

A TO Z OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND RECERTIFICATION



THE NATIONAL BOARD
OF SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY
AND SURGICAL ASSISTING



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INTRODUCTION

Who is AST?

The Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) is the national professional organization for surgical technologists. AST's primary purpose is to ensure that surgical technologists have the knowledge and skills to administer patient care of the highest quality by setting standards for education, supporting state and federal legislative efforts, and providing quality continuing education opportunities.

AST

6 West Dry Creek Circle Ste 200

Littleton, CO 80120-8031

800-637-7433

www.ast.org

Email: memserv@ast.org



Business Hours:

8 am-4 pm MST Monday-Friday

Who is the NBSTSA?

The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) oversees all aspects of the national certification examinations, including developing and administering the exams, and grants the CST* and CSFA* credentials to individuals who successfully pass the exam.

NBSTSA

3 West Dry Creek Circle

Littleton, CO 80120-8031

800-707-0057

www.nbstsa.org



THE NATIONAL BOARD
OF SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY
AND SURGICAL ASSISTING

Business Hours:

9 am-3pm MST Monday-Friday

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RECERTIFICATION: TWO WAYS TO RECERTIFY

General Information

AST is responsible for verifying and recording CE credits earned by the CST and CSFA to be applied toward their renewal of the credential. The CE credits are maintained in the member's CE file.

Advantages of Earning CE Credits as an AST Member

- Avoid paying the \$200 nonmember CE processing fee.
- Track earned CE credits online through the Member Dashboard on the AST website.
- Multiple CE credit packages are available at a substantial discount through the AST website.
- A discounted member registration fee is offered for annual AST events, including the National Surgical Technology Conference and Surgical Technology Educators Conference.

Value of a CE Credit

- 50 – 60 minutes of activity equals 1 CE credit.
- Partial CE credits are accepted. The activity **MUST** be a minimum of 30 minutes (0.5 CE credits). Partial CE credits are accepted in 15-minute increments past the 30 minutes.
- Example: Lecture lasts for 1 hour, 5 minutes = 1.25 CE credits.

Submitting CE Credits

Two ways are acceptable for submitting the AST CE Reporting Form with supporting documentation.

- **Mail** to AST, Member Services Dept., 6 West Dry Creek Circle, Suite 200, Littleton, CO 80120-8031
- **E-mail** scanned documentation in PDF format to memserv@ast.org

It is recommended that CE credits are submitted six months PRIOR to recertification.

On average, CE credits are recorded within 10 business days, on a first-come, first-serve basis upon receipt of the CE documentation. Members should plan accordingly.

Two Methods for Members to Confirm CE Credits

1. When CE credits are recorded, a CE Credit Letter confirming the number of CE credits that were accepted and recorded is mailed for personal records.
2. Members may check the AST website, ast.org, by signing into their member account using their login information.

Two-Year Certification Cycle

- **CST** – 30 CE credits must be earned to renew the credential.
 - Total of **four** of the 30 CE credits **MUST** be Live CE.
- **CSFA** – 38 CE credits must be earned to renew the credential.
 - Total of **eight** of the 38 CE credits **MUST** be Live CE.

Live CE

- Working collaboratively, AST and NBSTSA have approved the following definition of Live CE:
“All CE sessions presented at AST-approved conferences, workshops, AST State Assembly meetings, and by manufactures, including live or on-demand CE webinars or videos.”
- 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 real-time learning experience.
- Examples of Live CE that will be accepted and recorded for recertification include the following: Live CE processed for recertification earned at those conference, workshops, state assembly meetings, employer in-services, grand rounds, and physician professions must be approved by AST or otherwise comply with the AST Continuing Education Policies

for the CST and CSFA.

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

AST CE Online Library

• Three Free Online CE Credits Per Year

- Log in to the AST site to complete and earn three free credits per calendar year toward recertification.

• AST Member CE Packages

- Take advantage of AST's CE packages available on the AST site. The packages are available at a substantial AST member discount. No refunds are given and they cannot be applied to another certification cycle.

• Submitting Online CE Credits

- By paying online through your CE shopping cart, the CE credits post to your AST credit history within 24-48 hours after payment.
- You do **NOT** need to submit the certificate of completion or an AST CE Reporting Form if you are submitting and paying for online CE credits.
- **No refund** is given for AST online CE tests, AST live CE videos, or CE credit packages, and they **cannot** be applied to another certification cycle.

– **Available 24/7** at www.ast.org.

