

Residency Start Dates

Richard J. Shemin, MD

Chair, ABTS





November 2014

Re: ABS Support of August 1 Fellowship Start Date

Dear Program Director:

The American Board of Surgery has been concerned for a number of years about the difficulty general surgery residents face in transitioning from residency to fellowship. With roughly 80% of residents pursuing fellowship training after graduation, the tight turnaround from end of residency to start of fellowship has a grave impact on the well-being of these individuals, as well as on surgical education and patient care.

It is with this in mind that ABS leaders have engaged the fellowship community regarding this issue. The solution of shifting the start of fellowship programs from July 1 to August 1 has been already embraced by many fellowship programs.

The ABS strongly endorses a fellowship start date of August 1 for the following reasons:

- It allows residents to fully complete their final year of residency training. The issue of chief residents leaving their final year early is a serious one, forcing residents to use vacation time or other methods to meet the required 48 weeks per year of clinical training.
- It provides residents with time to move locations and for new fellowship orientation activities, including skills "boot camps" if necessary.
- It affords residents time to study for the General Surgery Qualifying Examination without being in training. To further support the change in start date, we will be moving the General Surgery Qualifying Examination to July as of 2016: July 19, 2016. Residents will thus be able to complete this phase of the certification process before beginning fellowship training.
- It will ensure seasoned fellows are present in the hospital during July to provide coverage and supervision for new residents, improving both patient care and the experience of incoming residents.
- Feedback from residents regarding this change has been overwhelmingly positive. While concerns have been raised regarding the loss of a month's salary and the need to arrange for health insurance coverage, it is felt that these are far outweighed by the benefits of the later start date.

We hope you will consider transitioning to August 1 for the start of your fellowship program, for the good of our specialty, our patients, and our future surgeons. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of David M. Mahvi in black ink.

David M. Mahvi, M.D.
Chair

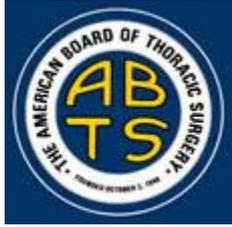
- **80% GS residents transition to fellowships**
- **Proposed: Shift in the Fellowship start dates from July 1 to August 1**
- **2016 Start**
- **Allows GS Chief Residents to complete their final year**
- **Allows time to move**
- **ABS written exam will be given on July 19, 2016**
- **Allows study time for the exam**
- **GS residents support this initiative**
- **Salary and COBRA**
- **July 1-31, 2016 transition**
- **ABTS Directors have given provisional support for this initiative**
- **Resident's ABTS applications will probably change to September 15 from August 15**

Draft Proposal for August 1 Thoracic Surgery Resident Start Date

- The American Board of Surgery at the request of the Surgery program directors has moved the Surgery Qualifying Exam date to July (July 19, 2016 for 2016). This change was initiated to allow Surgery residents to remain in their training programs until the required June 30 end date for the majority of programs. Additionally, with the change in the Qualifying Exam date, trainees will have the opportunity to study and take the ABS Surgery Qualifying Exam before the start of their fellowship, to move to their new training city in a more leisurely fashion, to fully participate in orientation in their new hospital, and potentially to offset patient safety concerns that have been noted with transitions to new trainees during the month of July. Orthopedics has adopted and executed this policy for many years with favorable results for residents and programs. Multiple informal surveys of residents have been very positive regarding this change in fellowship start dates. In response to this change, most postgraduate surgery fellowship start dates have been moved to August 1 (starting in 2016).

Draft Proposal for August 1 Thoracic Surgery Resident Start Date

- The American Board of Thoracic Surgery recognizes the potential value of this change by the American Board of Surgery for our residents and encourages thoracic surgery program directors to consider changing their program start dates to August 1. The American Board of Thoracic Surgery will therefore move the application deadline for the Qualifying Exam application to mid-September and the Qualifying Exam to December (starting in 2016). Before committing to this change multiple logistic considerations need to be decided at the local level and must include thoughtful discussion with the institutional Designated Institutional Official (DIO). Consideration needs to be given to the resident's salary gap (from July 1 to August 1), healthcare coverage (typically COBRA coverage will cover a 1 month gap readily), and those residents that have a visa that requires continuous training as a prerequisite.



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THE AMERICAN BOARD OF SURGERY

Incorporated



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