



**AST CONTINUING EDUCATION
POLICIES FOR THE CST® AND CSFA®**

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INTRODUCTION

The *AST Continuing Education Policies for the CST and CSFA* is provided for CSTs and CSFAs participating in continuing education (CE). CSTs, CSFAs and providers should adhere to these high standards established by the profession to ensure the ongoing educational development of individual practitioners and to demonstrate to the public the profession's commitment to providing the highest level of quality surgical patient care.

The Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) is recognized by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) as the responsible authority for the approval of CE for the CST and CSFA, including responsibility for CE credit processing and maintenance, which is subject to NBSTSA audit or verification. The NBSTSA is the responsible authority for all aspects of the certification process including examination eligibility criteria, examination fees, renewal requirements and renewal fees.

AST and the NBSTSA work collaboratively on the development of the *Continuing Education Policies for the CST and CSFA*.

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AST CE MISSION, GOALS, & RESPONSIBILITIES

AST CE Mission

AST supports quality surgical patient care by promoting the completion of CE to assure the public, certifying bodies and other health professionals that CSTs and CSFAs are maintaining current standards in the field of surgical technology and surgical first assisting.

AST CE Goals

AST will:

1. Analyze and up-date the CE policies on a periodic basis to reflect policy changes and current trends.
2. Develop and deliver CE that improves the knowledge and skills of the CST and CSFA.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the CE offerings in meeting the needs of the CSTs and CSFAs.

Role and Responsibilities of AST

AST recognizes and establishes the CE credit as the standard for all CE programs and enduring materials that are completed by the CST and CSFA. AST reviews CE programs and enduring materials for adherence to the AST CE policies, and **only** those CE programs and enduring materials approved by AST will be awarded CE credits.

Responsibility of the CST and CSFA

It is the **responsibility** of the CST and CSFA to know if a CE program or enduring material offered by a business or organization is AST approved for CE credits. **Only** CE credits earned by attending AST sponsored or approved programs or completing an AST sponsored or approved enduring material activity will be applied towards re-certification.

SUBMITTING YOUR CE CREDITS TO AST

Two-Step Process of Renewing the Credential

Renewing the CST or CSFA credential is a two-step process for members and non-members:

1. Submit the AST CE Reporting Form with verifying documentation to AST.
2. Submit the NBSTSA CST or CSFA Renewal Application to the NBSTSA (applications available at <http://www.nbstsa.org>)

Member

1. Submit the AST CE Reporting Form. Include verifying documentation of **all** CE credits reported (e.g., certificates of completion, certificates of attendance). The CE Reporting Form and documentation can be mailed, sent by FAX, or scanned and sent as an E-mail attachment to AST (see page 20 for mailing address, FAX number, and E-mail address).
 - a. A copy of the certificate of attendance provided by a state assembly for attending a meeting **must** be submitted in order for the CE credits to be recorded.
2. An AST CE Credit Letter indicating the number of CE credits that were recorded will be sent to you for the following types of CE: hard copy of AST CE exams from the journal *The Surgical Technologist*; hard-copy of AST CE courses, e.g. CE packages; certificates of attendance for AST approved events; certificates of completion for AST approved CE courses offered by proprietary CE providers. This letter **should** be kept with your personal CE records.
3. AST on-line CE offering is processed by AST independently from other CE credits and **must not** be submitted with a CE Reporting Form; the CE credits are automatically recorded for the AST member. Additionally, the member has the option of printing a

certificate of completion for his/her own records. Visit the AST CE Resource Center at the AST web site to earn quality CE credits on-line.

4. CE credits earned at the AST Annual National Conference and other AST sponsored programs will be **automatically processed** and recorded for the member. A CE Credit Letter will be sent to you and should be kept with your personal CE records.
5. It is **recommended** to have all CE credits submitted to AST **three to six months** prior to the certification expiration date.

Nonmember

1. Submit the AST CE Reporting Form **three to six months** prior to recertification date; include the non-member fee of \$400.
2. Include verifying documentation of **all** CE credits reported (e.g., certificates of completion, certificates of attendance). The AST CE Reporting Form and documentation can be mailed, sent by FAX or scanned and sent as an E-mail attachment to AST (see page 20 for mailing address, FAX number, and E-mail address).
3. After your CE credits are processed, AST will send you a CE Credit Letter indicating the number of CE credits that were accepted. A copy of the CE Credit Letter **must** be submitted with the NBSTSA CST or CSFA Renewal Application to the NBSTSA.