AST National Surgical Technology Conference

- **Member:** CE credits are automatically recorded in your AST CE file. A CE credit conference confirmation letter is mailed four to six weeks post-conference for your personal records.
- **Nonmember:** A CE credit conference confirmation letter is mailed four to six weeks post-conference for your personal records. Your conference registration fee includes one year of AST membership.

AST Monthly Journal – *The Surgical Technologist*

The CE article featured in AST's monthly journal provides up-to-date information featuring a relevant surgical topic, as well as the ability to earn one or

more CE credits. There is no expiration date on the articles, and tests may be submitted from the first CE article published in 1980 to the present.

• **Submitting Journal CE Credits**

– Submit the answer sheets to AST with the appropriate payments. Make a copy of the answer sheets for your records. No refunds are given and they cannot be applied to another certification cycle.

▶ **Member:** \$6 per CE credit, not per test. NOTE: If the test is 1.5 CE credits, the fee is \$9. If the test is 2 CE credits, the fee is \$12. If the test is 3 CE credits, the fee is \$18, etc.

▶ **Nonmembers:** \$10 per CE credit, in addition to the \$200 nonmember processing fee.

▶ Do **NOT** submit separate checks for each journal test. Multiple journal tests can be submitted and paid with one check or money order.

▶ Printed on the journal test answer sheet is the month, year, test number, and number of CE credits the test is worth. For example: 1, 2, or 3 CE credits. If it is an older test that doesn't show the number of CE credits, the test is worth 1 CE credit.

▶ You do **NOT** need to submit the AST CE Reporting Form with the journal tests.

• **Reasons Journal Tests are Returned:**

– Overpayment.

– Payment is not included.

– Duplicate: The test(s) were previously submitted and CE credits recorded.

– Failed test: A minimum of 70% must be scored on the test. Review the journal article and resubmit a new answer sheet with the appropriate fee.

State Assembly Meetings

State assemblies provide CE during meetings, as well as serving as the grassroots organization in regard to state legislative efforts. Announcements of state assembly meetings are published in *The Surgical Technologist*, on the states' websites, and the AST website, www.ast.org, under the State Assembly tab. State assemblies also contact state members of upcoming meetings through email and mailings.

• Submitting State Assembly CE Credits

- All state assemblies are required to complete the AST CE program approval prior to the date(s) of the meeting for the CE credits to be approved. The participant should verify that the meeting is AST approved.
- The state assembly is required to provide a certificate of attendance to the participants even if “auto recorded.”
- ▶ Member: Submit a copy of the certificate to AST for processing. The AST CE Reporting Form is not required to be submitted.
- ▶ Nonmember: Submit a copy of the certificate of attendance with the AST CE Reporting Form and \$200 nonmember processing fee.

College Courses

College courses that are relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting can be submitted to AST for CE credits.

- College courses **MUST** be completed with a minimum grade of “C.”
- The courses **MUST** be completed at an institution that is accredited by an organization recognized by the US Department of Education.
- Surgical first assistant college courses submitted for CE credits **MUST** be completed at a CAAHEP-accredited surgical first assistant program.
- 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.
- Anatomy & physiology, microbiology, pathophysiology, and pharmacology must be advanced level college courses.
- **Determining the Number of CE Credits**
 - College courses are awarded five CE credits for each semester hour completed. For example, a three-credit college course: $3 \times 5 = 15$ CE credits.
- **Submitting College Courses for CE Credits**
 - **Member and Nonmember:** Submit an unofficial college transcript from the institution where the courses were completed with the

AST CE Reporting Form – no exceptions.

- **Nonmember:** Include the \$200 nonmember processing fee.

- **Recommendation**

- Provide a copy of the course descriptions from the current edition of the college catalog with the AST CE Reporting Form and transcript(s).
- The descriptions assist in determining the relevancy of the course(s) to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting.

Healthcare Facility Sponsored In-Services

Healthcare facility sponsored in-services can be submitted to AST for CE credits as long as they are relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting. Employers are **NOT** required to submit healthcare facility in-services to AST for approval.

- AST accepts annual mandatory CE in-services relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting. For example: fire safety.
- Healthcare facility orientation is **NOT** accepted for CE credits.
- If the 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 healthcare facility, the program **MUST** be AST approved for the CE credits to count toward certification renewal.
- BLS, ACLS, and PALS are accepted for CE credits. Every 50-60 minutes of activity = 1 CE credit.
 - BLS includes CPR and automated external defibrillator (AED) training.
 - If BLS, ACLS or PALS are live training (not on the computer), then the CE credit can be claimed as live CE.
- CE credits are **NOT** awarded for on-the-job training, healthcare facility orientation, or work experience that the CST and CSFA completes as an employee of the healthcare facility providing the training.

