



Role Definitions and Qualifications for the Certified Surgical Technologist and Certified First Assistant*

Surgical Technologist

Surgical technologists are allied health professionals who are an integral part of the team of medical practitioners providing surgical care to patients in a variety of settings.

The surgical technologist works under medical supervision to facilitate the safe and effective conduct of invasive surgical procedures. This individual works under the supervision of a surgeon to ensure that the operating room environment is safe, that equipment functions appropriately, and that the operative procedure is conducted under conditions that maximize patient safety.

A surgical technologist possesses expertise in the theory and application of sterile and aseptic technique and combines the knowledge of human anatomy, surgical procedures, and implementation tools and technologies to facilitate a physician's performance of invasive therapeutic and diagnostic procedures.

Surgical Technologist Education

The preferred entry-level education for the surgical technologist is the associate degree, (but it is not required to take the CST certification examination).^{*} All programs are expected to meet the minimal curriculum requirements defined in the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*®. Only accredited programs will be considered to meet the criteria.

^{*}Adopted by the House of Delegates in 1990.

Certified Surgical Technologist (CST)

Surgical technologists are credentialed by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA). The NBSTSA is a member of the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA), a national organization that establishes stringent standards for credentialing examination programs. The NBSTSA's examinations are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) under the auspices of NOCA.

Current requirements mandate that qualified candidates for the certification examination have acquired a certificate or degree from an accredited education program.

All recommended educational and experiential standards are intended to support all requirements established by the NBSTSA for a qualified candidate.

^{*} Adopted by the AST House of Delegates in 1997.

CST Examination Eligibility

A candidate for the certification examination must be a graduate of an accredited surgical technology program.

CST Renewal Requirements

Four-year cycle—Those certifications issued or renewed *after* January 1, 2003.

- Sixty (60) continuing education credits as defined in the *AST Continuing Education Participant Policies*.

Certified Surgical Technologist: Level I

The standards for the Certified Surgical Technologist Level I were developed to offer guidance to surgical technologists functioning in the role of “first scrub” in a variety of specialty areas. These standards are intended to be applicable whether employment is private, group, by physician, or by hospital or other institution.

Competencies

1. Demonstrates knowledge and practice of basic patient-care concepts
2. Demonstrates the application of the principles of asepsis in a knowledgeable manner that provides for optimal patient care in the O.R.
3. Demonstrates basic surgical case preparation skills.
4. Demonstrates the ability to perform the role of first scrub on all basic surgical cases
5. Demonstrates responsible behavior as a health care professional.

Certified Surgical Technologist: Level II (Advanced)

The standards for the Certified Surgical Technologist Level II (Advanced) were developed to offer guidance to surgical technologists functioning as advanced first scrub practitioners in one or more specialty areas. These standards are intended to be applicable whether employment is private, group, by physician, or by hospital or other institution.

Competencies

1. Demonstrates all competencies required for the CST: Level I practitioner
2. Demonstrates advanced knowledge and practice of patient care techniques
3. Demonstrates advanced knowledge of aseptic and surgical technique
4. Demonstrates advanced knowledge and practice in the role of the first scrub
5. Demonstrates knowledge and practice of circulating skills and tasks
6. Demonstrates knowledge related to OR emergency situations
7. Demonstrates advanced organizational skills
8. Demonstrates advanced knowledge in one or two surgical specialty areas
9. Demonstrates a professional attitude

Certified Surgical Technologist: Level III (Specialist)

The standards for the Certified Surgical Technologist: Level III (Specialist) were developed to offer guidance to surgical technologists functioning as advanced first scrub practitioners in one or two specialty areas of in surgical service management areas. These standards are intended to be applicable whether employment is private, group, by physician, or by hospital or other institution.

Competencies

1. Demonstrates all competencies required for the CST: Level II
2. Demonstrates superior knowledge and practice of patient care techniques
3. Demonstrates superior knowledge of aseptic and surgical technique
4. Demonstrates superior knowledge and practice in the role of the first scrub or in the defined management position
5. Demonstrates advanced knowledge and practice of circulating skills and tasks
6. Demonstrates advanced knowledge related to O.R. emergency situations
7. Demonstrates superior knowledge in one or two surgical specialty areas
8. Demonstrates a professional attitude
9. Demonstrates leadership abilities

First Assistant Education

The bachelor's degree is the preferred model for the entry-level surgical first assistant (but it is not required to take the CFA certification examination).^{*} All programs are expected to meet the minimal curriculum requirements defined in the *Core Curriculum for Surgical First Assisting*[®]. Only programs accredited by CAAHEP will be considered to meet the criteria.

^{*} Adopted by the AST House of Delegates in 2001.

First Assistant

As defined by the American College of Surgeons, the first assistant provides aid in exposure hemostasis, and other technical functions that will help the surgeon carry out a safe operation with optimal results for the patient.

The first assistant works under the direction and supervision of the surgeon and in accordance with hospital policy and appropriate laws and regulations.

The NBSTSA also offers the national first assistant certifying examination.

CFA Examination Eligibility (effective January 1, 2004)

To be eligible for testing, an individual must fulfill the criteria in one of the two following options:

- Current CST plus 350 verified cases and two full years of first assistant experience during the last four years
- Graduate of a CAAHEP-accredited surgical assistant program,

CFA Renewal Requirements

Four-year cycle—Those certifications issued or renewed **after** January 1, 2003.

- Seventy-five (75) continuing education credits

First Assistant: Entry-Level

The standards for the First Assistant: Entry-level roles were developed to offer guidance to surgical technologists functioning as first assistants in a variety of specialty areas.

These standards are intended to be applicable whether employment is private, group, by physician, or by hospital or other institution.

Competencies

1. Demonstrates the principles of safe positioning of the surgical patient
2. Provides visualization of the operative site during the operative procedures
3. Demonstrates the appropriate techniques to assist the surgeon in providing hemostasis
4. Demonstrates the appropriate techniques to assist with the closure of body planes
5. Expedites the operative procedure by anticipating the needs of the surgeon
6. Demonstrates advanced knowledge of normal and pathological anatomy and physiology
7. Demonstrates knowledge of emergency situations
8. Demonstrates superior organizational skills
9. Demonstrates a professional attitude

First Assistant: Generalist

The standards for the First Assistant: Generalist role were developed to offer guidance to surgical technologists functioning as first assistants in a variety of specialty areas. These standards are intended to be applicable whether employment is private, group, by physician, or by hospital or other institution.

Competencies

1. Demonstrates the principles of safe positioning of the surgical patient
2. Provides visualization of the operative site during the operative procedure
3. Demonstrates the appropriate techniques to assist the surgeon in providing hemostasis
4. Demonstrates the appropriate techniques to assist with the closure of body parts
5. Expedites the operative procedure by anticipating the needs of the surgeon
6. Demonstrates advanced knowledge of normal and pathological anatomy and physiology
7. Demonstrates knowledge of emergency situations
8. Demonstrates superior organizational skills
9. Demonstrates a professional attitude

First Assistant: Specialist

The standards for the First Assistant: Specialist role were developed to offer guidance to surgical technologists functioning as first assistants in a specialty area. These standards are intended to be applicable whether employment is private, group, by physician, or by hospital or institution.

Competencies

1. Demonstrates all competencies required for the First Assistant: Generalist
2. Demonstrates advanced knowledge in the anatomy and physiology related to their specialty area
3. Demonstrates advanced knowledge in the surgical pathology and related procedures related to their specialty area
4. Demonstrates advanced knowledge of patient care techniques related to their specialty area