

AOSPine Europe Short-Term Fellowships—Guidelines

Introduction

Quality, consistency and academic qualification are key elements to a fellowship program. To ensure we achieve these criteria it is necessary to reaffirm the principles behind and guidelines for AOSPine Europe (AOSEU) fellowships.

Aims

The purpose of an AOSEU fellowship is to provide additional experience for trained orthopedic and neurosurgeons interested in spinal surgery. It is the responsibility of the host center to ensure that the fellow becomes conversant in the principles, indications, planning, techniques and complications of spinal surgery. Fellows are expected to enthusiastically immerse themselves in all aspects of the program offered by the host center.

Spine Centers

Short-term fellowships are offered in official Spine Centers (further details on the AOSPine website), namely hospitals or clinics throughout the region. Candidates can specify preferred centers in their application. However the final decision regarding choice of center will be made on the basis of the application and availability.

Duration

AOSPine offers short-term fellowships that range in duration from one week up to twelve weeks.

Support

An AOSEU stipend for each fellow is sent to the account of the host clinic or the fellow once the fellowship has commenced. This covers basic accommodation and meals. Most centers provide simple accommodation for the fellow, typically a single room either within the hospital complex or nearby. All travel expenses are the responsibility of the fellow or sponsor.

If family housing is required, arrangements must be made privately by the fellow himself. This can be expensive, and AOSEU cannot cover such additional expenses. Nor can AOSEU personnel or the center arrange housing for the fellow and family.

Furthermore our experience is that living outside of the hospital complex reduces active participation and thus impairs the professional benefit of the stay. As such we strongly recommend that fellows come alone and live in the center accommodation provided.

Fellowship Application

An AOSEU short-term fellowship is granted at the discretion of AOSEU, based upon the candidate's application and experience. Successful candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Submit a complete online application form and required documents at least 8 months prior to the fellowship
- Be a member of AOSpine
- Be a graduate of a spine program or be in an orthopedic or neurosurgery residency
- Have a strong interest in spine surgery
- Have previously participated in an AO or AOSpine course
- Have not participated in any other spine fellowship within the past two years

Applications will only be accepted using the official application form on the AOSpine website. The AOSEU Spine Centers & Fellowships Officer will examine the application and the candidate will be contacted with a decision. This process may take up to 3 months.

Coordination & Contact

All fellowships are organized by AOSEU. Direct arrangements between candidate and center are not permissible.

Confirmation & Changes

AOSEU must receive confirmation of acceptance within 1 month after a fellowship has been offered. The arrangement is then considered binding. If no response is received within 1 month, AOSEU shall be free to reassign the fellowship to another candidate.

Any later subsequent wish for change of timing or location may jeopardize the fellowship. Furthermore if a fellow cannot fulfill the requirements set out in this document, AOSEU may consider early termination of the fellowship.

If a fellow fails to participate to an agreed level or has compromised the learning experience through failure to attend the center, no certificate will be awarded and future tenures through AOSEU may be jeopardized.

During the Fellowship

The fellow is expected to follow the daily routine of the center and should be available for emergencies at night and on weekends. Active participation as a scrubbed assistant may be possible.

Some centers suggest, by way of an introduction, that fellows give a short presentation to staff. This can be on a subject or topic with which the fellow is familiar or actively involved. We recommend that fellows communicate with the Spine Center upon confirmation of fellowship to enquire about this.

Fellows will not be insured against accident or illness through either AOSEU or the center. It is the responsibility of each fellow to ensure that their medical insurance covers medical treatment in foreign countries. Furthermore it is strongly recommended that the fellow takes out malpractice insurance prior to starting the fellowship.

English is spoken by medical staff at many centers. However some staff members and patients may only speak their mother tongue, and staff meetings, ward rounds and outpatient clinics may be held in local language. Therefore it is advisable to acquire some knowledge of local language before the fellowship begins, allowing for better communication and integration.

White coats may be provided by the center, however to be sure please check this prior to starting the fellowship.

A fellow may be allowed to assist operations scrubbed in. However for legal reasons the fellow will not be permitted to perform surgery.

Evaluations

The AOSEU short-term fellowship program can only develop with the help of constructive and honest feedback from each fellow. Following completion of the fellowship, a confidential evaluation form must be completed and returned to AOSEU within 1 month. This is a mandatory requirement for each fellow to receive the AOSEU fellowship certification.

The Spine Center is also required to complete a confidential evaluation form upon completion of each fellowship.