



AAS Surgical Technology Program Student Handbook

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Southwest University

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Makes **YOU** Happen

Dear Esteemed Surgical Technology Students,

I hope you read this message with enthusiasm as you embark on this transformative journey within our Surgical Technology program, here at Southwest University. As the Program Director, I am immensely proud of each one of you for choosing this path, one that holds the potential to shape not only your professional trajectory but also the lives of the patients you will serve.

In the realm of healthcare, few principles are as crucial as "Aeger Primo" – the patient first. This timeless adage encapsulates the very essence of our calling as surgical technologists. It reminds us that our commitment to patient safety, care, and advocacy must always take precedence. Each day, you will be entrusted with the well-being of those seeking medical intervention, relying on your expertise and dedication.

As you progress through this program, I urge you to internalize the significance of "Aeger Primo." Your passion for patient-centric care should be the driving force behind every action you take. By approaching your studies with diligence and by collaborating harmoniously with our experienced faculty, you are building a foundation that will enable you to excel in your craft.

Remember, the success of your journey lies within your own hands. Your commitment to the program, to your studies, and to yourselves will be the key determinant of your accomplishments. Just as a surgical team relies on seamless coordination, your collaboration with fellow students, instructors, and healthcare professionals is essential.

Embrace the challenges with an open heart, for it is through challenges that we grow stronger. As you face the rigorous demands of this program, always keep in mind that "Aeger Primo" is not just a phrase, but a philosophy to live by. Your dedication to patient safety and advocacy will not only define your career but also the legacy you leave behind in the lives you touch.

Stay resolute, stay compassionate, and let your patient's best interest guide you through every decision you make. With your unwavering commitment and a patient-first mindset, you are not just becoming skilled surgical technologists – you are becoming beacons of care, hope, and excellence in healthcare.

Wishing you a transformative and fulfilling journey ahead.

Sincerely,

Maggie Silva Gonzalez, CST

Revised 1/28/2026

Article I. **Mission Statement & Program Goals**

Section 1.01 Mission Statement

The Surgical Technology program of Southwest University at El Paso is committed to excellence in education demonstrated by providing a comprehensive entry-level education program to students through quality didactic and clinical instruction in the general learning concentration of surgery. The Surgical Technology program supports the vision, values, and mission of Southwest University at El Paso, which values the importance of education, knowledge acquisition, and love of learning, through a well-rounded program. Our classes in didactic theory, application and practice of skill sets in the laboratory environment, and integration of didactic theory as well as acquisition of performance objectives in the clinical setting, bring to culmination the opportunity for the student to obtain a Certification for Surgical Technology, and be employable.

Section 1.02 Program Goals

Surgical Technology is an Allied Health profession whose primary concern is the care of surgical patients in the operating room. The Surgical Technologist helps prepare the operating room with necessary instruments and supplies, along with testing the surgical equipment. The primary role is to maintain the sterile field and aid the surgeon by passing sterile supplies or directly assisting with the surgery.

The Surgical Technologist is a direct patient care provider, is therefore in contact with, and works in conjunction with the patient, his /her relatives, physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Students who are selected for the program will be given every reasonable opportunity to successfully complete the program providing that proper attendance, behavior, attitude, and a willingness to work hard is demonstrated. While a great deal of material must be learned to be successful, we believe that creativity, versatility, attitude, and mechanical inclination are extremely valuable and desirable attributes in a Surgical Technologist. All these characteristics will be observed and evaluated along with the learning skills and required performance skills.

The goals of the Southwest University AAS Surgical Technology program:

- Goal #1: Program will Prepare Competent Surgical Technologist Graduates: Equip students with the knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors needed to perform as entry-level surgical technologists in cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains.
- Goal #2: Graduates Will Master Aseptic and Surgical Techniques: Train students to maintain sterile fields, handle surgical instruments, and assist effectively across various surgical specialties.
- Goal #3: Program will Ensure Pre-Graduation Certification Testing and Preparation: Provide comprehensive instruction and assessments to prepare and test students for the Tech in Surgery National Exam (NCCT TS-C) before graduation.
- Goal #4: Program will Foster Compassionate, Patient Centric Ethical Conduct, Teamwork and Effective Communication: Our program cultivates compassionate,

patient-centered leaders who master transformational ethics and crystal-clear team communication - driving top-tier patient safety, dignity, and outcomes across the surgical arena.

