



## ABHES BULLETIN

To: ABHES-Accredited Institutions and Programs  
Recognized Accrediting Agencies  
State Departments of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
Interested Parties

From: India Y. Tips, Executive Director

Date: February 3, 2020

Subject: Proposed Revisions to ABHES Accreditation Manual – Call for Comment

The Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) regularly reviews its accreditation policies, procedures, and standards and invites your comments regarding the February 2020 proposed revisions to the *Accreditation Manual* provided below.

The proposed revisions to Chapter II incorporate into the *Accreditation Manual* the standard change, announced to ABHES institutions and programs in Memorandums dated July 6, 2016, and July 25, 2018, that all institutions offering ABHES-accredited surgical technology programs would be required to confer an associate degree by July 1, 2020. These memos can be viewed on pages 5 and 6 of this document.

With respect to Chapter VII, the Commission has long held the view that it is in the interest of Surgical Technology students and the public that credentialing exams be nationally recognized and developed by an accredited credentialing agency. Therefore, in order to permit greater flexibility to programs and students, and at the same time remain faithful to ABHES' commitment to high standards, ABHES is proposing to broaden the language in Chapter VII to permit programs to administer an exam by a nationally recognized and accredited credentialing agency.

Changes to the standards are available on pages 3-4 of this document.

ABHES is requesting that you carefully read the proposed revisions and submit any comments and/or recommendations using the following link:

[Call for Comment on Proposed Revisions to the Accreditation Manual – February 2020](#)

Upon receipt and review of any written comments, the Commission may adopt the revision as proposed, adopt the revision with further changes, defer action for additional consideration, or reject the proposed revision. For all adopted revisions, ABHES will establish an effective date and announce the revisions prior to that date.

Proposed Revisions to ABHES *Accreditation Manual* – Call for Comment

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**Comments will be considered at the May 2020 Commission meeting. Please submit comments via the Survey Monkey link above, by Wednesday, March 4, 2020.**

Thank you for your participation.

## CHAPTER II – ELIGIBILITY AND CLASSIFICATIONS

### SECTION A – Eligibility for Application

#### b) Programmatic Eligibility

An organization offering a program in medical assisting, medical laboratory technology, or surgical technology education is eligible to apply for and be considered for programmatic accreditation if it meets the following criteria:

- (1) At the time of application and visit, it has enrollment in the program to allow evaluation of student outcomes. (Does not apply to currently accredited programmatic schools or those institutionally-accredited members seeking initial programmatic accreditation).
- (2) It is (a) a public or private institution at the postsecondary level institutionally accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) whose principal activity is education, (b) a hospital or laboratory-based training school, or (c) a federally-sponsored training program.
- (3) Its program is career focused and designed to lead to employment.
- (4) It is located in the United States or its territories.
- (5) At the time of the visit, the program will have (or have had within the past twelve months) student participation in clinical experience activities, as applicable, to permit evaluation of program operations and of student progress, satisfaction, and retention. In addition, the program will have enrolled students who have completed at least 50 percent of the program, or at least 25 percent of the core coursework. (Note: Does not apply to those institutionally-accredited members seeking initial programmatic accreditation; however, an additional on-site evaluation may be required.)
- (6) The coursework required for graduation, including didactic instruction and externship, provides the following:
  - (a) **Medical Assisting**
    - attainment of entry-level competencies (see MA.A.1. in Chapter VII-MA), and consists of at least a 24-week full-time program of training.
  - (b) **Medical Laboratory Technology**
    - attainment of entry-level competencies (see MLT.A.1. in Chapter VII-MLT), and at least 60-semester credit hours, 90 quarter credit hours, or its recognized clock-hour equivalent (normally two academic years) of training.
  - (c) **Surgical Technology**
    - consistency with the current Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology, produced by the Association of Surgical Technologists ([www.ast.org](http://www.ast.org)). Note: Currently accredited institutional members must adhere to the requirements for programmatic eligibility when adding a surgical technology program, which includes submission of the *Application for Programmatic Accreditation*. At a minimum, a surgical technology program must confer an associate degree.

## CHAPTER VII – ST EVALUATION STANDARDS FOR SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY

### SECTION A – Curriculum, Competencies, and External and/or Internal Clinical Experience

**ST.A.3.**        *The program administers to each ~~cohort of students~~ an examination by a nationally recognized and accredited credentialing agency~~the Certified Surgical Technologists (CST) examination,~~ after completion of curricula content and prior to graduation.*

~~The exam serves as the program’s quality indicator by producing relevant, first time attempt score data which assess curricular quality and overall achievement in the program.~~ Programs must demonstrate 100 percent examination participation and a 70 percent pass rate.

The exam program is proctored consistent with the credentialing agency’s requirements.

### SECTION B – Program Supervision, Faculty, and Consultation

#### Subsection 1 – Supervision

**ST.B.1.**        *The program supervisor is credentialed and experienced in the field.*

Supervisors of a surgical technology program:

- i. hold a credential in the surgical technology field from a nationally recognized and accredited credentialing agency ~~(supervisors of a surgical technology program hired after July 1, 2010, hold the Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) credential);~~
- ii. possess a minimum of three (3) years of operating room experience in the scrub role within the last five (5) years or three (3) years teaching in the field of surgical technology prior to employment; and,
- iii. evidence of continued education and training intended to maintain and enhance their professional knowledge of surgical technology instruction and administrative requirements as well as to promote necessary education, standards, and credentialing required in the surgical technology field (e.g., pursuit of advanced academic degrees and active participation in related state and national membership organizations).

