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

**TWO-YEAR CERTIFICATION CYCLE**

## INTRODUCTION

The *AST Continuing Education Policies for the CST and CSFA* is provided for CSTs and CSFAs participating in continuing education (CE) to recertify. CSTs, CSFAs, and CE 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 authority responsible for the approval of CE for the CST and CSFA, including responsibility for CE credit processing and maintenance that is subject to NBSTSA audit or verification. The NBSTSA is the authority responsible for all aspects of the certification process, including examination eligibility criteria, examination fees, recertification requirements, and recertification fees.

AST and 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 certifying bodies, public, and other health professionals that CSTs and CSFAs are maintaining current standards in the professions of surgical technology and surgical first assisting.

### AST CE Goals
AST will:
    a) analyze and update the CE policies on a periodic basis to reflect policy changes and current trends,
    b) develop and deliver CE that improves the knowledge and skills of the CST and CSFA, and
    c) 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 CE CREDITS TO AST

### Two-Step Process of Renewing the Credential
Recertifying is a two-step process for members and non-members.
    a) Submit the *AST CE Reporting Form* with verifying documentation to AST.
    b) Submit the NBSTSA CST or CSFA Recertification Application to NBSTSA. The applications are available at http://www.nbstsa.org.

### Member
    a) Submit the *AST CE Reporting Form*. Include verifying documentation of **all** CE credits reported, for example, certificates of attendance and certificates of completion. The *AST CE Reporting Form* and documentation can be mailed or scanned and sent as an email attachment to AST (see page 14 for mailing address and email address).
       1. Upon attendance to a State Assembly meeting, confirm if the certificate of attendance must be submitted to AST or the CE credits will be automatically recorded. The certificate of attendance is **not** required to be submitted with an *AST CE Reporting Form* if mailing or emailing the certificate to AST.
    b) AST online CE offerings are recorded by AST independently from other CE credits and are **not** required to be submitted with an *AST CE Reporting Form*. The CE credits are

automatically recorded for the AST member. The member has the option of printing a certificate of completion for their own records.

c) An AST CE Credit Letter indicating the number of CE credits that were accepted will be mailed to the CST or CSFA. This letter **should** be kept on file with personal CE records.

d) CE credits earned at the AST Annual Surgical Technology Conference and Surgical Technology Educators Conference will be **automatically** recorded for the member. A separate AST CE Credit Letter will be mailed to the CST or CSFA and should be kept on file with personal CE records.

e) It is **recommended** to have all CE credits submitted to AST **six months** prior to the certification expiration date.

## Nonmember

a) The *AST CE Reporting Form* with verifying documentation is required to be submitted one-time per certification cycle. It is recommended that the form and documentation is submitted **six months** prior to the recertification date. The $200 nonmember CE processing fee must also be submitted with the form.

b) Include the verifying documentation of **all** CE credits reported on the *AST CE Reporting Form*, for example, certificates of attendance and certificates of completion.

c) The *AST CE Reporting Form* and documentation can be mailed or scanned and sent as an email attachment to AST (see page 14 for mailing address and email address).

d) After the CE credits are processed, an AST CE Credit Letter indicating the number of CE credits that were accepted will be mailed. A copy of the AST CE Credit Letter **must** be submitted with the NBSTSA CST or CSFA Renewal Application to the NBSTSA. It is **recommended** that the original copy of the AST CE Credit Letter be kept on file with personal CE records.

## Important Note

If membership lapses for more than 90 days, the CE credits earned while a member are maintained by AST and can be applied towards recertification. However, CE credits earned as a non-member are subject to the non-member CE processing fee of $200 when submitted to AST.

## Appeal Process

To appeal a decision concerning the denial of CE credit(s) a written letter, hard copy, or email, **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

## Continuing Education

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

## CE Program

A CE program is defined as a live program including conferences, forums, healthcare facility sponsored in-services, 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 and 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 goods or services consumed by or used on patients, or advocates for the use of the products or services of a CIO.

## Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning or enduring material is defined as a non-live CE offering, in which the CST and CSFA independently completes a CE activity that is AST approved. Activities may include CE articles or courses delivered hard-copy or electronically that have a post-article exam.

## Proprietary CE Provider

Proprietary CE providers are non-healthcare businesses that offer CE programs and enduring materials.

