

**Adopted BoD May 29, 2024**

**AST Position Statement on Minimum Education for Surgical Technologists**

A profession’s educational base is the cornerstone of its growth and development. Providing competent, humanistic, and safe patient care as a Certified Surgical Technologists (CST) demands a broad area of knowledge and intellectual skills as well as technical proficiency. The increasing complexity of surgical therapies and the expanding role of the CST require the ability to adapt to new roles and technologies. This includes applying the skills in other healthcare facility departments demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. These increasing responsibilities demand a broadly based educational curriculum provided by accredited programs with a foundation in both the medical sciences and liberal arts. To remain on par with other health care professions, AST declares the associate degree in surgical technology to be the educational model for entry-level practice.

To maintain the expectation of students completing an associate degree, AST supports the surgical technology program accreditation process administered by the Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA), a collaborative effort of AST and the American College Surgeons (ACS) under the auspices of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Accreditation confirms that a program has attained high standards in surgical technology education that is to the benefit of the public, healthcare community, and students. AST supports that surgical technology programs should be accredited, and students should attend an accredited program to be able to learn the skills needed to provide safe, quality patient care.

Completing an accredited program ensures the graduate is eligible to take the surgical technology certification examination offered by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA), an independent body consisting of a collaborative effort of representative CSTs, a surgeon, and a public member. AST fully supports the NBSTSA surgical technology national certifying examination and its value to the CST, the public, the healthcare community, and the healthcare institutions. AST considers the CST credential as the established national credential and individuals who perform the role and duties of the surgical technologist should attain the credential. Healthcare employers should take into consideration when hiring an individual that they have attained the CST credential and should achieve the goal of only employing individuals with the CST credential.

It is the position of AST that the official title of health care professionals in the profession of surgical technology is “surgical technologist” that is nationally recognized by the ARC/STSA including the collaborating sponsors ACS and CAAHEP, and the NBSTSA who awards the CST credential for those who pass the national surgical technology certifying examination. The primary role of CSTs is the first scrub role that is considered an essential function as a member of the sterile surgical team and individuals fulfilling this role are considered as practicing surgical technology. Not all healthcare facilities and organizations use the correct title of the profession. Therefore, AST advocates that health care professionals who practice surgical technology be properly titled surgical technologist and the correct title of those who have passed the certifying examination and maintain their certification is Certified Surgical Technologist.

*Therefore, be it resolved*, because of the important roles that CST’s fulfill in the operating room as well as in other healthcare facility departments and the workforce shortage that has placed additional pressure on healthcare facilities to continue to meet the patient workload in the surgery department, it is that much more imperative that the healthcare facilities hire graduates of a surgical technology program that is programmatically accredited by an organization that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

*Be it resolved*, for CSTs to safely function in a direct patient care role, surgical technology education must maintain a high level of educational standards. Quality surgical technology education must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:

* Comprehensively deliver content that is outlined in the current edition of the AST *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*. The program curriculum must meet the content and competencies as stated in the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*.
* Demonstrate the curriculum content achieves the goals of the program. The program must have course syllabi that include the course description, the course objectives, the methods of evaluation, the topic outline, and the competencies the student must achieve to graduate from the program.
* The curriculum must be established in a sequence of classroom, laboratory, and clinical activities that meet the requirements of the current edition of the AST *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*.
* Completion of the in-person (live), interactive Lab Skills Assessments and Clinical Rotation Case Requirements as stated in the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*.
* The program length should be sufficient to ensure students can meet the program curriculum requirements.
* Maintain programmatic accreditation or in the process of seeking initial accreditation through a U.S. Department of Education or The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) approved accreditor.

*Be it resolved*, that graduates of accredited surgical technology programs have attained a high-level of critical thinking and multitasking skills that are applied daily to provide safe patient care that on-the-job trained individuals will not be able to attain. Competent and humanistic practice as a CST demands a broad area of knowledge and the development of intellectual skills combined with technical proficiency that only graduates of accredited programs can achieve.

*Be it resolved*, that the safest patient care can only be provided by an individual that has attained the title of “surgical technologist” who has met the educational standards of an accredited program and has successfully passed the NBSTSA certification examination to earn the “CST” credential.