
LEAD Continuous Certification Program Manual

Time-Limited Certificate Holders



American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®

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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

ABFAS has 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, surgical case activity, hospital privileging, and licensing, but replaces the recertification 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) do not have an ongoing evaluation.

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 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. Be surgically active and 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 and at the end of each five-year period meet or exceed the minimum standard as determined by the Board.

*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 are required to 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, they may be eligible for "Certified: Surgically Inactive" status. The Diplomat still needs to meet other Continuous Certification requirements, but their 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' attestations are accurate.

Complete a longitudinal assessment consisting of the fundamental diagnostic skills, medical knowledge, and clinical judgment to provide quality care during each ten-year cycle. Diplomates must participate for 12 quarters within each five-year period per ten-year cycle and at the end of each five-year period meet or exceed the minimum MDT p-value standard as determined by the Board.

The LEAD program aligns to a Diplomat's Foot Surgery certification 10-year cycle. To ensure a smooth transition period into the program, ABFAS created an [interactive webtool](#) which shows by when a Diplomat must complete their required quarters and meet or exceed the minimum MDT p-value standard.

Newly certified Diplomates will start participating in LEAD the first January following their initial certification date.

Have performed Foot and/or Reconstructive Rearfoot and Ankle Surgery within the last two years.

During the LEAD registration which occurs every 5 years, Diplomates will attest to having performed podiatric surgery. There is no need to upload case logs and there are no minimum case requirements. If a Diplomate has not performed surgery in the last two years, please contact the ABFAS office.

ABFAS may perform Audits to ensure the accuracy of the submitted data.

Communication

ABFAS will mainly communicate to Diplomates regarding the LEAD program via email. 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 a Quarter Start Notice via email. Then Diplomates will receive a reminder email each month if the current quarter's assessment is not completed.

Completion notice

Upon the completion of a quarter's assessment, Diplomates will receive a Quarter Completion Confirmation Notice via email.

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 30 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.

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	30 Foot Surgery Questions/Quarter

Foot & RRA Surgery Combined Assessment Structure – For Diplomates who hold Foot Surgery and RRA Surgery Certifications and/or Lifetime Certificates	
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Assessment Type	Continuous
Time Allotted	Three minutes per question
Item Type	Didactic/Multiple-choice
Number of Questions/Quarter	30 Questions/Quarter: 20 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 30 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 Subject Area	% Of Questions
A. Podiatric History and Physical	5
B. Diagnostic Studies/Medical Imaging	15
C. Differential Diagnosis	10
D. Surgical Principles	20
E. Surgical Procedures/Techniques	20
F. Procedural Perioperative Management	10
G. Complications	15
H. General Medical	5
TOTAL	100

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 30 multiple choice questions, 20 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
Foot Surgery Questions (20/quarter)

Major Subject Area	% Of Questions
A. Podiatric History and Physical	5
B. Diagnostic Studies/Medical Imaging	15
C. Differential Diagnosis	10
D. Surgical Principles	20
E. Surgical Procedures/Techniques	20
F. Procedural Perioperative Management	10
G. Complications	15
H. General Medical	5
TOTAL	100

RRA Surgery Questions (10/quarter)

Major Subject Area	% Of Questions
B. Diagnostic Studies/Medical Imaging	15
C. Differential Diagnosis	10
D. Surgical Principles	20
E. Surgical Procedures/Techniques	25
F. Procedural Perioperative Management	15
G. Complications	15
TOTAL	100

Preparing for the Assessment

Diplomates can prepare for the assessment as they feel necessary. Each quarterly LEAD assessment will consist of 30 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. 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.

CME Credits

After the LEAD program launches, ABFAS anticipates providing CME credit for Diplomates participating in the program. ABFAS will inform all Diplomates when this benefit becomes available.

Access

Starting in 2022, 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 Diplomat Site. ABFAS has partnered with SelfStudy, a Precision Learning Software Platform, to deliver these online assessments.

Each quarter, new questions will be available for both assessment types— Foot Surgery Assessment and Foot/RRA Surgery Assessment. After a quarter concludes, Diplomates will no longer be able to access that 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 refer to the [ABFAS Support Center](#) if they encounter any technical difficulties on the LEAD site. They may also contact lead@abfas.org.

Cost

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

LEAD Assessment Requirements

Participation in LEAD

Participation Requirement

A Diplomat must participate in all required quarters by June 30 of the Diplomat's Foot Surgery certification expiration year. A Diplomat who holds an RRA Surgery certification is not required to complete separate participation requirements. Diplomates can track their progress in their LEAD dashboard.

To access LEAD specific requirements by Foot Surgery certification expiration year, Diplomates should use the interactive webtool found on our website: [LEAD Program Requirements | ABFAS](#).

