

Structure and Use of the Training Manual

To help fistula surgeons develop the knowledge and skills required to competently diagnose and treat patients, the manual covers the full spectrum of obstetric fistula care and is structured into the following sections: 1. *Overview of Female Genital Fistula*; 2. *Preoperative Clinical Management*; 3. *Attainment of Skills in Fistula Surgery*; 4. *Complications of Fistula Surgery*; 5. *Postoperative Care*; and 6. *Audit and Research*.

Before any surgical training commences, trainee surgeons should carefully study all sections of the manual, as well as other recommended learning resources (see Learning Resources; page 239). Along with self-study, in-depth tuition delivered by a trainer/expert fistula surgeon is essential to ensure that the content is fully understood. This should be followed by extensive hands-on experience under the guidance of a trainer/expert fistula surgeon, enabling the trainee to develop surgical expertise.

Development and Assessment of Surgical Skills

Development of surgical skills is covered by 16 modules that have been divided across three ascending levels of competency: Level 1 to Level 3. Each surgical module includes a theoretical and practical component, covering learning objectives, general background information, preoperative assessment, surgery, complications, postoperative management and specific discharge advice. Module 17 in Level 3 is nonsurgical and focuses on the management of a fistula treatment facility.

At the end of each surgical module is a **Performance-Based Assessment** table, which is used after completion of each corresponding procedure to evaluate a trainee's ability and progress. Performance-based assessments should be carried out by the attending trainer/expert fistula surgeon, who assesses the trainee's ability against the respective criteria, either unsatisfactory, satisfactory or good. A module is passed if the trainee's skills are satisfactory or good for all listed criteria and signed off by a trainer/expert fistula surgeon.

Each surgical module contains a **Module Logbook**³ in which trainees should record the procedures they have observed, had direct supervision for or performed independently. Every entry must be signed-off by the attending trainer/expert fistula surgeon, with details of any necessary further training.

Levels of Competency

Trainees progress through the three levels of competency by successfully completing the performance-based assessment for each module and providing evidence of having performed the minimum requisite number of procedures for that level, as outlined below. Evidence of repairs should be provided in the form of a **General Logbook**⁴ meticulously kept by the trainee, verified by an assigned supervisor and available upon request as necessary.

³ See FIGO Fistula Resource Hub (www.figo.org/fistula-resources) for Module Logbook template if additional pages are needed.

⁴ See FIGO Fistula Resource Hub (www.figo.org/fistula-resources) for template.

Level 1

To be considered competent for Level 1, a trainee must successfully pass the respective performance-based assessment for all four modules in Level 1 and have performed a minimum of 50–100 repairs across all modules in Level 1.

Level 2

To be considered competent for Level 2, a trainee must successfully pass the respective performance-based assessment for all nine modules in Level 2 and have performed a minimum of 200–300 repairs across all modules in Level 2.

Level 3

As this level is highly specialised, it is most suited to trainees who spend a significant proportion of their time on fistula treatment in a high-need area, with a varied and challenging caseload. To be considered competent for Level 3, a trainee must successfully pass the respective performance-based assessment for the first three modules in Level 3 and, as there is not a minimum number of repairs, a trainer/expert fistula surgeon will use their discretion to sign off this level. Unlike the surgical modules, to be considered competent in Module 17/Level 3, trainees must demonstrate in discussion with their trainer/expert fistula surgeon a thorough understanding of running and managing a fistula treatment facility.

FIGO Certificate

While surgical competencies might be acquired independently of the FIGO Fistula Surgery Training Initiative, **only trainees enrolled in the Initiative can be awarded a FIGO Certificate.**