ABFAS may introduce additional content areas in the future.*

Foot Surgery Assessments Structure – For Diplomates who hold a Foot Surgery Certification	
Assessment Type	Continuous
Time Allotted	Three minutes per question
Item Type	Didactic/Multiple-choice
Number of Questions/Quarter	20 Foot Surgery Questions/Quarter

Foot & RRA Surgery Combined Assessment Structure – For Diplomates who hold Foot Surgery and RRA Surgery Certifications and/or Lifetime Certificates	
Assessment Type	Continuous
Time Allotted	Three minutes per question
Item Type	Didactic/Multiple-choice
Number of Questions/Quarter	20 Questions/Quarter: ≥ 7 Foot Surgery Questions and ≥ 10 RRA Surgery Questions

LEAD: Foot Surgery

Assessment Specifications

The LEAD assessment in Foot Surgery involves diagnostic and perioperative care of the podiatric surgical patient encompassing the foot and ankle. Intraoperative technical aspects will include reconstructive and non-reconstructive procedures of the forefoot and non-reconstructive procedures of the rearfoot/ankle. The assessment emphasizes generally accepted procedures and technology related to the practitioner’s daily practice. Each quarterly assessment contains a maximum of 20 multiple choice questions. After a Diplomate answers each question, they will rate how confident they are in their response to the question, as well as how relevant the question content is to their practice. The Diplomate will then see whether they answered the question correctly, an explanation of why the current answer is the best answer, and references that support the answer.

Assessment Content Map

Major Topic Area – Foot Surgery	# Of Questions
Perioperative Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics may include Podiatric History and Physical, Procedural Perioperative Management and General Medical 	≥ 3
Diagnostic Studies and Differential Diagnosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics may include Diagnostic Studies/Medical Imaging and Differential Diagnosis 	≥ 4
Surgery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics may include Surgical Principles, Surgical Procedures/Techniques and Complications 	≥ 7

LEAD: Foot/Reconstructive Rearfoot and Ankle Surgery

Assessment Specifications

The LEAD assessment in Foot and Reconstructive Rearfoot/Ankle Surgery involves diagnostic and perioperative care of the podiatric surgical patient who requires foot and/or reconstructive rearfoot and ankle procedures. This assessment emphasizes generally accepted procedures and technology related to the practitioner’s daily practice.

Each quarterly assessment includes a maximum of 20 multiple choice questions, 10 questions specific to foot surgery, and ten questions specific to RRA surgery. After a Diplomate answers each question, they will rate how confident they are in their response to the question, as well as how relevant the question content is to their practice. The Diplomate will then see whether they answered the question correctly, an explanation of why the current answer is the best answer, and references that support the answer.

Assessment Content Map

Major Topic Area - Foot Surgery	# Of Questions
Perioperative Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topics may include Podiatric History and Physical, Procedural Perioperative Management and General Medical 	≥ 1
Diagnostic Studies and Differential Diagnosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topics may include Diagnostic Studies/Medical Imaging and Differential Diagnosis 	≥ 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surgery Topics may include Surgical Principles, Surgical Procedures/Techniques and Complications	≥ 4

Major Topic Areas - RRA Surgery	# Of Questions
Diagnostic Studies and Differential Diagnosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topics may include Diagnostic Studies/Medical Imaging and Differential Diagnosis 	≥ 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surgery Topics may include Surgical Principles, Surgical Procedures/Techniques and Complications	≥ 7

Preparing for the Assessment

Diplomates can prepare for the assessment as they feel necessary. Each quarterly LEAD assessment will consist of 20 multiple-choice questions, including some based on visual presentations. Following each question are at least four possible answers. Each question has only one best answer. Diplomates will have three minutes to answer each question, and the questions will assess existing knowledge relevant to foot and ankle surgery.

Diplomates are not prohibited from referencing documentation when taking the assessment. Diplomates can use online tools to research specific topics or keywords; however, they are prohibited from copying or reproducing full LEAD questions and rationales into search engines, AI tools, or large language models (LLMs). See [Code of Conduct](#).

Through a performance tracker and pointed references and rationales after each question they answer, Diplomates will have the opportunity to see which areas require more attention to develop their knowledge and in which areas they have improved.

Access

To access LEAD from ABFAS's website, click the button "Access LEAD site" on the top of the homepage. Diplomates should log into the ABFAS website using their ABFAS username and password.

Diplomates must complete registration details once every five years. If a Diplomate needs to complete registration, the system will prompt the Diplomate to attest to non-assessment requirement(s) and agree to the program's Code of Conduct.

The site will then redirect Diplomates to the LEAD Diplomate site. ABFAS has partnered with Learnswell, a precision learning software platform, to deliver these online assessments.

Each quarter, new questions will be available for the Foot/RRA Surgery Assessment. After a quarter concludes, Diplomates will no longer be able to answer the previous quarter's questions.

A quarter is defined as three months within the calendar year as follows:

1. Quarter 1: January 1 - March 31
2. Quarter 2: April 1 - June 30
3. Quarter 3: July 1 - September 30
4. Quarter 4: October 1 - December 31

Technical Assistance

Diplomates should contact lead@abfas.org if they encounter any technical difficulties on the LEAD site.

