

Surgical Technologist FAQs

What does a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) do?

Certified Surgical Technologists (CST)s are highly skilled individuals who collaborate with surgeons, registered nurses, and other health care professionals to deliver high quality standards of care, demonstrate principles of asepsis, and participate in creating an operating room environment. A Surgical Technologist assists in every aspect of the surgical setting including pre, intra and post-operatively.

This is an exciting, growing career with great responsibility that requires safely working in a fast-paced, high-pressure, task-oriented and highly efficient Operating Room (OR) environment. Individuals must have steadfast attention to detail, be strong communicators, work as a cooperative unit and be committed to quality patient care.

Pre-operative responsibilities:

- CSTs have pre-operative responsibilities, which take place prior to a surgery. CSTs assist with collecting/organizing surgical supplies and equipment which are required for a surgery. They review a surgeon's "preference card" which has many specific details for what a surgeon needs/prefers to use during surgery, including whether the surgeon is right or left handed, special equipment, medications to be used, and reviews the surgical consent/schedule for the patient's surgical site location. Knowing where the surgical/operative site will be influences the way the CST organizes the operating room in preparation for surgery.
- When the patient is brought into the Operating Suite, a CST may assist the circulating nurse and anesthesia provider to position the patient correctly and perform duties such as surgical prep, visualize the surgical site, assist with catheter placement, gown surgical team members, and pour sterile fluids and open sterile supplies onto the sterile field.

Intra-operative responsibilities:

- CSTs are the guardians of the sterile field and surgical equipment within the OR suite. Their core responsibilities during surgery are to perform surgical scrubs, don sterile gowns, gloves and protective masks, and manage and maintain sterile fields with surgical instruments/equipment. They organize and collaborate with the surgical team, use sterile/non sterile supplies appropriately, perform surgical counts, label medications being used, pass and assist surgeons with sterile surgical instrumentation and use their surgical conscious in maintaining sterility and safety at all times.
- CSTs must be proficient and knowledgeable with several surgical instruments and several simple up to complex surgical procedures. CST are also responsible for the proper handling and precise labeling of any specimens that are collected during surgery. In some circumstances, a CST may assist the surgeon with surgery by holding retractors, manipulating tissue or cutting sutures.
- Throughout a surgical procedure, CSTs must anticipate the surgeon's needs, be aware of their surgical and non-surgical surroundings, communicate effectively with team members, troubleshoot any complications and correct champion issues when they arise. CSTs work in tandem with the whole team in the OR to make sure that the surgery stays on time.

- The CST participates and verifies surgical counts (sponges, needles, sharps, and instruments). A CST will also verify appropriate supplies /equipment are in working order for the correct time, place, and patient. A CST will assist the surgical team in creating a sterile field around the operative site with the appropriate sterile drapes and equipment.

Post-operative responsibilities:

- After a surgery is completed, the CST may apply or assist with the surgical dressing process. A CST may also aide other health care team members in patient transfers from OR table to stretcher and out of the operating suite.
- CSTs will support the clean-up of the OR including accounting for all materials used, sterilization steps to lower the risk of infections, gathering any used instruments, equipment or laundry, disposing or returning any unused medications and helping to prepare the room for the next surgery by returning everything to its place.

For more information about this career field, please visit: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/surgical-technologists.htm>

Who is eligible to apply?

Anyone interested in pursuing a career as a Surgical Technologist is eligible to apply for admission. Dartmouth-Hitchcock employees who are interested in applying for sponsorship can contact cst.training@dartmouth.org for more information.

When are applications due, and what is the application process?

For more details, see our [Admissions](#) page.

Are there any pre-requisites?

All applicants must complete the following pre-requisites to be eligible for admission:

- Proof of Age: applicants must be 18 years or older on or before start date of class year
- High school diploma: HiSET or GED (Graduate Equivalence)
- College-level Anatomy & Physiology I with a passing grade of C or higher (taken within the last five years)
- College-level Medical Terminology with a passing grade of C or higher (taken within the last five years)
- Current/valid Basic Life Support certification

Will I earn college credit during this program?

Granite State College (GSC), which is part of the New Hampshire University System, will recognize up to 49 prior-learning credits for students who complete the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Surgical Technologist Program.

What costs are the responsibility of students in this program?

Tuition

Tuition for the 11-month Surgical Technology Program is \$8,000.00. Please see the Withdrawal and Refund Policies for additional information about eligible tuition refunds and applicable fees.

Textbooks

The estimated cost of purchasing books and online resources is \$1058.00 if you purchase all new hard-copy text books. You may also choose to purchase used texts, rent texts, or use online texts. The required Cengage Unlimited- MindTap package includes online versions of the four Cengage texts listed below. Elsevier/Evolve text books may be purchased through Elsevier or on other online textbook websites. Students may also choose to purchase additional learning materials during the program to supplement text books and any course material.

