

ESR Criteria for Subspecialty Diploma Endorsement

Approved by the ESR Executive Council on June 14, 2024

The ESR considers collaboration with subspecialty diploma programmes as an important and positive development, facilitating mutual support between the relevant subspecialty societies and the ESR in promoting high standards of radiology education and practice throughout Europe. Through its involvement, it is hoped that the ESR will provide an objective and standardized reference point for the examination, thereby further enhancing its academic value and reputation. Endorsement of a subspecialty diploma (or certificate) will therefore signify a high-quality certification of excellence.

For each examination there are educational, medical, and technical standards and considerations, and the ESR would like to make its expertise in all these areas available to subspecialty societies who are ESR institutional members.

1. Outline of the programme

When applying for ESR endorsement of subspecialty diplomas, a document explaining the basic elements of the diploma programme needs to be provided, including:

- Aim(s) and target group
- Fee structure
- Eligibility criteria
- Knowledge base
- Examination structure
- Terminology (title of the programme, name of certificate).

This document must be presented to the ESR Executive Council.

2. Training

The training of candidates has to be in line with previously established basic principles of radiology training as laid out in the [ESR European Training Curriculum for Radiology](#). Key aspects of these principles are:

- Full subspecialisation should only take place **after the designated time for radiology residency, which should preferably last no less than five years**. For candidates with less than five years of training only: [Proof of experience](#) (see Annex 1) as a supervised staff radiologist is required.
- Subspecialty interest training during the residency period (preferably five years, see above) does not of itself fulfil the training requirement for a diploma. **At least two years of dedicated subspecialty training, including a minimum of one year following radiology certification, must be required by the certification programme.**
- The level of knowledge requested from candidates has to correspond to the curricular contents for full subspecialisation in the field of radiology provided by the [ESR European Training Curriculum for Subspecialisation in Radiology \(Level III\)](#).

3. Practicing Radiologists

Diplomas may only be awarded to fully-trained, licensed, and practicing radiologists. Compelling evidence of this has to be collected by the relevant subspecialty. Specialists from other fields and radiologists no longer in practice are specifically excluded from being granted an ESR- endorsed diploma as both a background in and active knowledge of radiology are necessary to fully understand and apply the knowledge recognized by such a diploma. **For the purposes of this requirement, proof of practice (e.g. from an ESR membership application) is considered compelling evidence.**

In an effort to homogenize the prerequisites for the ESR endorsement of a subspecialty diploma outline, diploma candidates have to provide the following documents with their application form:

- Certificate of completed training
- RIS documentation or logbook with a total record of the candidate's experience in the respective subspecialty countersigned by the candidate's programme director (at least two years of subspecialty clinical practice/ training certified by the programme director are required).
- A letter of support from the programme director or department head.
- At least 50 CME credits in the respective subspecialty recognized by the subspecialty societies
- CV
- Proof of ESR and subspecialty society membership in the year(s) of the application and the examination.

Minimum participation in up to 3 subspecialty society events (congresses, workshops, courses) and/or the European Congress of Radiology (ECR) within a max. period of 5 years or an equivalent number of webinars defined by the subspecialty society can be required from the candidates.

In those cases in which the validity of a subspecialty diploma is limited in time, the request for renewal shall be linked to the provision of at least 20 CME credits per year recognized by the subspecialty societies and active ESR and subspecialty society memberships. The participation in specific subspecialty society events may be recommended but shall not be compulsory.

4. ESR Membership

To receive a subspecialty diploma from an ESR-endorsed programme, **the candidate must be a full radiologist or corresponding radiologist member of the ESR as well as the respective subspecialty society in the year(s) of the application and examination.** ESR Members-in-Training are not entitled to receive a subspecialty diploma from an ESR-endorsed programme. Granting diplomas to candidates who do not fulfil this membership requirement means that the ESR endorsement of the programme will be automatically revoked.

Mechanisms to ensure ESR membership of diploma holders:

- Diplomas may only be issued to candidates whose fulfilment of the membership requirement has been acknowledged by the ESR.
- The diploma application must be accompanied by an ESR membership certificate.
- **Lists of all examinees**, including names and country of residence and relevant proofs of: ESR membership, practice, and, for candidates with less than five years of training, experience as a supervised staff radiologist **must be sent to the ESR Office at least**

four weeks before an examination takes place.

- Lists of candidates who passed the exam must be sent to the ESR before the diplomas are issued, but at the latest four weeks after the examination.

5. Examinations

Knowledge base:

A prerequisite to confer any diploma is that the candidate has passed an examination designed to ascertain knowledge, skills, and/or competence (the knowledge base). **The examination should test knowledge as laid out in the subspecialty interest component of the [ESR European Training Curriculum for Subspecialisation in Radiology \(Level III\)](#) (see point 2).** The certification programme should provide a brief but clear and unambiguous description of the topics which must and the topics which may be covered by the examination. This is not intended to forbid new information from being introduced but rather to establish the general boundaries of the knowledge base.

Requirement:

Diplomas may not be conferred without successful examination ('grandfather clause' programmes and certificates for society fellows without examinations are neither supported nor endorsed by the ESR). The ESR recommends that all examinations containing an oral part have to be conducted by experts. The eligibility criteria for expert examiners must be clear and unambiguous.

There should only be one certification programme per area within a subspecialty. Having multiple programmes for different areas (e.g. diagnostic and interventional programmes) in a given subspecialty society is acceptable and encouraged. However, the ESR will not endorse a certification programme if the subspecialty society also offers a parallel programme in the same area which is not endorsed by the ESR, e.g. for candidates who do not fulfil the ESR eligibility criteria such as non-radiologists. Starting a new certification programme in an area in which there is already an ESR-endorsed programme means that the ESR endorsement will be automatically revoked.

