
Dear reader

This brochure addresses not only doctors and operating room personnel (ORP) who intend to apply for an AO Fellowship, but also those candidates who have already gone through the selection process and who are about to leave for their host clinic.

We would like to inform about you what you may and may not expect from your fellowship. You will also find information on what will be expected from you and what you should avoid doing.

In order to get the most out of this time abroad, you are recommended to become integrated into the daily activities of the host clinic—and the emergencies at night. This process is always dependent upon both sides, namely on you and your hosts.

You will be informed about the daily schedules, OR programs, outpatient clinics, grand rounds, and so on. Some clinics will ask you to give a short presentation about your own background, your research, or a recent study of yours (*only applies to surgeons*).

Due to the increasing number of applicants and concerns about the behavior of a few fellows that have come to the host clinics, we have had to create and apply more stringent selection and monitoring criteria—both for the fellows and the host clinics.

We have introduced a new way of evaluating the fellowships in the form of a personal logbook. We expect every fellow to register in this logbook all his/her clinical activities, as well as the surgical procedures he/she was able to attend, observe, or even scrub in. Furthermore, fellows will be asked to highlight those topics or procedures which are of particular interest. Points of criticism may, of course, also be added (*only applies to surgeons*).

We ask you to read the following pages carefully, as they contain important information which will help you to enjoy your fellowship and gain maximum benefit from it.

We hope that your application will be successful and that you will enjoy your stay abroad, learning all about the AO philosophy and the different AO techniques and making new and lasting acquaintances with members of the AO family.



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The AO Fellowship

The AO Fellowship provides additional experience in AO techniques for fully trained orthopedic surgeons, general surgeons, and ORP interested in trauma treatment. The purpose of this fellowship is to make fellows familiar with the indications, planning, techniques, and pitfalls of osteosynthesis, as judged by AO experts. This applies not only to fractures but also to polytrauma management, pseudarthroses, osteotomies, arthrodeses, and so on. It is not an organized course and the knowledge acquired is largely dependent on the fellows' own initiative.

Successful history

Since the AO Fellowship program began in 1971, a total of about 5,000 fellows have been sponsored. During the past 10 years there have been about 2,500 MD fellowships granted, ranging from 4–12 weeks in duration, and about 160 fellowships for ORP. Many of these former AO fellows have become leading orthopedic surgeons in their own countries all around the world.

Worldwide reach

AO fellowships are offered in more than 100 hospitals in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, and the USA. Fellowships for ORP are offered in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Great Britain.

A regular AO Fellowship generally lasts 4–8 weeks.

Fellowship offer

The fellowship usually covers accommodation and living expenses. Travel costs have to be entirely paid for by the participant. Most clinics provide simple accommodation for one person only. AO International strongly recommends you not to bring your family. If alternative accommodation is required, the fellow must organize and pay for this himself/herself. A prerequisite for fellowship eligibility is previous attendance at an AO Principles Course. Due to the popularity of the fellowship, it is not possible to accept every application.

Requirements and qualifications

The principal requirement is that applicants must show interest in increasing their knowledge of the treatment of trauma with particular emphasis on AO techniques and show interest in becoming actively involved in further AO activities locally.

In addition, applicants for an AO Fellowship must fulfill the following criteria:

- Ⓞ Graduation from a training program in general surgery or orthopedics.
- Ⓞ Previous participation in an AO Principles Course.
- Ⓞ Previous experience with AO principles and techniques (for ORP 5 years).

The maximum age limit is usually 40.

Letters of recommendation

Applicants should submit a letter of recommendation, either from the chair of the local AO Alumni chapter (whose address can be found on the AO website: www.aofoundation.org), an AO Trustee, or a representative from the local/regional AO Education Committee.

A letter from the Head of your own institution is also mandatory.

Application form

In addition to the filled-in application form applicants should also submit the following documents:

- Ⓞ Curriculum vitae
- Ⓞ Copy of medical school diploma
- Ⓞ Copy of AO Basic/Principles Course certificate
- Ⓞ 2 letters of recommendation (as described above)
- Ⓞ List of publications and major lectures given by the applicant
- Ⓞ 1 recent passport-size photograph
- Ⓞ Health Certificate (see page 6 in brochure)
- Ⓞ If English is neither the applicant's mother tongue nor the language used by the host clinic, evidence of attendance at an English language course or a course of the language of the host clinic should be enclosed.