## Stand-Alone Event

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

## TWO-YEAR CERTIFICATION CYCLE

a) **NOTE –** If you earn the CST or CSFA credential or recertify on January 1, 2020, or after, you will be in a two-year certification cycle.
   1. **Example if in a two-year cycle –** If your four-year certification expires June 2022, you will recertify with 60 (CST) or 75 CE (CSFA) credits and will begin a two-year cycle, 2022 – 2024.
b) **You are required to earn Live CE credits while completing the two-year certification cycle.**
c) **CST –** 30 CE credits must be earned to recertify.
   1. Four of the 30 CE credits **MUST** be Live CE.
d) **CSFA –** 38 CE credits must be earned to recertify.
   1. Eight of the 38 CE credits **MUST** be Live CE.

## Live CE

a) Working collaboratively, AST, ASA, and NBSTSA have approved the following definition of Live CE.
   1. All CE sessions presented at AST-approved conferences, workshops, AST State Assembly meetings, employer in-services, grand rounds, physician professional meetings including live or on-demand CE webinars or videos, and live CE by manufacturers.

b)  Live CE credits processed for recertification earned at those conferences, workshops, State Assembly meetings, employer in-services, physician grand rounds, and physician professional meetings must be approved by AST.

c)  AST will approve Live CE for manufacturers but does not approve on-demand CE webinars or videos.

d)  For documentation requirements when submitting Live CE credits go to https://www.ast.org/Members/AST_CE_Policies.

e)  The requirement for Live CE credits has been implemented to achieve a balance in the methods in which CSTs and CSFAs earn CE credits, and to promote face-to-face discussions with lecturers that contributes to a real-time learning experience.

## METHODS TO EARN CE CREDITS

CE credits can be earned through the following methods.

a)  College courses
b)  Surgical missions
c)  AST approved live events
d)  AST approved CE courses – hardcopy or electronic
e)  Authoring CE articles for health-related publications
f)  CE lecturer or instructor at AST approved live events
g)  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 certification, education, guidelines development, and research.
   1.  ARC/STSA
   2.  CST Study Guide Revision Panel
   3.  NBSTSA Item Writers Committee
   4.  CSFA Study Guide Revision Panel
   5.  NBSTSA Job and Task Analysis Committee
   6.  CST or CSFA Core Curriculum Revision Panel
   7.  NBSTSA Examination Review Committee – CST
   8.  NBSTSA Examination Review Committee – CSFA
   9.  AST Education & Professional Standards Committee

## Important Notes

a)  CE activities **must** be relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting.

b)  Training provided by employer and work experience.
   1.  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. For example, a CST completes on-the-job training to learn the first scrub role to be a member of the surgery department's cardiovascular team. This training is distinct from attending an employer sponsored in-service that is described on pages 9 - 10.

## DESCRIPTIONS OF METHODS TO EARN CE CREDITS

### AST CE Credit Value for a Live Event or Committee Activity

a) One CE credit equals 50 – 60 minutes of activity for live events or viewing an on demand recorded CE lecture and completing the post-lecture exam.

b) 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 15 minutes will be awarded 1.25 CE credits.

c) When possible, the lectures provided at CE programs will be combined to award the maximum number of CE credits, if 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.

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

a) National boards, standing committees, panels, and individuals that complete volunteer activities are recognized by AST as CE learning opportunities, wherein, the CST or CSFA learns through their contribution. The types of activity that could be awarded CE credits include:

1. research and development of CE policies,
2. research and review accreditation policies,
3. research and author guidelines for best practices in surgical technology,
4. research and author educational documents and forms, for example, student evaluation and clinical rotation forms,
5. contributions to the NBSTSA job and task analysis of the surgical technology or surgical first assisting professions,
6. research and contribute to revisions of the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology* and *Core Curriculum for Surgical Assisting*,
7. review AST CE program and enduring material applications, of which, five CE credits are awarded for the completion of each application, and
8. NBSTSA item writing and review for the development of a high-stakes examination by researching, drafting, and reviewing potential items, or researching and reviewing currently developed items.

### AST State Assemblies

a) State Assemblies, who sponsor a program, are required to complete the program approval process for participants to receive AST approved CE credits.

b) Participants **should** verify that a State Assembly program is AST approved prior to attending the program.

c) **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.

## CIO Live Events

a) AST accepts the CE credits offered at stand-alone, live events, planned, and sponsored by CIOs.
   1. The event **must** be AST approved for the CE credits to be accepted. The CIO is responsible for communicating to attendees if the event is approved.
   2. The CE credits for enduring material developed and offered by CIOs are **not** accepted by AST.

b) **Documentation requirement:** A certificate of attendance and the following information **must** be provided on the certificate.
   1. Name of the CIO.
   2. Date of the event.
   3. Title of the event.
   4. The number of CE credits.
   5. A blank line for the CST or CSFA signature.
   6. Authorized signature of the CIO representative.

