

Early Specialization Program (ESP) in Vascular Surgery Review Committee for Surgery

The Review Committee will consider proposals for the Early Specialization Program (ESP), a six-year education and training pathway leading to eligibility for certification in both general surgery and vascular surgery. The ESP is designed to recognize exceptional general surgery residents who, in the collective judgment of the general surgery and vascular surgery program directors, have demonstrated the required maturity, skill, and judgment to enter into vascular surgery education and training early.

This pathway includes four years of general surgery and two years of vascular surgery education and training, to be completed at the same institution. Entry into the ESP does not shorten length of education and training in the general surgery residency or decrease program requirements. However, 12 months of experience in vascular surgery will either occur in the PGY-5, or be divided between the PGY-4 and PGY-5, and will count toward both general surgery and vascular surgery certification requirements.

The ESP candidate must be identified before completion of the PGY-3 in general surgery and must be listed on the general surgery program's Resident Roster in the Accreditation Data System (ADS) for the 60 months of residency. All cases performed by the resident in the PGY-4 and PGY-5 must be entered into the resident's general surgery Case Log.

Both the general surgery and vascular surgery programs must be sponsored by the same ACGME-accredited Sponsoring Institution and must currently hold a status of Continued Accreditation prior to resident approval into an ESP pathway.

Proposals for an ESP pathway require approval by the Review Committee for Surgery *before* implementation. A description of what must be included in an ESP pathway proposal and instructions on how to submit are included below.

Content or Specialty Content Areas that Must Be Addressed in an ESP Pathway

1. Essential content areas of general surgery, defined as the following:
 - Abdomen and its contents
 - Alimentary tract
 - Skin, soft tissues, and breast
 - Endocrine surgery
 - Head and neck surgery
 - Pediatric surgery
 - Surgical critical care
 - Surgical oncology
 - Trauma and non-operative trauma (burn experience that includes patient management may be counted toward non-operative trauma)
 - Vascular surgery

2. Secondary areas/rotations are:
 - Endoscopy
 - Plastic and reconstructive surgery
 - Thoracic surgery

3. Additional technical experience includes (these are separately evaluated by the Review Committee as defined categories, but generally involve one of the above-noted content areas):
 - Laparoscopy
 - Advanced laparoscopy

4. Other specialty areas which have been previously defined are:
 - Anesthesia
 - Gynecology
 - Neurological surgery
 - Orthopaedic surgery
 - Urology
 - Transplantation

Requirements for an ESP Pathway

- Thirty-six of the first 48 months of general surgery residency must be spent in areas 1, 2, or 3 above. No more than four months of the 36 may be spent in vascular surgery.
- During the 24 months of PGY-4 and PGY-5, 12 months must be spent as chief resident in general surgery.
 - Chief resident rotations are defined as ones in which the resident is the most senior resident on the service, is directly responsible for overseeing all patients on the service, and reports directly to the responsible attending physician.
 - The 12 months of chief resident rotations may be distributed throughout the 24 months of the PGY-4 and PGY-5 levels.
 - The chief resident rotations must be in the essential content areas (non-vascular). An exception may be made on a case-by-case basis to allow up to four months of vascular surgery rotations as chief resident.
 - No more than four months of the chief resident experience may be in any single content area.
- During the 24 months of PGY-4 and PGY-5, 12 months must be spent on vascular surgery education and training.
 - The 12 months must all be spent entirely in clinical rotations and cannot include research rotations. Similarly, nonoperative rotations, such as interventional radiology or cardiology/vascular medicine, will not be credited toward the certification requirements in general surgery.
- The PGY-6 must consist entirely of 12 months of vascular surgery education and training.

The table below clarifies the documents that must be submitted along with proposals for new ESP pathways, as well as the materials required for an established ESP pathway to request new candidates.

Request for New ESP Pathway	Request for New Candidates in an Approved ESP Pathway	Documents
X	X	A letter of support from the general surgery and vascular surgery program directors that documents resources to provide all residents and subspecialty fellows with a sufficient breadth and balance of operative experience in the essential content areas
X	X	A letter of support from the Sponsoring Institution's designated institutional official (DIO)
X	X	Verification that both programs' American Board of Surgery pass rates on the Qualifying and Certifying Examinations meet or exceed those specified in the ACGME Program Requirements
X		A description of the process used for candidate selection
X		The block diagram for the first four years of general surgery education justifying a candidate's preparation for the ESP pathway (no more than four months of the first 36 months of general surgery residency can be spent exclusively on the vascular surgery service)
	X	Confirmation that the rotations have not changed since the last proposal for the ESP pathway; if changes have occurred, describe the changes and demonstrate compliance with curricular program requirements
X		Operative data demonstrating that the program is providing sufficient operative experience during the PGY-1-4 in the essential content areas for all current residents in the general surgery program during the academic year in which the initial proposal is made

Direct questions to Review Committee staff members (contact information is listed on the [Surgery](#) section of the ACGME website).

Submit completed proposals and requests for new ESP candidates to Associate Executive Director Aimee Morales at amorales@acgme.org.