Fees**Member**

- Submit AST CE Reporting Form with verifying documentation

Nonmember

- Submit AST CE Reporting Form with verifying documentation one time per certification cycle **three to six months** prior to recertification date and the \$400 non-member CE processing fee.

Member and Non-member: Proprietary CE Provider Processing Fee

CE credits earned through a proprietary CE provider are subject to a processing fee. The fee does **not** apply to: in-services; AST sponsored programs and enduring materials; state assembly meetings; college courses; physician non-profit organization's programs; AST approved programs offered by other non-profit health organizations.

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|------|
| * 1 – 10 CE credits | \$15 processing fee | * 31 – 40 | \$60 |
| * 11 – 20 | \$30 | * 41 – 50 | \$75 |
| * 21 – 30 | \$45 | * 51+ | \$90 |

Important Notice

If membership lapses for more than 90 days the CE credits earned while a member are maintained by AST, and can be applied towards renewal of the credential. However, CE credits earned as a non-member are subject to the non-member CE processing fee of \$400 when submitted to AST.

Appeal Process

To appeal a decision concerning the denial of CE credit(s) a written letter, hard copy or E-mail, **must** be submitted to the AST Continuing Education Department. If the original decision is upheld, a second appeal may be made to the AST Education & Professional Standards Committee who will make the final decision. Decisions regarding CE credits from non-approved CE programs and courses are not appealable.

DEFINITIONS

AST Definition of CE

CE is a **formal, planned, and structured learning experience** that is identifiable and can be measured through awarding of CE credits, the purpose of which is to enhance the competency of the CST and CSFA to foster the development of the profession.

CE Program

A CE program is defined as a live program including but not limited to healthcare facility sponsored in-services; conferences; forums; seminars; symposiums; or workshops in which the CST and CSFA attend CE lectures.

Commercial Interest Organization

A commercial interest organization (CIO), also referred to as a healthcare manufacturer, is an organization that produces, markets, sells, or distributes healthcare goods or services consumed by or used on patients; or is owned or operated, in whole or in part, by an organization that produces, markets, sells, or distributes healthcare good or services consumed by or used on patients; or advocates for the use of the products or services of a CIO.

Enduring Material

Enduring material is defined as a non-live CE offering including but not limited to CE articles delivered hard-copy or electronically that have a post-article CE exam; viewing a recorded CE lecture on-line, CD, DVD or other electronic means that has a post-article CE exam.

Proprietary CE Provider

Proprietary CE providers are businesses (non-healthcare manufacturer) that offer CE programs and/or enduring materials.

Stand-Alone Event

A single live event (conference, forum, symposium, workshop) that is planned, sponsored and offered by an organization or business that is separate from healthcare facility in-services.

AST CE CREDIT VALUE FOR IN-SERVICES, LIVE EVENTS, COMMITTEE

ACTIVITIES, INSTRUCTION AND RECORDED LECTURES

1. One CE credit equals 50 – 60 minutes of activity for live events or viewing a recorded CE lecture and completing the post-lecture CE exam.
2. Partial CE credits are accepted by AST. However, the CE activity **must** be a minimum of 30 minutes (0.5 CE credits). Partial CE credits are accepted in 15 minute increments past the required minimum of 30 minutes. For example, an activity that is one hour and fifteen minutes will be awarded 1.25 CE credits.
3. When possible the lectures provided at CE programs will be combined in order to award the maximum number of CE credits as long as the lectures are subject related. For example, an orthopedic seminar offers several lectures that are 15 minutes in length; the

lectures will be combined to determine the total number of CE credits that will be accepted by AST.

METHODS TO EARN CE CREDITS AND DOCUMENTATION

CE credits can be earned through the following methods: attendance to AST State Assembly meetings; authoring CE articles for health-related publications; surgical missions; healthcare facility live in-services; CE lectures and instructor at workshops; approved CIO live events; completion of approved enduring material; college courses. Additionally, participation on the following national boards, national standing committees or panels as well as completion of volunteer assignments may also be acceptable forms of CE if they are determined to involve substantial contributions to professional efforts related to education, certification, research and guidelines development: ARC/STSA; Core Curriculum Revision Panel; CST Study Guide Revision Panel; CSFA Study Guide Revision Panel; Education & Professional Standards Committee; Examination Review Committee – CST; Examination Review Committee – CSFA; Item Writers Committee; Job and Task Analysis Committee.