#### Subsection 2 – Faculty and consultation

**ST.B.2.a.**        *Faculty formal education/training and experience support the goals of the program.*

All faculty works under the direction of the program supervisor. Faculty teaching didactic and clinical core (found in the Core Curriculum) courses (i) hold a credential from a nationally recognized and accredited credentialing agency~~the Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) credential if hired after July 1, 2010,~~ and (ii) have within the last five (5) years a minimum of three (3) years of operating room experience or teaching in the field, or a combination of the two prior to hire date.



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## ABHES BULLETIN

TO: ABHES-Accredited Institutions and Programs  
Interested Parties

FROM: Ms. Florence Tate, Executive Director

DATE: July 6, 2016

SUBJECT: Surgical Technology 2-year Degree Requirement

The Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit, via programmatically, surgical technology programs. At present, ABHES accredits 57 institutions or programs offering surgical technology. More specifically, 18 institutions or programs confer a Diploma/Certificate upon successful completion of the program while 39 institutions or programs confer an Associate Degree upon successful completion of the program.

All ABHES accredited surgical technology programs must meet the programmatic requirements outlined in Chapter VII-ST of the *Accreditation Manual* in addition to aligning the programs' curricula with the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology* 6<sup>th</sup> Edition (Core Curriculum), published by the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST). The Core Curriculum includes a section entitled, "The Associate Degree in Surgical Technology" that highlights the importance of an education beyond the Diploma/Certificate level to better equip graduates with the skills necessary to gain entry-level employment in the field of surgical technology. With increasingly more challenging surgical treatments, and rapid technological advances, institutions must broaden the depth and breadth of surgical technology programs to ensure that graduates are adequately prepared to meet the needs of the profession. Moreover, "AST recognizes the associate degree level for surgical technology programs as the educational model that must be offered to prepare graduates to fulfill the entry-level duties of the surgical technologist".

At its May 2016 meeting, the Commission considered the direction of the profession, credentialing requirements, the AST Associate Degree Concept Resolution paper, as well as consulted with subject matter experts from the ABHES Programmatic Accreditation Committee for Surgical Technology (PAC-ST) and determined that **all ABHES accredited surgical technology programs must confer an Associate Degree by July 1, 2020**. Institutions and programs must continue to comply with all accreditation policies and standards as outlined in the *Accreditation Manual* and must consider this requirement when reviewing the depth and breadth of its surgical technology program(s). The Commission believes this timeframe supports a smooth transition period for institutions and programs conferring only a Diploma/Certificate and allows for appropriate concessions to be made at the campus level.

Institutions and programs are reminded that all program-related modifications must be reviewed and approved prior to implementation. As such, institutions and programs should review Chapter III.B.4., of the *Accreditation Manual* or visit [www.abhes.org/forms/applications](http://www.abhes.org/forms/applications) for further information with this regard.

Contact Amanda Ludwa, Manager of Programs and Staff-Liaison to the PAC-ST at [aludwa@abhес.org](mailto:aludwa@abhес.org) or 571-282-0051 with any questions you may have regarding this bulletin.



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## ABHES NOTIFICATION

TO: ABHES-Accredited Institutions and Programs  
Interested Parties

FROM: Ms. India Tips, Interim Executive Director

DATE: July 25, 2018

SUBJECT: Surgical Technology 2-year Degree Requirement

The Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit, via programmatically, surgical technology programs. ABHES is one (1) of two (2) accrediting agencies in the United States that oversees the approval process of certificate, diploma, and associate degree programs in surgical technology. Graduates of these programs are eligible to sit for the Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) credential.

All ABHES accredited surgical technology programs must meet the programmatic requirements outlined in Chapter VII-ST of the *Accreditation Manual* in addition to aligning the programs' curricula with the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology* 6th Edition (Core Curriculum), published by the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST). The Core Curriculum included a section entitled, "The Associate Degree in Surgical Technology" that highlights the importance of an education beyond the diploma/certificate level to better equip graduates with the skills necessary to gain entry-level employment in the field of surgical technology.

The ABHES Commission continues to require that all accredited surgical technology programs confer an associate's degree by **July 1, 2020**. However, the Commission also recognizes there may be programs that are not be able to comply with the academic requirement of this standard. In these instances, the institution or program must submit a letter to request an exemption and provide a detailed explanation by January 31, 2019. All requests should be addressed to Ms. Mary Margaret Coughlin and emailed to [ST@abhes.org](mailto:ST@abhes.org).

Institutions and programs are reminded that all program-related modifications must be reviewed and approved prior to implementation. As such, institutions and programs should review Chapter III.B.4., of the *Accreditation Manual* or visit [www.abhes.org/forms/applications](http://www.abhes.org/forms/applications) for further information with this regard.

Contact Mary Margaret Coughlin, Manager of Programs and Staff-Liaison to the PAC-ST at [mcoughlin@abhes.org](mailto:mcoughlin@abhes.org) or 571-282-0057 with any questions you may have regarding this bulletin.