

AAHKS Fellowship Recognition Program Requirements & Guidelines

January 2025

Introduction

The American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS) works to advance hip and knee patient care through education, advocacy, research, and outreach. Among our core values are inclusivity, life-long learning, integrity and professionalism. Ensuring that all adult reconstruction fellowship training programs provide the highest quality educational and training experience supports these core AAHKS values and our goal of producing technically skilled, highly qualified hip and knee surgeons.

AAHKS leadership recognizes the need for oversight to provide structure to fellowship training. The AAHKS Fellowship Recognition Program defines a common set of standards that recognized arthroplasty programs must meet and a formal process for ensuring adherence to these standards. Improvements to the structure of fellowship training can positively impact programs, trainees and the profession. Its overarching goal is to ensure that adult reconstruction fellowship training programs are structured with solid foundational educational platforms while minimizing the administrative burden.

The AAHKS Fellowship Recognition Program is overseen by the AAHKS Fellowship Committee. Two distinct pathways will be provided by which adult reconstruction fellowship programs may achieve recognition: 1) adhere to the guidelines laid forth in this document (“AAHKS Pathway”) or by having existing ACGME accreditation (“ACGME Pathway”). Requirements for both pathways are outlined in this document.

Participation in this program will become a requirement to participate in the AAHKS Adult Reconstruction Fellowship Match, as well as to receive AAHKS Fellowship Grants, over the next several years.

Guidelines and Requirements

General Requirements for Adult Reconstruction Fellowship Programs

Each adult reconstruction fellowship program is required to be structured as a one-year program. Fellows will be allowed a maximum of three months away from the home program for outside rotations, ideally in a hands-on capacity.

Adult reconstruction fellowship programs must attest that they adhere to the following standards:

1. Provide fellows with a sound didactic and clinical education that is carefully planned and balanced with concerns for patient safety and fellow well-being. The learning objectives should not be compromised by excessive reliance on fellows to fulfill service obligations.
2. Plan and monitor the relationship between residencies and fellowships to preserve and complement the educational experience of both.

3. Provide an intellectual environment free of bias of gender, race or religion that emphasizes acquiring the knowledge, skills, clinical judgment and attitudes essential to the practice of the subspecialty.

Faculty Requirements

There should be a fellowship program director responsible for the program. The fellowship program director must qualify and be a fellow member of AAHKS.

There should be a sufficient number of faculty (minimum one full-time attending per one fellow). All adult reconstruction fellowship program faculty must maintain a full unrestricted license to practice medicine and be board certified/eligible by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgeons (ABOS) or equivalent recognition by the Royal College of Surgeons for Canadian surgeons

The faculty should devote sufficient time to the educational program to fulfill their supervisory and teaching responsibilities.

There should be an administrative director or coordinator assigned to handle the administrative requirements of the fellowship.

Surgical Volumes and Case Logs

A sufficient number of procedures must be available to ensure adequate surgical experience for each fellow. The minimum case volumes are 250 primary hip and/or knee arthroplasties and 25 revision hip and/or knee arthroplasties per fellow.

AAHKS will provide a case log system for fellows to record cases. Alternatively, programs may submit electronic copies of case logs from any existing case log system. Any case where the fellow was scrubbed should be recorded in the case log.

For programs that are ACGME accredited, fellows will not be required to complete the AAHKS case log. Instead, each fellow's ACGME case log can be submitted to AAHKS.

Completion of the AAHKS case log or submission of the ACGME case logs are due September 1 of each year (or one month following completion of the fellows' academic year, if the program follows an atypical calendar).

Curriculum

A Program Curriculum needs to be formulated and organized. Fellows should participate in the structure of the curriculum and present a portion of the lectures. Recommended components of the curriculum include:

1. Didactic Curriculum: Weekly teaching conferences with a rotating list of subjects and associated reading list. AAHKS has developed a [sample curriculum](#) for programs' reference and use.
2. Case conferences of upcoming or past cases to review indications, diagnosis and management and surgical principles of hip and knee cases.
3. Grand Rounds
4. Morbidity and Mortality conferences
5. Journal Club
6. Participation in at least one national meeting per year (for ex. AAHKS, AAOS, CCJR, etc.)

Programs will be required to submit summaries of their curriculum with the application.

Research

Fellows should take an active part in basic science and/or clinical research. This could include original research, local quality improvement projects, systemic reviews, meta-analyses, review articles, case studies, etc.

The final goal of the research project should include submission of a publication quality manuscript and/or submission of an abstract to a national meeting.

Evaluations

The faculty should evaluate the fellows they supervise in a timely manner on each rotation, no less than quarterly. These evaluations should be maintained at each training site as part of the fellow's permanent record and available for review by the AAHKS Fellowship Committee upon request. A sample AAHKS evaluation form is available for use.

The performance of the faculty should be evaluated by the fellows to review their teaching abilities, commitment to the educational program, clinical knowledge, and scholarly activities. This evaluation should include annual confidential evaluations by fellows. A sample AAHKS faculty evaluation form is available for use.

The fellows may be contacted by the AAHKS Fellowship Committee to complete a confidential evaluation of the program upon completion of their fellowship year.

Graduation

Graduation requirements for fellows completing adult reconstruction fellowship programs is as follows:

1. Completion of case logs with adequate case volumes (250 primary/25 revision per fellow)
2. Passage of ABOS part 1 (or equivalent) examination
3. Verification from program director

Each graduating class will be announced/recognized at the AAHKS Annual Meeting in November. Recognition certificates with the official AAHKS seal will be available following the meeting and recorded in the fellow's AAHKS database profile.