To apply, please fill in the application form. The application form is available for download on the AO website www.aofoundation.org

Language concerns

Language is a common problem that we face when placing a fellow. In many of the European hosting hospitals German is the working language. We recommend very strongly to acquire a basic knowledge of the working language of the host country or a good command of English. A fellow must be aware that the staff of the particular country will speak mostly in their mother tongue so he/she might not always be included in the ongoing discussions.

Family and accompanying persons

AO International recommends all fellows to come alone so they are able to derive maximum benefit from the expert instruction available and from the fellowship experience as a whole. Having the family nearby is often a considerable distraction; the desire to work long and unsocial hours and to be on call for emergencies is frequently much reduced as a result. Please be aware that this is a learning experience and not a holiday!

Feedback—Logbook

We are extremely grateful to those involved in training a fellow and accompanying him/her during his/her stay. The reports we receive from the consultant physicians at the AO Clinic confirm that the relationship is a reciprocal one. If the fellow is actively interested and anxious to learn, he/she will benefit enormously from an AO Fellowship, as indeed will the host clinic. However, if the medical staff feels that the fellow has come more as a tourist than to have a learning experience, instruction and discussion will rapidly fade out. In every case, it is of great value to us to receive honest comments from both sides in the form of the confidential report which follows a fellowship—this provides a basis from which to evaluate future placements.

We have therefore introduced the logbook which every AO fellow is requested to update during his/her stay abroad and which he/she must submit in order to get his/her AO certificate.

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Logbook on operations

Every fellow is requested to keep a so-called logbook or a kind of diary on all his/her activities during the fellowship. It must contain a list of all the operations that were followed or attended, either as an observer or as a scrubbed assistant. We would also expect some follow-up comments on every surgery attended. This list must be submitted, together with the questionnaire, at the end of the fellowship. You should be aware that not only are you asked to make a short report about your stay but also that the host clinic is requested to answer questions.

Regulations and procedures

Application date

Applications must be sent **at least 8–12 months prior** to the requested period of the fellowship.

Preferences

The candidate may express a preference for a continent, a country or a clinic. However, the final decision lies with AO International and is based on the places available.

Coordination

In view of the large number of applications we receive, AO International exclusively coordinates all arrangements. No direct arrangement between a future fellow and a specific clinic will be tolerated or supported.

Confirmation of acceptance

AO International must receive confirmation of acceptance within one month after offering a fellowship. The arrangement is then considered to be a binding contract. If no response is received within that period, AO International considers itself free to assign the place to another candidate.

Changes of place and date

Any late wishes for a change of dates or places may endanger the entire fellowship. If a fellow is unable to fulfill the conditions stated in this document, the Head of the clinic may propose a premature termination of the stay to the President of AO International.

Health Certificate

Upon arrival at the host clinic, a certificate of Hepatitis B and C as well for HIV has to be presented. If not available the fellow will not be allowed to scrub in at surgery.

Working hours

The fellow is expected to follow the daily routine of the clinic and should be available for emergencies at night and on weekends. Active participation as a scrubbed assistant is possible in most clinics, except in the USA.

Leave of absence

Temporary leave or absence need approval from the Head of the clinic. If, for some reason, the fellow wishes to change the placement or leave prior to completion of the allotted period, permission must be sought from both the Head of the clinic and AO International.

Introductory presentation

Some clinics suggest, as a means of introduction, that the fellow gives a short presentation to the staff. This can be on a subject or a topic with which the fellow is familiar or actively involved in. We recommend that you contact the clinic to enquire about such a presentation. *(Does not apply to ORP.)*

Feedback

The fellowship can only maintain or raise its high standards if we have feedback from the fellows. Following completion of the placement a confidential report is requested. This evaluation form should be returned to the President of AO International or the Director of ORP Nurse Education with honest comments or criticism.

Reporting

A confidential report is also prepared by the host clinic. This will be used as reference for any further communication or information.

Insurance

During your stay you will not be covered by insurance against illness or accident through either AO International or the hospital. Please check whether your medical insurance also covers medical treatment in foreign countries. Furthermore, you will not be covered by malpractice insurance. Should you have no coverage for these risks, we strongly recommend arranging this before leaving.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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Both the application forms for surgeons and ORP are downloadable from the above mentioned web link.