## College Credit

a) College courses submitted for CE credits **must** be completed with a grade of "C" or better.
b) College courses **must** be relevant to healthcare, surgery, surgical technology, or surgical first assisting.
c) Surgical first assistant college courses **must** be completed at a CAAHEP accredited surgical first assistant program.
d) The courses **must** be completed at an institution that is accredited by an organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
e) The completion date is used to determine if the course was completed as an AST member. If completed as a non-member, the $200 non-member processing fee **must** be submitted.
f) 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.
g) The following college courses or subjects are **not** accepted for CE credit(s).
   1. Astronomy
   2. Computer
   3. Fine arts
   4. Geography
   5. Geology
   6. History
   7. Literature
   8. Philosophy
   9. Physical education
   10. Political science
   11. Religion
h) The following is a list of college subjects to provide guidance as to the courses that could be accepted for CE credit(s).
   1. Advanced anatomy and physiology
   2. Advanced microbiology
   3. Advanced pathophysiology

    4. Advanced pharmacology
    5. Chemistry, including organic chemistry and biochemistry
    6. Communication
    7. Embryology
    8. General biology
    9. Genetics
    10. Healthcare human resources
    11. Healthcare management and business
    12. Mathematics
    13. Physics
    14. Psychology, including abnormal psychology, clinical psychology, developmental psychology, and neuropsychology
    15. Sociology
    16. Teaching methods

i) College courses will be awarded five CE credits for each semester hour completed.
    1. Example: 3 college credit semester course: 3 x 5 = 15 CE credits.
    2. College courses submitted as quarter hours will be converted to an equivalent number of semester hours using the formula, quarter hour ÷ 1.5 = semester hour(s).

j) **Documentation requirement:** Unofficial college transcript – **no exceptions are made.**

k) **Recommendation:** Please submit a copy of the course description(s) from the college or university catalog.

## Healthcare Facility In-Services

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

b) The in-services may be live, recording of a live in-service, or hard copy or online course.

c) BLS, ACLS, and PALS are accepted for CE credits. BLS includes CPR and automated external defibrillator (AED) training. Additionally, courses completed to be a BLS, ACLS, or PALS instructor are accepted for CE credits.

d) CE provided by a proprietary CE provider that has contracted with a healthcare facility **must** be approved by AST.

e) 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 to have the CE credits count towards certification renewal.

f) Healthcare facility orientation is **not** accepted for CE credits.

g) AST will **not** accept in-services organized or sponsored by a CIO, or their representatives, that has a formal registration process and fee, referred to as a stand-alone event, where the

employer's role is only providing access to the healthcare as a venue. In those instances, CIOs and other third-party businesses are required to adhere to AST's CE policies and complete the CE program approval.

h) **Documentation requirement options**
1. Certificate of attendance or completion. If a certificate is submitted, the following information **must** be provided on the certificate.
    i. Name of the healthcare facility.
    ii. Date of the in-service.
    iii. Title of the in-service and the title should contain the word "in-service", for example, "Nailing of Hip Fractures In-Service".
    iv. Name of the individual, instructor, or lecturer, that provided the in-service.
    v. Signature of the healthcare facility's Clinical Educator or other approved individual.
    vi. Signature of the CST or CSFA attendee.
2. Other accepted options
    i. The sign-in sheet for live in-services is accepted and it **must** have the signature of the CST or CSFA attendee.
    ii. Also acceptable is an official healthcare facility transcript of the in-services the CST or CSFA has attended or completed.

## Instructor or Lecturer of Health Professionals

a) This method for earning CE credits applies to CSTs and CSFAs that provide CE lectures at an AST approved CE program, AST sponsored program, serve as instructors during an AST approved CE workshop, for example, a wound closure workshop held at a State Assembly meeting, or employer sponsored in-service.
1. This method for earning CE credits does **not** apply to those CSTs and CSFAs who provide lectures, lab, or clinical demonstrations as part of their job duties, such as educators, medical sales representatives, or preceptors.

b) CST and CSFA instructors or lecturers will receive two CE credits for the initial preparation of the presentation. CE credits are also awarded according to the length of the presentation. The lecture or workshop **must** be 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.

c) **Documentation requirement**
1. For AST sponsored programs, such as the Annual Surgical Technology National Conference or Surgical Technology Educators Conference, the CST or CSFA instructor or lecturer is **not** required to submit documentation as proof of providing a CE lecture or serving as an instructor. AST will **automatically** enter the CE credits for the individual.
2. 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 the length of the activity.