Recognition Pathways

To participate in the annual Adult Reconstruction Match, all adult reconstruction fellowship programs must be pursuing one of two pathways: 1) Participate in the AAHKS Fellowship Recognition Program ("AAHKS Pathway"), or 2) Hold active ACGME accreditation ("ACGME Pathway").

Programs selecting the AAHKS recognition pathway will follow the process below for both new and renewing programs. Annual updates will be required, and re-application for recognition will be required every five years. At the discretion of the Fellowship Committee, programs may be required to renew recognition at an alternative timeframe following their initial application to allow for a staggered renewal process.

AAHKS Recognition Pathway Procedure and Process

All fellowship positions at an AAHKS-recognized program must be part of the match process. Requests for exceptions to this rule may be submitted to the Fellowship Committee for consideration on a case-by-case basis. Programs may only accept the number of fellows for which they are approved. Increasing the number of fellowship positions requires approval from the AAHKS Fellowship Committee.

Adult reconstruction fellowship training programs may apply for AAHKS recognition by completing the below steps.

1. Complete the online application form to attest to meeting the education & faculty guidelines and submit required documents.
2. Complete the AAHKS [“Exhibit A” online form](#)
3. Pay the applicable fee (fee may be covered by qualifying for an AAHKS Fellowship Grant)

ACGME Pathway: AAHKS Recognition of ACGME Accreditation Process

Active ACGME accreditation is considered as fully meeting the standards of AAHKS recognition. Adult reconstruction fellowship programs that are ACGME accredited do not need to apply for separate AAHKS recognition. Instead, they may confirm their program’s ACGME accreditation by completing the following steps:

1. Complete the online application to verify program information and submit a copy of the program’s ACGME program application.
2. Complete the AAHKS [“Exhibit A” online form](#)
3. Submit ACGME case logs following completion of each training year. Pay the applicable fee (fee may be covered by qualifying for an AAHKS Fellowship Grant)

Maintenance and Renewal Process

Adult reconstruction programs will be required to submit an annual update. Changes in structure of the fellowship such as program director, faculty, facilities or curriculum should be submitted with the annual renewal. Case logs must be completed by the required deadline. Programs must renew recognition every five years by completing the renewal application and submitting any necessary documents, updating old documents and complying with any new requirements.

Fee Structure

AAHKS recognition aims to be cost-effective for programs and the organization by keeping fees appropriately balanced to cover administrative costs. When possible, programs may be able to offset accreditation costs by participating in the AAHKS Fellowship Grant program. Fee structure for AAHKS recognition for both non-ACGME and ACGME programs can be found in appendix A.

AAHKS Recognition Application Timeline

January 18	Online applications open & email invitation sent to Fellowship Programs
April 1	Application submission Deadline
April 1-June 1	AAHKS review process
June 1-30	Remediation period for any deficient programs to review/remediate issues
July 1-15	Notifications sent to programs
Aug 31	Fellowship Match application for fellows posted on SF match website. Fellowship status will be detailed for each program
November 1	Deadline for fellow application submission to SF match

All adult reconstruction programs that plan to participate in the match must have achieved completed participation via either pathway by April 1, 2026, to continue participating in the 2026 Match and future Matches, or otherwise arrange for an extension/waiver. Once successfully completed, programs must renew AAHKS recognition or submit their ACGME renewal information every five years.

Compliance & Adverse Actions

The AAHKS Fellowship Committee is responsible for reviewing applications, monitoring compliance with program requirements, adopting policy changes as appropriate and making recognition decisions. The AAHKS Fellowship Committee will address any issues related to compliance, adverse actions and appeals and evaluate the Fellowship recognition Programs/processes on an ongoing basis.

Adult reconstruction fellowship programs that do not meet recognition standards will be notified of deficiencies and given time to work with the AAHKS Fellowship Committee to bring their program into compliance. If after sufficient time the program is unable to comply with AAHKS standards, the Fellowship Committee may recommend further remediation or that the program be removed from match.

Appeals

Adult reconstruction fellowship programs may request an appeal of any adverse action by sending written notice to AAHKS at the following address: 9400 W. Higgins Road Suite 230, Rosemont IL 60018. All decisions of the Fellowship Committee shall be submitted to the AAHKS Board of Directors for approval.

Application Process & Formal Agreement Statement

<https://www.aahks.org/recognition/>. All applications to the Recognition Program must be completed online.

By signing the application, you acknowledge that your program agrees to comply with this process and meet these requirements, and you agree to be bound by the following terms and conditions:

I hereby attest that our fellowship program has met the most current quality standard requirements set by the AAHKS Fellowship Committee and contained in this document. I understand that meeting these standards is required to participate in the AAHKS Fellowship match.

I understand that AAHKS reserves the right to update this application and the quality requirements at any time. Revision to these requirements will take effect only after allowing programs a reasonable time to comply. All applications for fellowship recognition will be reviewed based on the most current requirements. I attest that our fellowship program complies with the most current version.

[Apply online.](#)

Contact information: Fellowship@aaahks.org

Appendix A:

Fee Structure:

During the initial application period/first year of the program, there will be no additional fee for applying for and achieving AAHKS Fellowship Recognition. A renewal fee may be assessed in future years.

Any fees associated with Fellowship Recognition are in addition to the annual \$500 Match fee.

AAHKS reserves the right to request additional materials from programs undergoing faculty and/or programmatic changes.

Programs may withdraw from the AAHKS Match anytime during the five-year recognition period on request upon submission of an official letter addressed to the AAHKS Fellowship Match Oversight Committee. Programs interested in re-joining the AAHKS Match will be required to submit a new application.