Important Notice

1. CE activities in which CE credits are earned **must** be relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting.
2. CIO Continuing Education:
 - a. The CE credits offered by CIO's at their sponsored live events are accepted as long as the live event has been approved by AST.
 - b. The CE credits for enduring material developed and offered by CIO's is **not** accepted by AST.

AST State Assemblies

1. State assemblies who sponsor a program are required to complete the program approval process in order for participants to receive AST approved CE credits.
2. Participants **should** verify that a state assembly program is AST approved prior to attending the program.
3. **Documentation requirement:** A certificate of attendance signed by an authorized individual who represents the state assembly. The total number of CE credits to be awarded for the program **must** be printed on the certificate.

Activities of AST, ARC/STSA, and NBSTSA Boards, Standing Committees & Panels

1. National boards, standing committees, panels, and individuals that complete volunteer activities are recognized by AST as CE learning opportunities wherein the CST or CSFA learn through their contribution. The types of activities that could be awarded CE credits include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Research and authorship of standards of practice.
 - b. Research and development of CE policies.
 - c. Research and contribution to revisions of the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology* and *Core Curriculum for Surgical Assisting*.
 - d. Research and authorship of educational documents and forms, e.g. student evaluation forms, clinical rotation forms.

- e. Item writing and review for the development of a high-stakes examination or study guide, by researching, drafting, and reviewing potential items, or researching and reviewing currently developed items.
- f. Contribution to a job and task analysis of the surgical technology or surgical first assisting professions.
- g. Research and review of accreditation policies.
- h. Review of AST CE program and enduring material applications (5 CE credits will be awarded for the completion of each application)

Writing for Health-Related Publications

1. When writing a CE article to be published the magazine or journal **must** be a health-related publication. Additionally, the publisher **must** have a peer-review process in place in order to determine if the CE article meets the publishing standards of the magazine or journal.
2. CE credit will **only** be awarded for the initial publication of a CE article.
3. Four CE credits are awarded per 2,000 type written words. CE credits are awarded in increments of 500 words, e.g. 2,500 words equal 5.0 CE credits.
 - a. The CE article **must** be a minimum of 2,000 type-written words.
 - b. The word count does **not** include the post-article CE exam, reference page or bibliography.
4. **Documentation requirement:** The CE credits will be automatically entered for CSTs and CSFAs that write CE articles for the AST journal, *The Surgical Technologist*. CSTs and CSFAs that write a CE article for other magazines and journals **must** submit an official, published copy of the article that has your name printed as the lead author, name of the

magazine or journal, date of publication, and volume number

Surgical Missions

1. Surgical mission trips are accepted by AST for CE credits.
 - a. One time per four-year certification cycle the CST or CSFA may submit a surgical mission trip to AST for CE credits. The surgical mission trip is awarded 10 CE credits **no matter** the length of the mission.
 - b. **Documentation requirement:** The AST Surgical Mission verification form **must** be completed by the CST or CSFA including authorized signature of the mission team leader, and a copy submitted with the CE Reporting Form. Incomplete forms will be returned.

Healthcare Facility Live In-Services

1. Healthcare facility live in-services are accepted by AST for CE credits.
 - a. In-service training is a key component of CE for all surgical technologists and surgical first assistants. Healthcare facility sponsored live in-service is defined by AST as:
 - (1) training that is developed and planned by the healthcare facility, and offered at no cost to the CST and CSFA that does not require the employees to complete a registration form to attend the in-service;
 - (2) training that assists employees in current or new techniques, instrumentation, equipment and procedures;
 - (3) training that may be provided by, but not limited to, the OR supervisor, clinical educator, another employee of the healthcare facility, physician, or a representative of a CIO.