Cost

The ABFAS annual fee funds the LEAD program. There is no additional, separate self-assessment examination fee.

LEAD Assessment Requirements

Participation in LEAD

Participation Requirement

A Diplomate who holds a lifetime certificate will begin their first five-year LEAD cycle in January 2022 and must begin fulfilling their participation requirements at that time. A Diplomate must participate in 12 required quarters by June 30 at the conclusion of every five-year period. Diplomates can track their participation on their LEAD Progress Page.

Full participation in a LEAD assessment quarter is defined as completing all 30 questions within the quarter's timeframe. A Diplomate must complete all 30 questions for that quarter to be counted toward the required number of quarters within each five-year period. Failure to complete all 30 questions within a quarter will result in that quarter being excluded from participation.

Diplomates who do not complete the participation requirements

If a Diplomate certified prior to 1991 does not meet the Continuous Certification requirements due to non-participation in LEAD by the end of their five-year LEAD cycle, they are "non-compliant" with Continuous Certification requirements. To become compliant, they must pay a \$500 penalty and immediately start participating in LEAD.

Performance in LEAD

Diplomates with Lifetime certificates do not need to meet LEAD performance requirements. However, Diplomates may track their performance on the LEAD Assessment Dashboard.

Measurement Decision Theory (MDT) and MDT p-values

MDT is the method ABFAS uses to analyze Diplomates' performance on the Continuous Certification LEAD assessment. MDT calculates the probability (or MDT p-value) that a Diplomat is keeping up with topics relevant to the practice of foot and ankle surgery. These p-value estimates update each time a Diplomat answers a LEAD question.

When a Diplomat initially starts the LEAD program, we assume they are already keeping up with relevant knowledge and they are assigned an *initial* MDT p-value of 0.95 that is based on historical ABFAS recertification exam pass rates. We can assume that there is a 95 percent chance that a Diplomat is keeping up to date with their podiatric surgery knowledge. Once the Diplomat starts answering questions, the initial MDT p-value will update with a new *calculated* MDT p-value.

A Diplomat's calculated MDT p-value can increase or decrease after they answer each question. If the Diplomat answers the question correctly, the MDT p-value will increase slightly depending on the difficulty level of the question. If the Diplomat does not answer the question correctly, the MDT p-value will decrease slightly. We expect the calculated MDT p-values for each Diplomat to fluctuate at first and then stabilize as they answer more questions.

The calculated MDT p-value is based on the most recent 120 questions answered—what we call “the rolling 120.” ABFAS enrolls Diplomates who hold a Lifetime certification in a single LEAD assessment composed of 20 Foot Surgery questions and 10 RRA Surgery questions each quarter. ABFAS calculates two MDT p-values for Diplomates who hold both a Foot Surgery and RRA Surgery certification: one from the last 120 Foot Surgery questions and the other from the last 120 RRA Surgery questions.

Diplomates will begin seeing their MDT p-value(s) on a graph on their LEAD Assessment Dashboard after they have completed at least one question in Foot Surgery and one question in RRA Surgery of the assessment. Although Diplomates with Lifetime certificates are not required to meet a performance requirement, they will see the minimum MDT p-value of 0.1 indicated by a red dotted line on their MDT graph and can track their performance in comparison to the minimum MDT p-value as well to their peers. An MDT p-value less than 0.1 indicates a probability of less than ten percent they are keeping their knowledge current. Tracking performance can be a helpful tool in guiding the continuing medical education of Lifetime certificate holders.

Code of Conduct

All participants agree to the following terms by accessing this program:

1. The content of the LEAD assessments is the exclusive, copyrighted property of ABFAS and constitutes confidential information. No participant may copy or share the content (including photographs) with anyone else, whether during or after accessing the assessments, and whether in hardcopy, electronic, or oral form.
2. Participants must answer the LEAD assessment questions solely on their own, not using a third-party service or person to provide or submit answers. No participant may copy or input LEAD questions or rationales into search engines, artificial intelligence (AI) tools, or Large Language Models (LLMs). Anything other than entering specific keywords into these tools is prohibited.
3. Participants agree to the ABFAS Website [Terms of Use](#) in using LEAD-related online services.
4. Participants must promptly notify ABFAS if they identify or learn of anyone else's violation of these terms.

5. Participants waive all rights they may have to all causes of action against ABFAS, and its officers, employees, and volunteers involved in the assessment process, whether known or unknown, that might arise out of, or in connection with, this assessment or ABFAS' determinations about your certification.

Confidentiality

ABFAS considers the status of an individual's participation in and the stage of completion of all certification components, including an individual's certification status and certification history, to be public information. ABFAS reserves the right to publish and share public information in any and all public forums determined by ABFAS to be reasonable, including the posting of public information on the ABFAS website, as well as sharing public information with medical licensure boards, managed care organizations, third party payers, or others. While ABFAS generally regards all other information about individuals as private and confidential, there are times when ABFAS must release certain information to fulfill its responsibilities as a medical specialty certification board.

ABFAS specifically regards the results of an individual's Board Qualification, Board Certification, or Continuous Certification participation (including performance reports) as private and confidential.