- Example: A CST is completing 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 healthcare facility sponsored in-services as described above.

• **Submitting In-Service CE Credits**

- A healthcare facility certificate of attendance, official healthcare facility transcript, or sign-in sheet with an authorized signature (for example, a surgery department supervisor, clinical educator, or other individual authorized by the employer).
- The documentation must also include the name of the healthcare facility, indicate it’s an in-service, title of in-service, date of in-service, number of CE credits, and signature of the CST or CSFA attendee. The documentation must be submitted with the AST CE Reporting Form.

Other Enduring Material

Enduring material is self-directed learning in which the CST or CSFA independently completes CE activity that is AST approved.

- The enduring material must be AST approved to earn the CE credits. The CST or CSFA is responsible for researching if a CE enduring material offered by a business or organization is AST approved.
- Businesses and organizations that would like to offer CE to the CST and CSFA are required to submit their CE offerings to AST for review and possible approval.
- AST does **NOT** accept enduring material CE offered by healthcare manufacturers.
- Types of enduring materials include CE articles that require completing the post-article exams that are offered hard-copy or electronically; viewing recorded lectures that includes completing a post-lecture exam that are offered on CD, DVD, online; or other electronic means.

• **Submitting Enduring Material CE Credits**

- Upon completion of an AST approved endur-

ing material offered by another business or organization, the CST and CSFA must submit a copy of the certificate of completion provided by the business or organization with the [AST CE Reporting Form](#). The business or organization does **NOT** directly report the CE credits to AST.

- For additional information, please see the AST CE Policies for the CST and CSFA at www.ast.org.

Professional Organizations

AST accepts the CE credits offered at live events (conferences, forums, symposiums, and workshops) that are sponsored by ACCME-accredited organizations and if the event is approved to offer AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s).™ Additionally, CE credits are accepted for live events approved by the ADA-CERP and JCAHPO.

• **Submitting Professional Organization CE Credits**

- The professional organization should provide a certificate of attendance that is signed by an individual designated to represent the organization.
 - The certificate should include the name of the organization, title of event, date(s) of event, name or signature of the CST or CSFA, and number of CE credits.
- **Member:** Include a copy of the certificate with the AST CE Reporting Form.
 - **Nonmember:** Include a copy of the certificate with the AST CE Reporting Form and the \$200 non-member processing fee.

Surgical Mission

CSTs and CSFAs who perform their job duties as a member of a surgical team that performs surgeries during a surgical mission can earn CE credits.

- One time per certification cycle, the CST or CSFA may submit a surgical mission trip to AST for CE credits.
- 10 CE credits are awarded, no matter the length



of the mission.

- The AST Surgical Mission Verification Form must be completed by the CST or CSFA, including an authorized signature of mission team leader. Incomplete forms will be returned.

Writing for Health-Related Publications

The CST or CSFA, who authors a CE article, may be awarded CE credits due to the research that is necessary to write the article.

- When writing a CE article to be published in a journal or magazine, the article must cover a health-related topic.
- The article must meet a peer-review process that determines whether the article meets the publishing standards of the journal or magazine.
- CE credits will only be awarded for the initial publication of an article.
- One CE credit is awarded per 2,000 typed words. Partial CE credits are awarded in increments of 500 words (For example: 2,500 words equals 1.25 CE credits). The word count does NOT include the title of the article, headings, post-article CE exam, reference page, or author's bio.
- **Submitting Publications for CE Credits**
 - *The Surgical Technologist*: The CE credits will be automatically entered for CSTs and CSFAs who

have a CE article published in the AST Journal.

- Other publications: The CST or CSFA must submit an official, published copy of the article that has their name printed as the author, name of the journal or magazine, date of publication, and volume number with the AST CE Reporting Form.