- b. AST will **not** accept in-services organized or sponsored by a CIO or their representatives that has a formal registration process and/or fee (referred to as a stand-alone event), where the employer's role is only providing access to the healthcare facility as a venue. In those instances, CIOs and other third-party businesses are required to adhere to AST's continuing education policies and complete the CE program approval process.
 - c. CE provided by a proprietary CE provider that has contracted with a healthcare facility **must** be approved by AST.
2. BLS, ACLS and PALS are accepted for CE credits. Additionally, courses completed to be a BLS, ACLS, or PALS instructor are accepted for CE credits.
 3. Healthcare facility orientation is **not** accepted for CE credits.
 4. If an employer sponsors or provides funds for an employee(s) to attend a conference, forum, seminar, symposium, or workshop, or complete any other type of CE activity sponsored by an organization other than the employer, the CE activity **must** be AST approved in order to have the CE credits count towards certification renewal.
5. **Documentation requirement options:**
- a. Certificate of Attendance: If a certificate of attendance is submitted the following information **must** be provided on the certificate – name of healthcare facility; date of in-service; title of in-service; name of individual that provided the in-service (lecturer/instructor); signature of healthcare facility's Clinical Educator or other approved individual; signature of CST or CSFA attendee.

- b. Other accepted options: The sign-in sheet for the in-service is accepted; it **must** have the signature of the CST or CSFA attendee. Also acceptable is an official healthcare facility transcript of the in-services the CST or CSFA has attended.

Instruction of Health Professionals

1. This method for earning CE credits does **not** apply to those CSTs and CSFAs who provide lectures or lab/clinical demonstrations as part of their job duties, such as educators, preceptors and medical sales representatives.
2. This method for earning CE credits applies to CSTs and CSFAs that provide CE lectures at an AST approved CE program, serve as instructors during an AST approved CE workshop, e.g. wound closure workshop at a state assembly meeting or employer sponsored in-service.
3. CST and CSFA presenters and instructors will receive CE credits for the initial preparation and presentation of a topic. Two CE credits will be awarded for the initial preparation of the presentation. The lecture or workshop **must** last a minimum of 30 minutes. For example, if a lecture lasts 45 minutes the CST or CSFA presenter would be awarded a total of 2.75 CE credits. However, if the lecture is repeated at a future program CE credits are **only** awarded for the length of the lecture.
4. **Documentation requirement:** For AST sponsored programs such as the Annual National Conference, forums or workshops, the CST and CSFA presenter or instructor

does **not** need to submit documentation as proof of providing a CE lecture or serving as a workshop instructor; AST will **automatically** enter the CE credits for the individual.

However, CSTs and CSFAs that present a CE lecture or serve as an instructor at a non-AST sponsored program including a state assembly meeting **must** submit a copy of the program agenda that includes their name as presenter and title of the presentation or workshop as well as length of the activity.

Professional Organizations

1. AST accepts the CE credits offered at live events (e.g., conferences, forums, symposiums, workshops), including *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)*TM, that are offered by organizations who are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) or the organization's live event is approved by a separate organization that is ACCME accredited. Additionally, CE credits offered at live events that are approved through the American Dental Association's Continuing Education Recognition Program (ADA-CERP) and the Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO) are accepted by AST.
2. **Documentation requirement:** A certificate of attendance signed by an authorized individual who represents the organization. The total number of CE credits to be awarded for the program **must** be printed on the certificate.

CIO Live Events

1. AST accepts the CE credits offered at stand-alone, live events (forums, workshops) planned and sponsored by CIOs.
 - a. The event **must** be AST approved in order for the CE credits to be accepted and the

CIO is responsible for communicating to attendees if the event is approved.

2. **Documentation requirement:** A certificate of attendance and the following information **must** be provided on the certificate – name of CIO; date of event; title of event; authorized signature of CIO representative; number of CE credits; blank line for CST or CSFA signature.

Enduring Material

1. Enduring material is self-directed learning in which the CST and CSFA independently completes CE activity that is approved for CE credits by AST.
2. Methods of enduring materials include but are not limited to CE articles and completing a post-article CE exam that are offered hard-copy or electronically; viewing recorded lectures and completing a post-lecture exam that are offered on-line, CD, DVD, video tape or other electronic means.
3. Participants should verify that the enduring material activity is AST approved prior to completing.
 - a. AST does **not** accept enduring material CE provided by CIOs.
4. CE credits are awarded as follows for completion of CE articles or courses; the CE article or course must be a minimum of 2,000 words in length:
 - a. 2,000 – 2,499 words equals 1.0 CE credits; 2,500 – 2,999 words equals 1.25 CE credits; 3,000 – 3,499 words equals 1.5 CE credits; 3,500 – 3,999 words equals 1.75 CE credits; and so forth.

b. The word count does **not** include the post-article CE exam, reference page or bibliography.

5. **Documentation requirement:** AST members and non-members refer to “Submitting Your CE Credits to AST” for information as related to submitting AST sponsored enduring material activities for CE credits.