Full participation in a LEAD assessment quarter is defined as completing all 30 questions within the quarter's timeframe. A Diplomat 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

Please note that as ABFAS starts the LEAD program in 2022, Diplomates will have varying participation requirements depending on where they are within their 10-year certification cycle in 2022. The information below depicts rules for a full 10-year certification cycle. As Diplomates will be in different phases of their certification cycle when the program starts, please use the interactive webtool to find your participation requirements. [LEAD Program Requirements | ABFAS](#).

Note – the following policies are mutually exclusive

At the end of the first five-year period within a ten-year cycle, if a Diplomate has not participated in 12 quarters (but has participated in at least four quarters of the first five-year period), the Diplomate can use the second five-year period to make up any missed quarters during the first five-year period. The Diplomate's certification status will remain active for the duration of the cycle. If a Diplomate does not complete 24 quarters within a ten-year cycle, the Diplomate's status will expire.

At the end of the first five-year period within a ten-year cycle, if a Diplomate has not participated in nine or more of the required 12 quarters (i.e., the Diplomate has participated in three or fewer quarters of the first five-year period), the Diplomate must participate in all 20 quarters within the second five-year period. If the Diplomate does not participate in every quarter of the second five-year period, the Diplomate's Foot Surgery, and if applicable, RRA Surgery certification status will change to "active - not participating in Continuous Certification." This status change will take effect following the first quarter of the second five-year period that is missed. If a Diplomate does not complete the full 20 quarters within the second five-year period, the Diplomate's Foot Surgery, and if applicable, RRA Surgery certification status will expire, and the Diplomate must apply to reestablish board certification under the policy established by the ABFAS Board of Directors.

Performance in LEAD

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 Diplomate is keeping up with topics relevant to the practice of foot and ankle surgery. These p-value estimates are updated each time a Diplomate answers a LEAD question.

When a Diplomate 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 Diplomate is keeping up to date with their podiatric surgery knowledge. Once the Diplomate starts answering questions, the initial MDT p-value will be updated with a new *calculated* MDT p-value.

A Diplomate's calculated MDT p-value can increase or decrease after they answer each question. If the Diplomate answers the question correctly, the MDT p-value will increase slightly depending on the difficulty level of the question. If the Diplomate does not answer the question correctly, the MDT p-value will decrease slightly. We expect the calculated MDT p-values for each Diplomate 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 both a Foot Surgery and RRA Surgery 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. ABFAS calculates a single MDT p-value for Diplomates who hold only a Foot Surgery certification.

Diplomates will begin seeing their MDT p-value(s) on a graph in their LEAD dashboard starting after they've completed at least one question in Foot Surgery and one question in RRA Surgery, if applicable, of the assessment.

LEAD Performance Requirement

The Performance Requirement defines the minimally acceptable calculated MDT p-value for a Diplomate. Anything lower, and we assume the Diplomate is not keeping up with relevant topics. The current LEAD Performance Requirement is an MDT p-value of 0.1 and is based on research and analysis completed by medical specialty Boards that similarly use MDT. This means if a Diplomate's calculated MDT p-value is less than 0.1 there is a probability of less than 10 percent they are keeping up, and we conclude the alternative is true—that they are not keeping up.

A Diplomate must be at or above the MDT p-value standard by June 30 of the Diplomate's Foot Surgery certification expiration year.

Additionally, if a Diplomate also holds an RRA Surgery certification, the Diplomate must be at or above the RRA MDT p-value standard by June 30 of the Diplomate's RRA Surgery certification expiration year.

To access LEAD specific requirements by Foot Surgery certification expiration year, Diplomates should use the interactive webtool found on our website: [LEAD Program Requirements | ABFAS](#).

Diplomates who do not meet the performance requirements

At the end of the first five-year period within a ten-year cycle, if a Diplomate's MDT p-value is below standard, the diplomate must raise their MDT p-value to be at or above standard by the end of the second five-year period. The Diplomate's certification status will remain active for the duration of the cycle. If a Diplomate does not raise their MDT p-value to be at or above the standard, the Diplomate's status will expire.

At the end of the ten-year cycle, if a Diplomate's MDT p-value is below standard, the Diplomate's Foot Surgery, and if applicable, RRA Surgery certification status will expire, and the Diplomate must apply to reestablish board certification under the policy established by the ABFAS Board of Directors.

Note: A Diplomate maintaining certification in Reconstructive Rearfoot/Ankle Surgery in a year after Foot Surgery certification must maintain certification in Foot Surgery to remain certified in Reconstructive Rearfoot/Ankle Surgery.

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 (including photographs) or share the content 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 or other service or person to provide or submit answers.
3. Participants agree to the [Terms of Use](#).
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's 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 and surgical activity.

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 a CE credit 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

Podiatric Surgery Activity Audit Requirements

Diplomates must have performed Foot and/or Reconstructive Rearfoot and Ankle Surgery within the last two years. If selected for a podiatric surgical activity audit, Diplomates must provide a case list from one hospital or surgery center.

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)