

Comparison of Accredited vs. Non-Accredited Surgical Technology Programs



	Accredited Surgical Technology Programs (ARC/STSA or ABHES)	Non-Accredited Surgical Technology Programs / On-the-job Training Programs
Degree/Diploma/Certificate	Associate's Degree	Diploma/Certificate of Completion
Certification	CST (Certified Surgical Technologist) through NBSTSA	TS-C through NCCT or another credential that is not nationally recognized
Length of Program	1 year for pre-requisites 1 year for Surgical Tech program	5 days to 6 months
Clinical Time in Hospital	120 cases minimum required for graduation and certification	0 cases required prior to completion or certification. Many programs do not provide clinicals and students must seek out their own clinical experience.
Hands-On Skills Labs	1 Semester prior to clinical rotation	Minimal or online
Instrument Identification	1 Semester prior to clinical rotation	Minimal or online
Aseptic Technique Training	1 Semester prior to clinical rotation	Minimal or online
Anatomy & Physiology, Microbiology, Pharmacology Courses	Completed during or prior to the Surgical Technology program	No Requirement
Cost of Program	Less than \$10,000 for pre-requisites and Surgical Tech program	Prices vary up to \$40,000, but most programs are for profit. Programs tend to cost more but offer less.

Comparison of CST certification vs. Alternate credential certification

	CST	TS-C, NST, or other credential
Certifying Organization	National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NCCA accredited)	National Center for Competency Testing or National Medical Licensing Association
Program Accreditation Required	Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA through CAAHEP) or Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES)	No
Nationally Recognized	Yes 17 states recognize ONLY this credential	No
Surgical Cases Required	120 minimum completed prior to graduation and sitting for certification per ARC/STSA standards	No case requirement prior to the credentialing exam. For the TS-C, cases may be completed up to 2 years after sitting for the exam. Other credentials require no cases for certification.