Frequency:

Examinations have to take place at least once a year, at the relevant subspecialty society meeting. Upon request, the ESR will also provide facilities for examinations at the ECR. ECR examinations are not required but are strongly encouraged.

Technical aspects:

The examination has to be performed with up-to-date technical and educational tools. In order to ensure a high level of technical requirements and uniformity of examinations, the written part(s) of the examinations shall be standardized and run with continuous software, that is subject to regular updates and quality assessment. It is suggested that a sample examination be made available to candidates.

Oral exams, if available, have to be performed with state-of-the-art materials and as in as standardized a manner as possible; this requirement needs to apply to all languages in which the examination is offered; high quality imaging allowing the correct interpretation of the cases shown must be ensured.

To ensure equal treatment, all candidates must use the same equipment.

6. Diplomas

- **ESR must agree to the phrasing used in the diplomas**, such agreement not to be unreasonably denied.
- **Templates (see Annex 2) are provided by the ESR office; adhering to this uniform design is encouraged.**
- Information regarding signatories has to be provided.
- **The Chairperson of the ESR Board of Directors shall co-sign all diplomas together with the President of the subspecialty society.**

7. Observation

Examinations will be observed, through on-site visits, at least every sixth exam or every third year. The names of the observers will be announced by the ESR at least one month prior to the exam. Date suggestions / invitations for an observation have to be provided by the host society to the ESR preferably six months prior to the exam at the latest.

Costs for observation need to be covered by the subspecialty society. The ESR will try to appoint observers who are either participating in the relevant events or involved in other ways, in order to ensure limited costs of observation. Observers must be invited to pre- and post-examination panels and examiner meetings, and they must be provided with all examination-related information including case material, scoring system, results, etc.

Obligations of the observers:

- Collect all relevant information in order to be able to evaluate the exam according to the endorsement criteria
- Visit all examiners' meetings, both pre-and post-examination attend at least 10% of all examinations and examination parts
- Meet the persons responsible for the examination
- Evaluate the suitability of the test material of all examination sections
- Interview at least two candidates
- Interview at least two examiners
- Evaluate if the examination has proceeded according to the endorsement criteria

Rights of the observers:

- Access to all areas of and equipment/materials used in the examinations, prior to, during, and after the actual examination
- Access to all information necessary to evaluate if the examination has proceeded according to the endorsement criteria
- Access to all examiners' meetings, both pre-and post-examination (information about dates in due time)
- Access to all persons involved in the examination process, including but not limited to those responsible for the examination
- Access to the candidates
- Receipt of examination time schedule
- Receipt of a list of candidates
- Receipt of a list of examiners

8. Reporting

Basic information must be provided to the ESR Office (see above, to be forwarded to the ESR Board of Directors) at least three months prior to each examination:

- Planned venue
- Planned Date
- Languages used in the examinations
- Lists of all examinees have to be sent to the ESR at least four weeks before an examination takes place. Lists of candidates who passed the exam have to be sent to the ESR before the diplomas are issued, but at the latest four weeks after the examination (see item 4) membership).

Three months after each examination, a short report must be submitted to the ESR including information such as:

- Number of applicants
- Number of candidates
- The pass mark for written and oral parts
- The pass rate of each section and the total pass rate
- Evaluation (basic observations, feedback, weaknesses, and planned improvements)
- The aforementioned statistics have to be provided separately for each language in which the examination was given, as well as for the examination as a whole.

9. Organisational Issues

Equal treatment of candidates is mandatory. Therefore all candidates must have the same eligibility requirements, examination conditions, equipment and most importantly the same length of time to complete the exam. Exceptions for this policy are: exams in different languages and candidates with special needs.

10. Term and Termination

The endorsement will be given for a period of three years. After three years, the endorsement can be renewed, provided that the criteria and requirements described above have been fulfilled. If any gross violations of the criteria are reported to the ESR, endorsement will be revoked before expiration. When an endorsement is revoked, the programme will not be eligible to reapply for ESR endorsement for a period of 2 years.

A request for renewal of the endorsement should be addressed by the subspecialty society to the ESR preferably no later than six months prior to the expiration of the endorsement.

Annex 1 ad 2. Training: Proof of Experience

Name & Address of Subspecialty Diploma Applicant:

ESR Personal ID

Proof of Practice Years

This is to certify that

(Title): _____ (first name:) _____ (last name:) _____

Has been working as supervised staff radiologist in this hospital/institution from _____ to _____.

Name & address of hospital/institution:

Street: _____

Zip Code: _____ City: _____ Country: _____

Official stamp of hospital/institution:

Name and function of undersigned in **block letters** (Authorized representative of department/hospital /institution)

Signature of authorised representative

Annex 2 ad 6. Recommended template:

SUBSPECIALTY SOCIETY

LOGO NAME OF SUBSPECIALTY DIPLOMA

This is to certify that

XY [title, first name, last name of successful candidate]
having satisfied the examination requirements on [month day year] has acquired the [name of
subspecialty diploma].

This qualification attests a standard of in-depth knowledge in the field of [subspecialty] as
outlined in the [subspecialty chapter] of the ESR European Training Curriculum for
Subspecialisation in Radiology.

Title, name, signature of Chairman of the
ESR Board of Directors

Title, name, signature of subspecialty society
President

[name of subspecialty diploma] endorsed by the European Society of Radiology (for the period
of [3 years])

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