Upon completion of an enduring material activity offered by a proprietary CE provider or non-profit organization the CST and CSFA **must** submit the certificate of completion provided by the proprietary CE provider or non-profit organization with the AST CE Reporting Form.

6. **Proprietary CE provider processing fee:** CE credits earned through proprietary CE providers are subject to a processing fee (fee does **not** apply to in-services; AST sponsored programs and enduring materials; state assembly meetings; college courses; physician non-profit organization’s programs; AST approved programs offered by other non-profit health organizations).

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------|------|
| a. 1-10 CE credits | \$15 processing fee | d. 31-40 | \$60 |
| b. 11-20 | \$30 | e. 41-50 | \$75 |
| c. 21-30 | \$45 | f. 51+ | \$90 |

College Credit

- College courses submitted for CE credits **must** be completed with a grade of “C” or better.
- The following information pertains to the acceptance or non-acceptance of college courses for CE credits:
 - The courses **must** be completed at an institution that is accredited by an organization

recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

- b. College courses **must** be relevant to healthcare, surgery, surgical technology and/or surgical first assisting.
 - c. Surgical first assistant college courses submitted for CE credit(s) **must** be completed at a CAAHEP accredited surgical first assistant program.
 - d. General nursing and physician assistant college courses that are not specifically related to the medical – surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting will **not** be accepted for CE credits.
 - e. The completion date is used to determine if the course was completed as an AST member. If completed as a non-member, the \$400 non-member processing fee must be submitted.
3. The following college subjects/courses are **not** accepted for CE credit(s): astronomy; communication; computer; fine arts; geography; geology; history; literature; philosophy; physical education; political sciences; and religion.
 4. The following is a list of broad college subjects to provide guidance as to the courses that could be accepted for CE credit(s):
 - a. Advanced anatomy & physiology
 - b. Advanced microbiology
 - c. Advanced pathophysiology
 - d. Advanced pharmacology
 - e. Chemistry (including organic chemistry and biochemistry)

- f. Embryology
 - g. General biology
 - h. Genetics
 - i. Healthcare human resources
 - j. Healthcare management and business
 - k. Mathematics
 - l. Physics
 - m. Psychology (including abnormal psychology, clinical psychology, developmental psychology and neuropsychology)
 - n. Sociology
 - o. Teaching methods
5. College courses will be awarded 5 CE credits for each semester hour completed.
Example: 3 college credit semester course: $3 \times 5 = 15$ CE credits.
 6. College courses submitted as quarter hours will be converted to an equivalent number of semester hours; quarter hour $\div 1.5 =$ semester hour.
 7. **Documentation requirement:** Unofficial college transcript – **no exceptions made.**
Recommendation: Please submit a copy of the course description(s) from the college/university catalog.

Important Notice Concerning Training Provided by Employer & Work Experience

CE credits are **not** awarded for on-the-job training and work experience that the CST and CSFA completes as an employee of the facility providing the training. Example, CST completes on-the-job training in learning the first scrub role to be a member of the healthcare facility's

cardiovascular team. This training is distinct from attending employer sponsored in-services which is described on pages 14 – 15.

FILLING OUT THE CONTINUING EDUCATION REPORTING FORM

Type or use black or blue ballpoint pen. Fill in all blanks.

Credits Earned on Month and Year

1. CE credits **must** be earned within the four-year certification cycle. CE credits earned over the required number to renew the CST or CSFA credential **cannot** be applied to the next certification cycle.

Provider Name

1. List the name of the organization or business that sponsored the CE program or enduring material activity.

Educational Activity

1. List the specific title of the CE program or enduring material activity.

Location

1. List the city and state where the CE program took place.

Number of CE Credits

1. List the total number of CE credits earned.

Signature

1. Sign the form.

SUBMITTING CE REPORTING FORM AND DOCUMENTATION

1. Documentation can be mailed, sent by FAX, or sent as an E-mail attachment.
 - a. Mailing Address: AST; Member Services Dept.; 6 West Dry Creek Circle; Suite 200; Littleton, CO 80120.
 - b. FAX to the attention of Member Services Department: (303) 694 – 9169.
 - c. E-mail: memserv@ast.org
2. Member and non-member include the proprietary CE provider processing fee if necessary.
3. Non-members include the \$400 non-member processing fee.
4. Allow 7 – 10 business days for processing CE credits.
5. **Incomplete forms will be returned.**

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