Audits

ABFAS may perform random audits of Diplomates' online attestations of CE requirements.

ABFAS will notify Diplomates via email if ABFAS has selected them for an audit. Diplomates have one month to provide the necessary documentation to ABFAS. Diplomates can either email necessary documentation as attachments to certifications@abfas.org or fax necessary documentation to 415.553.7801.

CE Credits Audit Requirements

If selected for an audit, Diplomates must submit CME certificates of continuing education credits only for Category 1 programs in which they actively participated. It is the Diplomate's responsibility to obtain documentation of continuing education credits, not that of the organization that offers the program.

The provider should furnish Diplomates who have participated in Category 1 activities with a certificate of completion. The CME certificate should state that the activity has been approved for Category 1 credit and name the institution or organization that awarded the credit.

Acceptable certificates/documentation must include:

- Name of the licensee
- Name of the course
- Date of the course
- Number of credit hours earned
- Provider of the course
- Category type

LEAD CME Credits

ABFAS Diplomates can now earn 1.0 Continuing Medical Education (CME) credit for each completed quarter of the LEAD Continuous Certification Program.

To earn LEAD CME credit, a Diplomate must complete all 20 questions in a quarter and will not receive credit for partially completed quarters. CME credit is awarded regardless of MDT p-value or whether a Diplomate answers each question correctly.

LEAD CME Transcripts

Diplomates can access their LEAD CME transcripts through the [ABFAS CME Credit Tracking site](#) using their ABFAS username and password.

CME credits will be available two weeks after each quarter closes.

How LEAD CME Credits Are Calculated

CME credit is based on Continuing Education Contact Hours (CECH), which is the time—in hours—a learner takes to complete a learning activity. For LEAD, Diplomates are allowed 3 minutes to answer each question and there are 20 questions per quarter. Quarterly LEAD CME credit is calculated as 3 minutes per question X 20 questions per quarter = 60 minutes per quarter, or 1.0 CECH.

CPME Approval Statement

The American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery is approved by the Council on Podiatric Medical Education as a provider of continuing education in podiatric medicine. The American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery has approved this activity for a maximum of 1.0 continuing education contact hours per quarter.

LEAD Continuing Education Information

Intended Audience

The intended audience for participation in the LEAD program is all ABFAS diplomates.

LEAD Continuing Education Mission Statement

ABFAS' mission is to protect public health by ensuring high standards in foot and ankle surgery. Post-certification, ABFAS augments our mission by supporting Diplomates in maintaining and expanding their knowledge and judgement over the course of their careers. LEAD is a continuing educational tool to enhance competency and the ability to provide excellent patient care and improve patient health outcomes.

LEAD consists of assessments for learning (formative assessments) whereby Diplomates receive instantaneous feedback on questions, keeping their knowledge sharp and protecting the public by ensuring rigorous standards. All Diplomates must participate in LEAD throughout their ten-year recertification cycle.

LEAD Learning Objectives

ABFAS Diplomates that participate in LEAD will:

- Stay up to date on foot and ankle surgical knowledge to provide the best patient care.
- Understand their own foot and ankle surgical knowledge gaps.

- Be aware of journal articles and other resources, identified by ABFAS in the LEAD platform, that Diplomates may read to address any knowledge gaps identified by the LEAD system.

LEAD Continuous Certification Committee

The purpose of the Continuous Certification Committee is to develop the Continuous Certification program, including LEAD, and policy recommendations related to continuous certification.

Christopher Lotufo, DPM, FACFAS Chair

Jamie Bakal, DPM, FACFAS

Annette Filiatrault, DPM, FACFAS

Alan Ng, DPM, FACFAS

Joseph Treadwell, DPM, FACFAS

Cost to Participate and Commercial Interest

- LEAD is available to all diplomates of ABFAS. There is no fee to participate.
- No commercial interest provides financial support for LEAD.

Appendix A

ABFAS SAMPLE HOSPITAL/SURGICAL CENTER PRIVILEGE LETTER

This letter is a **sample only** and may be used as reference when requesting your appointment letter. The items listed are the critical data elements that **MUST** be provided on all privilege letters. Contact ABFAS at info@abfas.org or 415-553-7800 if you have questions. You can download a template [here](#).

Please make sure your privileges information in your ABFAS profile is up to date. Submit documentation to: privileges@abfas.org.

(Official Hospital/Surgical Center Letterhead) Hospital/Surgical Center Name

Street Address City, State/Province, Postal Code

_____ (date)

(Must be currently dated, within three months of submission to ABFAS, or include dates of appointment below)

American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery
445 Fillmore Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

To Whom It May Concern:

_____, DPM, was granted the following privileges in podiatric foot and ankle surgery at _____ (hospital/surgical center name) on _____ (appointment date):

Category

- Active
- Non-Surgical
- Courtesy
- Consulting
- Provisional
- Other _____ (describe)

Type

- Foot Surgery
- Foot and Rearfoot/Ankle Surgery

Dr. _____ is due for reappointment on _____ (reappointment date).

Sincerely,

Medical Staff Director or Credentialing Coordinator
(Signature Required)