



Board Update – November 2025

1. Meeting

The Board of Directors met in October 2025. Dr. Rebecca M. Minter is chair of the board of directors, with Dr. Mark R. Chassin as vice chair. We are pleased to submit the following information.

2. Continuous Certification Knowledge Gaps Reports

The ABS is now able to share knowledge gaps reports related to our various Continuous Certification Assessments (CCA) with our partner societies.

The purpose of these reports is to provide a summary of specialty-specific knowledge gaps identified through diplomate performance on the CCA. Information provided includes data on first-attempt exam performance over the last three years, including average percent correct values, keywords, and references for items with lower diplomate performance.

This information is provided in order to serve the profession by giving societies the data to develop member-facing educational activities specifically directed at documented knowledge gaps. Reports for each ABS specialty can be found on our [website](#).

3. Quality Improvement Initiative

The ABS has made a significant effort to align with the [ABMS Standards for Continuing Certification](#) and engage in the development of a quality agenda. Over the last several years, the ABS has been including questions as well as educational resources and references related to quality improvement on our Continuous Certification Assessments. In the next phase, ABS will provide credit to diplomates for quality improvement initiatives that they are already doing in collaboration with specialty societies. Engagement with our partner societies will be critical to the success of this project and will allow societies to offer a benefit to their members as well as further advance the profession. Additional information will be available in the coming months regarding how societies can participate in this initiative.

4. Nontraditional Pathway to ABS Certification

The ABS is pleased to announce the launch of the Nontraditional Pathway to Certification following nearly three years of review and refinement of the now defunct Academic Pathway to ABS Certification. Surgeons who have completed a surgical training program in another country that is equivalently structured and accredited in comparison to an ACGME-accredited general surgery or vascular surgery residency program may be eligible for initial certification through this pathway.

Surgeons who trained in the U.S. are not eligible to apply for ABS certification through this pathway.

These surgeons are ONLY admissible to the ABS initial certification process if they have completed training in an ACGME- or American Osteopathic Board of Surgery (AOBS)-accredited program and meet all pertinent ABS standards and requirements. This is not a pathway for U.S.-trained surgeons who have failed our standard process, or for any other alternative, non-ACGME pathways in the U.S.

This extremely rigorous process helps verify the quality of non-ACGME trained surgeons and ensures that the training completed by applicants matches the quality and difficulty of ACGME-accredited surgical training. Further, this pathway aligns ABS certification opportunities with those of other ABMS

member boards and serves the best interests of patients and of the profession by providing the opportunity to obtain ABS certification to well-established and qualified surgeons practicing in the U.S. The pathway is intended for surgeons who are in active practice in the United States and who are not currently admissible for ABS certification. Program sponsorship is required, and applicants must remain in practice at the same institution/location while completing the certification examination process.

For additional information, including full pathway requirements and examination admissibility details, please visit the [ABS website](#).

5. ABS Continuous Certification Program and Requirements

Now entering its ninth year, we are pleased to report that participants enrolled in the Continuous Certification Program consistently report a high degree of satisfaction with our Continuous Certification process. Responding to diplomate complaints about the former high stakes, secure, point in time recertification exam that covered the breadth of each specialty area and provided no opportunity for learning or feedback, the ABS introduced the Continuous Certification Program in 2018. As part of the program, a biennial modular online assessment process replaced the traditional ten-year recertification exam, providing a more flexible, interactive, and educational learning experience for diplomates. Program fees have been stable since inception and have not been increased in over nine years. While these fees primarily support the work of creating and delivering the assessment, they are also used to support the ongoing process of quality improvement, enhancing both process and user experience for diplomates year after year. In addition, fees from this and our other exams go to supporting research to evaluate relevance and validity as well as developing and processing surveys for feedback, and managing diplomate, trainee, program director, hospital credentialing offices, and patient calls and concerns about their surgeons.

In 2021, the ABS focused on reducing the administrative burden of diplomate reporting on ongoing certification requirements. As a result, CME has since been automatically transferred to the ABS through the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME®) PARS system. Over 4,000,000 credits transferred through this process as of November 2025.

Going forward, to avoid confusion and duplication of CME credits as well as ensure valid and high-quality CME, only CME transmitted through PARS will be accepted for Continuous Certification. CME providers must participate in this process if they wish for diplomates to be able to use their activities to count towards Continuous Certification Program requirements. Activities registered with the ACCME that count towards ABS requirements will be listed in the [ACCME's CME Passport](#). If providers are having trouble getting their activities registered with the ACCME, they should [contact the ACCME](#).

6. Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs)

General surgery EPAs went into effect on July 1, 2023. As of October 2025, over 525,000 assessments have been collected. All candidates for the 2028 ABS General Surgery Qualifying Examination (GSQE), regardless of the time of entry to training, will be required to submit an EPA profile as part of their application. All current time and number-based requirements will remain in force until 2028 or until further notice.

EPAs for vascular surgery, pediatric surgery, and complex general surgical oncology officially launched at all ACGME-accredited training programs on August 1, 2025. EPAs for surgical critical care officially launched on September 2, 2025.

The ABS website has a dedicated [EPA section](#) full of information, videos, and details related to the rollout and implementation of EPAs. Please check the ABS website frequently for updates on this initiative.

If your program or society is interested in having the ABS EPA Project Speakers Bureau give a Grand Rounds or other presentation on EPAs, please [sign up here](#).

7. Focused Practice Designations

The first focused practice designation (FPD) examination in [Adult Complex Thyroid/Parathyroid Surgery](#) (ACTPS) was held in April 2025 with 217 total examinees, 109 from the ABS. The ABS has worked in conjunction with the American Board of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (ABOHNS) to define the standards of practice, participation, and knowledge that are required to be identified as a surgeon who focuses their practice in complex thyroid/parathyroid. This partnership assures a single set of standards for surgeons who are recognized by this designation, regardless of their initial training.

The ACTPS FPD is the second that has been developed by the ABS, in addition to our existing FPD in [Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery](#) (MBS). Since 2022, over 250 surgeons have earned their MBS FPD. As of 2025, surgeons certified by either the ABS or the American Osteopathic Board of Surgery (AOBS) meet the same eligibility requirements and take the same exam to achieve this designation. AOBS diplomates who are successful on the exam will be recognized by the AOBS with a certificate of added qualification, while ABS diplomates who are successful on the exam will continue to be recognized by the ABS with a focused practice designation. Meeting the same standards and taking the same examination meets a high professional standard of transparency to the public and other stakeholders.

8. Volunteering for the ABS

The ABS is always seeking volunteers at all levels for a variety of different opportunities including serving on task forces to explore potential new initiatives, examination item writing, examining for our oral exams, providing essential user testing and feedback on ABS products, and more. A detailed description of the various committees and volunteer positions and the time commitment required is available on our [website](#). Your members can sign up to be a volunteer at any time by visiting our website and completing the [volunteer form](#).