

Associate Degree Implementation Policy for Surgical Technology Programs

Relevant Standard: **Standard I. Sponsorship A. Program Sponsor**

Purpose:

The ARC/STSA Associate Degree Implementation Policy establishes provisions and requirements related to implementation of the associate degree in CAAHEP-accredited surgical technology programs. This policy supplements institutional sponsorship requirements as found in the *CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Education Programs in Surgical Technology* (approved 11/19/2021).

Implementation Requirements:

- ✳ Effective **January 1, 2022**, all sponsoring institutions applying for initial accreditation of a surgical technology program must award a minimum of an associate degree.
- ✳ Programs accredited prior to **January 1, 2022**, or those that have submitted a Request for Accreditation Services (RAS) form for initial accreditation to CAAHEP prior to **January 1, 2022**, must award a minimum of an associate degree prior to **August 1, 2022**.
- ✳ Programs with dual tracks (associate degree and certificate/diploma) may no longer begin a CAAHEP accredited certificate/diploma cohort after **August 1, 2022 (i.e., certificate/diploma cohort start date no later than July 31, 2022)**.
- ✳ Non-degree granting institutions accredited prior to **January 1, 2022**, may require an associate degree or higher for admission into the surgical technology program to meet the intent of the Standard.
- ✳ For certificate/diploma programs accredited prior to **January 1, 2022**, or those that have submitted a Request for Accreditation Services (RAS) form for initial accreditation to CAAHEP prior to **January 1, 2022**, articulation agreements and/or bridge programs may be developed with degree-granting institutions* for award of the associate degree. The sponsoring institution must continuously maintain the articulation agreement to maintain CAAHEP accreditation status. In the event of dissolution of an articulation agreement, the program sponsor must finalize a new articulation agreement with another degree-granting institution prior to subsequent cohort enrollment.
*Degree-granting institutions referenced above must be institutionally accredited by an accreditor recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the United States Department of Education.
- ✳ Programs that do not award an associate degree as of **August 1, 2022**, may apply for a two-year extension of the required implementation date.
- ✳ Requests for the associate degree extension will be accepted **May 1 – July 31, 2022**.

✳️ ARC/STSA recognizes the unique mission of the United States Armed Forces. The following criteria applies to military branches (e.g., Army, Navy, Air Force) sponsoring CAAHEP-accredited surgical technology programs.

👉 Utilization of pre-requisite training related to the students' surgical technology education to award academic credit to fulfill the associate degree requirement is acceptable.

👉 Military programs may form articulation agreements and/or bridge programs with degree-granting institutions* for award of the associate degree.

* Degree-granting institutions referenced above must be institutionally accredited by an accreditor recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the United States Department of Education.

👉 Military program graduates may complete required coursework for the associate degree subsequent to program completion, yet prior to separation from military service.