

Accreditation Review Committee on Education in Surgical Technology

PAE to CST Outcomes Reporting Transition

At its September 2007 meeting in Denver, the ARC-ST Board of Directors officially recognized the national Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) board examination as an approved curricular outcomes assessment indicator, *beginning with classes completing August 1, 2008*, for programs choosing to participate. CAAHEP accredited surgical technology programs will have the *option* to use either the CST examination *or* the PAE as their programmatic outcome measure, *but not both*. Programs must choose.

OPTIONS

Option 1 An accredited program continues to administer the PAE as their program assessment outcome measure. No further action required.

Option 2 An accredited program elects to administer the CST examination as their program assessment outcome measure beginning with cohorts completing *August 1, 2008*. Programs electing the CST exam option *cannot* convert back to the PAE.

PILOT TEST Year

2008-2009 Those programs electing to convert to the CST examination from the PAE, as their sole program outcome measure, will be participating in a *Pilot Test* during the annual reporting period **8/1/08 - 7/31/09**.

Program Reporting CST examination performance results during the *Pilot Test* year will be reported for the first time on the **2010 Annual Report** by those programs which elect to switch to the CST. They will be reported in a separate area of Section I specifically for CST examination results, by individual cohort and in summary for the reporting year.

Note: PAE administration will *not* be required *nor* will any PAE results be accepted for annual reporting after 8/1/08 for those programs which switch to the CST examination.

CST Pass-rate Threshold Outcomes performance is measured in trends. Therefore, all programs electing to switch to the CST examination as their outcomes indicator will *not* be subject to any *pass-rate threshold* during the *Pilot Test* year. Additionally, participating programs will *not* be required to compare or contrast program performance in previous years on the PAE to the *Pilot Test* year CST examination.

After the 2010 *Annual Reports* are submitted, the ARC-ST will analyze CST performance results reported from all participating programs during the *Pilot Test* year. Those results will be the basis for identifying an appropriate *pass-rate threshold* setting for the CST exam as an outcomes measure going forward. Once a *pass-rate threshold* is determined by the ARC-ST, it will serve as the basis for ongoing program assessment and published.

Note: The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) has arranged for detailed CST exam performance reports for participating programs which will be available from the testing agency, Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP).

BENEFITS

Accredited programs voluntarily converting to the CST examination *option* will benefit from a valid, verifiable and easy-to-report assessment of program outcomes focusing on entry-level knowledge and skills consistent with the well-established national benchmark entry-level credentialing examination in surgical technology. This includes:

Score Reporting Performance reports will be available in significantly greater detail than before, tentatively including testing and program completion dates, examinee identifiers, and national comparisons during the same period.

Program Access The NBSTSA, in working with AMP, offers to candidates and educators enhanced computer- based testing (CBT) at approved AMP testing centers across the country, as well as pre-graduate, on campus web-based *group* testing (WBT). Participating program officials will enjoy report availability online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with restricted, secured access.

Resources/Content Reports tentatively will be keyed to the 2008 NBSTSA surgical technologist certification examination outline, reflecting the three (3) major divisions and eight (8) subdivisions and restricted to program officials.

- Information on CST exam scheduling requirements, timelines and reports will be available from NBSTSA (www.nbstsa.org).

Students Surgical technology students will benefit from the opportunity to earn their CST credential at the conclusion of their education via student discount packages from the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) arranged by their programs.

- Information on student discount packages will be available from AST (www.ast.org).

CONVERTING to the CST

Programs electing to convert to the CST examination effective with *all* cohorts completing beginning *August 1, 2008* and thereafter, can *only* do so by completing the [2008 Outcomes Indicator Election Form](#) available *after* July 1, 2008. This form *must* be submitted, with verifying signatures from both the surgical technology program director *and* an institutional administrative officer (CEO, President or Dean), to the ARC-ST home office no later than *September 1, 2008*.

Remember, once your program elects to use the CST examination, you cannot go back to the PAE *nor* can you mix CST results with PAE results during any subsequent reporting year. You will be administering and reporting results for the CST exam *only*.

PAE to CST Outcomes Reporting Background

Background & History

For the last several years, the PAE has been the standardized program assessment instrument required for *Annual Reporting* of outcomes by CAAHEP accredited surgical technology programs, as mandated by the ARC-ST.

As part of their on-going outcomes based accreditation (OBA) evaluation of programmatic outcomes indicators over the last several years, the ARC-ST has been evaluating the entry-level CST examination for appropriateness and validity as a program assessment instrument. The minimum expected outcome for all students enrolled in CAAHEP accredited programs in surgical technology is *entry-level preparation*. The ARC-ST confirmed that the national CST examination is the only NCCA accredited examination that evaluates entry-level preparation in the field.

This process culminated in the nationwide distribution of an online survey to approximately 420 Program Directors in CAAHEP accredited ST programs (January 2007) with over 240 responses with an overwhelming endorsement of the CST as an outcomes measure.

Based upon the results of the evaluative process, the ARC-ST Board of Directors determined at its Fall 2007 meeting to continue the development of an *optional* program assessment measure that will feature the CST examination and incorporate a *Pilot Test* year to assess effectiveness and appropriate reporting thresholds.

More recently, review of data available regarding CAAHEP accredited programs which accessed the CST examination *group testing* option, available from the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) since 2005, revealed a dramatic increase in program participation.

Approximately 30 programs in 2005, 70 programs in 2006 and, most recently, 120 programs in 2007 administered the CST exam to their completing students while also administering the PAE exam to comply with existing ARC-ST policy. Those 120 programs represent nearly 25% of all CAAHEP accredited surgical technology programs across the nation demonstrating growth in adoption of the CST exam as a desirable outcomes measure, in advance of ARC-ST recognition.

Finally, while in 2007 over 7,400 completers took the PAE, notably over 5,000 first-time examinees sat for the CST exam. The vast majority of those candidates who took the CST examination in 2007 are estimated to be recent program graduates. The ARC-ST is aware that this significant level of participation in the CST exam for eligible candidates occurred whether or not programs actively supported their graduates or pre-graduates efforts.

For those programs wishing to elect the CST examination as their program assessment outcomes measure beginning in Fall 2008, please contact the ARC-ST (www.arcst.org).

The ARC-ST thanks you for your continuing support for excellence in surgical technology education and assessment.