Plastic Surgery Program Requirement Changes  
Review Committee for Plastic Surgery  
ACGME

Changes effective 7/1/2012  
Committee Support for Elimination of the “Combined” Programs

In support of the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS) decision to eliminate the “combined” program format, the Review Committee for Plastic Surgery voted to amend the Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Plastic Surgery, eliminating PR Int.C.1.a), which required:

“At least three years of clinical education with progressive responsibility in a single ACGME- or RCPSC-accredited surgery residency program. A transitional year or rotating internships may not be used to fulfill this requirement.”

This change to the program requirements was approved by ACGME Board of Directors at its October 2011 meeting, with an effective date of July 1, 2012.

The Committee defined the implementation of conversion procedures at its May 2011 meeting. “Combined” programs may:

a. request that their programs be converted to an integrated format; or,

b. remain an independent program.

The Committee agreed on the following timeline:

- Conversions may begin as early as July 1, 2012.
- The last conversion request will have a start date of July 1, 2015.
- The last start date for residents grandfathered into the “combined” format will have a start date of July 1, 2018.

If “combined” programs and their institutions wish to convert to an integrated program format, a site visit will not be required. If programs and institutions wish to add a second program format, then a site visit will be required.

To request a conversion from a “combined” to an integrated program format, submit the following items to the ACGME offices, to the attention of Dr. Peggy Simpson, Executive Director for the Review Committee for Plastic Surgery:

1. information regarding the proposed new complement (positions by PGY-level), an educational rationale, a new block diagram, a response to most recent citations, and a summary of major changes since the program’s last site visit;
2. a list of new participating sites which are not part of the current plastic surgery independent program rotation schedule;
3. goals and objectives for any new rotations (e.g., all of PGY-1-3 and any new PGY-4-6 rotations);
4. curriculum vitae for any new faculty members (e.g., faculty members not listed in the program's most recent program information form (PIF));
5. a cover letter, co-signed by the designated institutional official (DIO) and the program director, describing the requested implementation timeline and commitment to current residents in the "combined" program; and,
6. signed letters noting support for and cooperation with the converted program from involved program directors/division heads/department chairs of those new departments involved in the PGY-1-3 years, and any new rotations in the PGY-4-6 years.

If programs in the “combined” formats wish to add both independent and integrated formats, a new PIF application for the integrated format must be submitted to the ACGME.

If programs in the "combined" format wish to convert to the integrated format, the independent format would be discontinued. Residents currently in the "pipeline" will finish their education under the format promised when they entered the program.

Changes effective 7/1/2009
At its June 2008 meeting, the ACGME Board of Directors approved changes to the Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Plastic Surgery. Those changes became effective July 1, 2009.

Four major areas of change were included:
   1. Standardized program formats
   2. Revisions to didactic content areas
   3. Program director protected time
   4. Program coordinator institutional support

Standardized program formats
All independent program formats must be 36 months in length. All integrated program formats must be 72 months in length. The first residents affected by these requirement changes were those who began their plastic surgery education on July 1, 2011.

Honoring Previous Commitments to Current Residents for Residents in "Combined" Programs
Residents who began their plastic surgery education prior to July 1, 2010 will complete their program according to the terms and conditions of their appointment letters. The Review Committee neither expects nor condones lengthening resident program length after the start of an educational program, nor does it expect or condone changing residents’ program formats.

All residents recruited from November 1, 2008 forward must be informed of the three-year length of residency in plastic surgery, and all will be expected to complete a three-year residency program.

For institutions providing residency education in a “combined” format, where the resident enters the institution’s surgery program for three years before beginning the plastic surgery residency, the Review Committee understands that residents in the general surgery portion of their education have been informed of the total number of years of education. In order to ensure that these residents have their previous commitments honored, all “combined” programs were required to provide the following information to the Review Committee:
• Resident Name
• PGY position (specify surgery or plastic surgery)
• Expected date of graduation (from plastic surgery)

The Review Committee informed the ABPS about any exceptions granted.

**Distinct Program Numbers for Independent and Integrated Programs**

At the October 2008 Review Committee meeting, it was determined that distinct program numbers will be assigned separately for the independent and integrated program formats. As a result, programs that conduct residency education in an integrated program format only will be assigned a new program number beginning with “362.” All other information about the program remained the same, including the program’s history, accreditation status, and cycle length.

Programs that conduct residency education in an independent program format only will retain the “360” program number.

Those institutions that conduct residency education in both the independent and integrated program formats will be assigned an additional program number beginning with “362” to designate the integrated program. The “362” program’s current accreditation status and cycle length will be identical to the “360” program’s accreditation status and cycle length. In institutions with both “360” and “362” programs, coordinated site visits will be assigned when the targeted site visit date is identical. As programs participate in the “Annual Update” Information process, it is extremely important to accurately confirm that each resident has been assigned to the correct program number. For assistance in filling out the Annual Update, please contact the ACGME Accreditation Data System (ADS) representative for Plastic Surgery, Jenna Walls at 312.755.7117.