Instruction of Health Professionals

- CSTs or CSFAs who provide a CE lecture may be awarded CE credits.
- This applies to providing a CE lecture at an AST-sponsored event, such as the National Surgical Technology Conference or Surgical Technology Educators Conference, healthcare facility in-services, or serving as an instructor at an AST-approved CE program or workshop, such as a state assembly meeting or wound closure workshop.
- CE credits are not awarded for providing lectures or lab/clinical demonstrations when it is a part of the CST's or CSFA's job duty: ie, educators, medical sales representatives, and preceptors.
- **Awarding CE Credits**
 - The lecture or workshop **MUST** last a minimum of 30 minutes.
 - CST and CSFA presenters and instructors receive 2 CE credits for the initial preparation of a topic.
 - For example: If a lecture lasts 45 minutes, the CST or CSFA presenter would be awarded 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.
- **Submitting CE Credits for Presentation or Instruction**
 - **AST-sponsored programs, such as conferences:** The CST or CSFA presenter **MUST** be a member of AST to be eligible to present. The CST or CSFA is **NOT** required to submit documentation as proof of giving a CE lecture or serving as a workshop instructor. AST will automatically enter the CE credits in the individual's CE file.

- **Other programs:** CSTs and CSFAs that present a CE lecture or serve as an instructor at a non-AST sponsored program, such as a state assembly meeting, must submit a copy of the program agenda with the AST CE Reporting Form. The program agenda **MUST** include the name of the presenter, title of the presentation or workshop, and length of activity.

Why CE Credits Are Not Accepted

CE credits that are not accepted can present a challenge in recertifying if there is not sufficient time left to earn additional CE credits before the expiration date of the credential. **As previously mentioned, it is encouraged to submit CE credits six months prior to the certification expiration date.** This allows time to earn additional CE credits within the certification cycle if CE credits were not accepted and avoid taking the NBSTSA national certification examination to renew the credential. The following are some of the more common reasons for CE credits not being accepted.

• CE Credit Value NOT Met

- If a CST or CSFA attends a lecture or program, or views a recorded CE lecture that is less than 30 minutes. (One CE credit equals 50-60 minutes of activity.)
- Partial CE credits are accepted by AST; however, the CE activity must last a minimum of 30 minutes.
- After 30 minutes, CE credits are accepted in 15-minute increments.

• CE Credits NOT Earned During Current Certification Cycle

- CE credits **MUST** be earned during the current certification cycle.
- CE credits are accepted based on the date of completing the CE activity, **NOT** when the CE activity was purchased, or date submitted to AST.

• CE Activity is NOT Approved by AST

- CE credits were earned by completing a CE activity or attending a CE event that is **NOT** AST approved.

- **CE Reporting Form NOT Submitted with CE Credits**

- CE credits were submitted without a completed CE Reporting Form. The form is available on the AST website, www.ast.org.
- Each CE activity, except for AST-sponsored CE, must be listed on the reporting form. Forms that state “see other pages” or “see transcript” will be sent back.

- **Documentation NOT Included with the CE Reporting Form**

- Documentation verifying completion of CE listed on the CE Reporting Form is **NOT** included when submitted to AST.
- A part from AST-sponsored activities and state assembly meetings, copies of verification documentation must be included with the CE Reporting Form.
- Accepted documentation includes:
 - ▶ certificate of attendance or completion
 - ▶ attendance sign-in sheet for healthcare facility in-services (See previous information regarding healthcare facility sponsored in-services for details.)
- Documentation that is **NOT** accepted includes:
 - ▶ tests
 - ▶ paid receipts
 - ▶ announcements of events
 - ▶ program agenda/brochure

- **CE Activity is NOT Relevant**

- CE credits are returned if it is determined the activity is **NOT** relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting.

- **Previously Completed CE Submitted Again**

- Previously completed CE that was submitted to AST and processed, **CANNOT** be resubmitted for CE credits and will **NOT** be accepted.
- An exception is made for BLS, ACLS, and PALS. Each time the CST or CSFA renews one of those certifications it can be submitted for CE credits.

- **Nonmember Fee NOT Included**

- The nonmember CE processing fee of \$200 is **NOT** included when CE credits are submitted.



NONMEMBER INFORMATION

- CE credits earned **outside** the dates of AST membership are subject to the \$200 nonmember processing fee – **no exceptions.**
- If the CST or CSFA joins AST after earning CE credits, the CE credits are considered nonmember and the \$200 nonmember processing fee must be paid.
- The \$200 fee includes one year of AST membership.
- The \$200 payment **MUST** be included when submitting the AST CE Reporting Form with supporting documentation.
- CE credits are reviewed before the \$200 is charged to a credit card or a check is cashed.
- If some, or all, of the CE credits are not accepted, the CE documentation is returned with the \$200 payment.