## Professional Organizations

a) AST accepts the CE credits offered at live or on-demand events, for example, conferences, forums, symposiums, and workshops, that are sponsored by an ACCME (Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education) accredited organization, and the event is approved to offer *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™*, or CE credits are accepted if an organization's live or on-demand event is approved to offer *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™* by another ACCME accredited organization.

b) CE credits are accepted for live or on-demand events approved by the ADA-CERP and JCAHPO.

c) **Documentation requirement:** A certificate of attendance signed by an authorized individual who represents the organization. The total number of CE credits to be earned must be printed on the certificate.

## Surgical Mission

a) One time per two-year certification cycle, the CST or CSFA may submit a surgical mission to AST for CE credits.

b) The surgical mission is awarded 10 CE credits **no matter** the length of the mission.

c) **Documentation requirement:** The AST Surgical Mission verification form **must** be completed by the CST or CSFA that includes the signature of the mission team leader, and a copy submitted with the *AST CE Reporting Form*. Incomplete forms will be returned.

## Member and Nonmember: 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 healthcare facility in-services, AST sponsored programs and enduring materials, State Assembly meetings, college courses, physician non-profit organization's programs, and 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 |

## Self-Directed Learning

a) Self-directed learning or enduring material in which the CST and CSFA independently completes a CE activity that is AST approved. The CST and CSFA should verify that the enduring material activity is AST approved prior to completion.
   1. AST does **not** accept enduring material CE provided by CIOs.

b) Methods of enduring material include:
   1. CE articles that includes completing a post-article exam that are offered hard-copy or electronically, or
   2. participating in a self-directed course and completing a post-lecture lecture exam that is offered online or by other electronic means.

c) CE credit value for self-directed learning, such as CE articles or courses, is awarded according to word count.
   1. The article or course must be a minimum of 2,000 words in length, not including headings, titles, post-article exam, reference page, or bibliography.
   2. 2,000 – 2,499 words = 1.0 CE credits

        2,500 – 2,999 words = 1.25 CE credits
        3,000 – 3,499 words = 1.5 CE credits
        3,500 – 3,999 words = 1.75 CE credits

d) **Documentation requirement**
1. AST members and non-members refer to "Submitting CE Credits to AST" on pages 3 - 4 for information as related to submitting AST sponsored enduring material activities for CE credits.
2. Upon completion of an AST approved enduring material activity, the CST and CSFA **must** submit the certificate of completion provided by the non-profit organization or proprietary CE provider with the *AST CE Reporting Form*.

## Writing for Health-Related Publications

a) When writing a CE article for publication, the journal or magazine **must** be a health-related publication. Additionally, the publisher **must** have a peer-review process in place to determine if the CE article meets the publishing standards of the journal or magazine.
b) CE credits will **only** be awarded for the initial publication of a CE article.
c) The CE article **must** be a minimum of 2,000 typewritten words. The word count does **not** include the headings, title of article, post-article exam, bibliography, or references.
1. CE credits are awarded in increments of 500 words. For example, four CE credits are awarded for 2,000 typewritten words or 2,500 words equals 5.0 CE credits.
d) **Documentation requirement**
1. The CE credits will be automatically recorded for CSTs and CSFAs that author CE articles for the AST journal, *The Surgical Technologist*.
2. CSTs and CSFAs that author a CE article for other journals and magazines **must** submit an official, published copy of the article that has the CST's or CSFA's name printed as the lead author, name of the journal or magazine, date of publication, and volume number.

## COMPLETING THE *AST CONTINUING EDUCATION REPORTING FORM*

Type or use black or blue ballpoint pen to complete the form and fill in all blanks.

## Credits Earned on Month and Year

a) CE credits **must** be earned within the two-year certification cycle.
b) CE credits earned over the required number to recertify **cannot** be applied to the next certification cycle.

## Provider Name

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

## Educational Activity

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

## Location

a) List the city and state where the CE program took place.

## Number of CE Credits
    a) List the total number of CE credits earned.

## Signature
    a) Sign the form.

## SUBMITTING THE *AST CE REPORTING FORM* AND DOCUMENTATION

    a) The documentation can be mailed **OR** sent as an email attachment.
        1. AST
           Member Services Department
           6 West Dry Creek Circle
           Suite 200
           Littleton, CO 80120
        2. memserv@ast.org
    b) Members and non-members remember to include the proprietary CE provider processing fee, if necessary.
    c) Non-members remember to include the $200 non-member processing fee.
    d) Allow 7 – 10 business days for the CE credits to be recorded.
    e) **Incomplete forms will be returned.**

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