Book Name	Approx. Pricing
Cengage	
Cengage Unlimited- MindTap (includes online access to the following four Cengage texts)	\$199.00
Surgical Technology for the Surgical Technologist 5th Edition	\$110.00 (hard-copy)
Fundamentals of A&P 4th Edition by Donald C. Rizzo	\$127.00 (hard-copy)
Medical Terminology for Health Professionals 8th Edition	\$140.00 (hard-copy)
Microbiology for the Surgical Technologists by Rodriquez **	\$91.00 (hard-copy)
Elsevier/Evolve	
Pharmacology for Surgical Technologist 3rd Edition can be bought used ISBN 978-1-4377-1002-1 **	\$70.00
Other <i>(Note: many of the books below can purchased used on Amazon)</i>	
Pocket Guide to the Operating Room ISBN 978-0-8036-1226-6 **	\$45.00
Pearson's Surgical Technology Exam Review ISBN 978-0-13-500048-9	\$90.00
Surgical Mayo Setups ISBN 978-1-111-13818-9	\$113.00
Surgical Instrumentation an Interactive Approach by Renee Nemitz ISBN 9781-4557-0719	\$72.00
Total Book Costs	\$1,058.00

Personal supplies

Trainees are responsible for purchasing any personal supplies needed for the program, including but not limited to:

- **Footwear:** only plain closed toe and heel shoes (shoes cannot have multiple colors and large insignias), and socks or hose are permitted. The cost can vary per personal preference, with an estimated range of \$25-\$100
- **Two program polo shirts:** ordered through the Program Director with an estimated cost of \$30.
- **Black scrub pants:** estimated cost of \$20.
- **Classroom supplies:** including items such as notebooks, pens/highlighters/markers, note/flash cards, etc. These costs vary per personal preference, with an estimated range of \$25-\$100.
- **Laptop computer:** cost varies per personal preference, with an estimated range of \$200-\$1500.

What is the time commitment for this program?

Becoming a CST is not a fast or easy journey. This is 11-month college-level curriculum that will require dedication and commitment. Students who participate in the D-H program will cover topics such as anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, surgical instruments, pathophysiology, pharmacology, principals of surgical technology, and clinical training that is best-in-class.

What is the admission committee looking for in a strong CST candidate?

Being a CST is a physically demanding, mentally challenging and incredibly rewarding professional role. It requires the ability to focus, problem solve, pay close attention to detail, have excellent listening and communication skills, and an underlying commitment to doing what is right for patient safety and well-being.

A successful candidate for this program will demonstrate a strong work ethic through reliability and dependability, time management skills, team work and communication skills, the ability to work under pressure and stress including the ability to keep composure and think critically.

Flexibility and adaptability are two fundamental skills in the OR, which can be an unpredictable, intense environment. The ability to be flexible, navigate the unknown and adapt to changing circumstances are essential.

What are the physical demands of being a CST?

Selected candidates must complete an Occupational Medicine Health Screening and have sufficient strength and motor coordination to perform the following physical activities:

- Frequent reaching and manual dexterity to handle patients and equipment, and to manipulate very fine surgical supplies
- Ability to wear required surgical gear, such as lead aprons, thyroid shields, masks, and eyewear
- Ability to work with complex equipment, such as video systems and microscopes, robotics, etc.
- Standing and walking, functioning without nourishment and/or be unable to have a bathroom break for sustained periods of time
- Frequent transporting, holding, moving, lifting, and transferring patients of various sizes to and from the operating table
- Ability to work with strong, potentially noxious smells

- Visual acuity sufficient to work with figures and other data and to make fine visual inspection of equipment. Sufficient eyesight to manipulate equipment, distinguish instruments, supplies and color and interpret data
- Sufficient hearing to assess patient needs and to understand instructions from surgeons and others and ability to respond quickly to verbal orders
- Sufficient written and oral skills to communicate needs promptly and effectively, to express and exchange ideas, and to interact with patients, surgeons, peers, and other medical personnel
- Ability to work with frequent interruptions and responding quickly and appropriately to unexpected situations
- Ability to work with wide variations in workload and stress levels

Can I work while I am going through the program?

This is a full-time commitment for the duration that you are in the program. Academic performance is closely monitored and attendance is mandatory. There will be additional homework, just as there would be if you were enrolled in a post-secondary academic institution, in the evenings and on the week-ends.

What credential or certification will I get from this program?

Successful graduates will become members of the Association of Surgical Technologists, earn prior-learning credits from Granite State College and a Certificate of Completion from the D-H Surgical Technologist Training Program.

Is the D-H Surgical Technologist Program accredited?

This program is fully accredited by the [Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs \(CAAHEP\)](#) in conjunction with the [Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting \(ARC/STSA\)](#).

You can contact the CAAHEP at:

25400 US Highway 19 North
Suite 158
Clearwater, FL 33763

Phone: (727) 210-2350
Fax: (727) 210-2354
Email: mail@caahep.org