Recertifying by Examination

The other route available for renewing the CST or CSFA credential is retaking the NBSTSA national certification examination. For questions and information regarding recertifying by exam, contact the NBSTSA at (800) 707-0057 and select option 1.

The NBSTSA administers the national certification examinations and issues the certifications for CSTs and CSFAs. **AST and NBSTSA** are two separate organizations thus making **recertification a two-step process:**

1. AST processes the CE credits for individuals recertifying by credits.
2. NBSTSA completes the actual recertification, and issues the certification certificate.

For examination questions, contact the NBSTSA at

NBSTSA General Information

The following is general information about renewing your credential through the NBSTSA. For specific questions, contact the NBSTSA or visit www.nbstsa.org.

IMPORTANT: Once the CE credits have been submitted and recorded by AST you are **not** done with the renewal process. The NBSTSA is responsible for the renewal of the credential. A completed NBSTSA Renewal Application Form **must** be submitted to the NBSTSA with the **renewal fee**. Applications are available online at www.nbstsa.org. The NBSTSA issues the new certification certificate.

- Renewal can be completed six months in advance of the expiration date of the certification cycle. However, this does not change the original expiration date/start date of the next certification cycle.
- Proof of earning CE credits does **not** have to be submitted to the NBSTSA. The CE credits that AST recorded can be verified automatically by the NBSTSA. Applications must be received by your expiration date, or the 90-day late renewal policy will apply (see below for additional information).
- All CE credits **must** be earned during the current certification cycle. CE credits earned outside the dates of the certification cycle will **not** be accepted by AST, and there is no extension of the certification cycle. The individual will be required to retake the national certification examination to renew the credential.
- Extra CE credits do **not** “roll” over to the next certification cycle per the NBSTSA policy. As stated previously, CE credits must be earned during the current certification cycle. If you complete the renewal six months or less before the expiration date, it is recommended you wait until the start of the next certification cycle to submit CE credits.

NBSTSA 90-Day Late Renewal Policy

- An individual whose certification has lapsed will be able to renew within 90 days of the expiration of their certification date upon paying a late fee and satisfying the renewal requirements.
- Individuals whose certification has lapsed and who

renew within the 90-day late policy will keep their certification number and will be issued a new certification date from their original certification expiration date, as though they had renewed on-time. The renewal application with fee and penalty fee **must** be received within 90 days of the original expiration for this rule to apply. The CE credits must have been earned within the normal dates of the certification cycle. If the certification has expired, but the required number of CE credits were earned during the certification cycle, the CE credits can be submitted to AST. The nonmember must pay the AST \$200 nonmember CE processing fee.

- After 90 days, the applicant must retake the certification examination and pay the fee for renewal by examination.
- If any discrepancies are found with the new certification card and/or certificate, contact the NBSTSA.

Name Change

Previous or currently certified individuals who have a name change are required to request the change through NBSTSA. The Name Change and/or Replacement Form is available on the NBSTSA website, www.nbtsa.org. Once the NBSTSA updates a name change it will be updated in your AST membership account automatically, therefore, you do NOT need to submit a name change also to AST.

CHECKLIST BEFORE SUBMITTING CE CREDITS TO AST

Use the following as a personal checklist to confirm all steps have been completed prior to submitting CE credits to AST.

- ☐ All CE credits were earned while an AST member
 - ☐ Nonmember: \$200 processing fee included with submission of CE credits
 - ☐ All CE credits were earned during the current certification cycle
 - ☐ CE credits are relevant to the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting
 - ☐ Completed CE Reporting Form
 - ☐ Copies of supporting documentation, for example, certificates of attendance or completion. Keep the originals of the documentation.
 - ☐ The NBSTSA Renewal Application Form with renewal fee to the NBSTSA.

Money orders, personal checks, institutional checks, American Express, Mastercard, and VISA are accepted. Checks need to be made payable to AST.

DEFINITIONS

CE program: A live program including conferences, forums, healthcare facility sponsored in-services, seminars, symposiums, or workshops in which the CST and CSFA attend CE lectures or receive hands-on training.

Enduring material: Non-live offerings including CE article delivered hard-copy or electronically that has a post-article CE exam, viewing a recorded CE lecture online, CD, or other electronic means that has a post-article CE exam. It is a method of self-directed learning in which the CST and CSFA independently completes the CE activity.

Healthcare facility in-service: CE activity that is developed, planned, and provided in-house through the healthcare facility where the CST or CSFA is employed to improve skills or learn about new developments in the medical-surgical practice of surgical technology or surgical first assisting.



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