- Goal #5: Program will Provide Robust, Comprehensive and Diverse Clinical Experience: The program offers clinical ventures beyond the traditional operating room, offering hands-on clinical rotations in the main OR, Labor & Delivery, Endoscopy, Cath Lab, and Interventional Radiology (IR)—ensuring students not only meet national requirements but also build unmatched practical expertise across diverse, high-acuity procedural settings.

Article II. **Program Administration**

Section 2.01 Administration

Students should be familiar with their instructors and administrative staff, as they are essential resources for guidance and support. If students have questions or concerns, they should first address them with their instructor. If the issue is not resolved, it is important to follow the appropriate chain of command to seek further assistance. This ensures that concerns are addressed effectively and through the proper channels. The faculty and administration are committed to supporting students in their journey to becoming competent Surgical Technologists and achieving success.

Program Director's Assistant	Estefania Adame	eadame@southwestuniversity.edu
Program Director	Maggie Silva Gonzalez, MA OML, CST	
Program Dean	Dr. Javier Gutierrez	

Article III. **Scope of Practice**

This scope of practice outlines the typical responsibilities and functions of a Surgical Technologist, offering a general framework for the tasks they may be called upon to perform, both independently and in collaboration with the surgical team. While their primary role is in the capacity of a scrub technologist, Surgical Technologists are versatile professionals who can assist the surgical team in various capacities, as the situation requires. The roles and responsibilities of Surgical Technologists as integral members of the healthcare team, always prioritizing the well-being of the patient.

Article IV. **National Certification & Professional Membership**

For Surgical Technology students to secure meaningful employment upon graduation, they must pass the national certification exam. Certification is a requirement for employers and serves as a validation of a student's skills, knowledge, and readiness to work in the field.

To ensure students are fully prepared, the program provides structured coursework, hands-on clinical experience, and exam preparation resources. Students are expected to take responsibility for their learning, actively engage in their training, and seek faculty support when needed. Successfully passing the national certification exam is not only a program requirement but a necessary step in launching a successful career in surgical technology.

Section 4.01 NCCT

A surgical technologist who is certified by the NCCT provides evidence to employers, other healthcare professionals, and the public that the certified individual has met the allied health professional for the knowledge that underlies surgical technology practice. Certified surgical technologists demonstrate mastery of a broad range of knowledge of surgical procedures, aseptic techniques, and patient care by successfully completing the surgical technology certification examination. Certification by the NCCT is nationally recognized.

National Center for Competency Testing
7007 College Blvd Suite 385
Overland Park KS 66211
<https://www.ncctinc.com/>

During your Surgical Technology education, the program faculty will strive to prepare you to become a professional who is eligible to sit for the national certification exam. However, graduation does not guarantee passage of the exam.

Section 4.02 NBSTSA

A surgical technologist, who is certified by the NBSTSA, provides evidence to employers, other healthcare professionals, and the public that the certified individual has met the national standard for the knowledge that underlies surgical technology practice. Certified surgical technologists demonstrate mastery of a broad range of knowledge of surgical procedures, aseptic techniques, and patient care by successfully completing the surgical technology certification examination. Certification by the NBSTSA is nationally recognized

National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting
6 West Dry Creek Circle, Ste. 100
Littleton, CO 80120
<https://www.nbstsa.org/>

Section 4.03 Certification Exam Preparation

For Surgical Technology students to obtain meaningful employment upon graduation, they must pass the national certification exam.

Minimal requirements to sit for the national certification exam include the following criteria:

- Fulfillment of degree requirements for the Associates of Applied Science in Surgical Technology from an accredited university or program.

- Clearance by the clinical faculty, and program director as completing all of the clinical requirements including completion of all applicable procedure competencies, and academic courses with a 75% course grade or above.
- Pass Surgical Technology Proficiency Exit Exam with a 70% score or higher.
- Pass the Tech in Surgery TS-C (NCCT) certification exam.

a) Testing Details

Students will have two Surgical Technology Proficiency Exams. The first exam, is a practice exam, given during the first week of the Exam Review Preparation course. The second exam is the Surgical Technology Proficiency Exit Exam and is conducted during the student's last two to three weeks of the course, as testing space permits. Tutoring and remediation will be focused on the results of the Surgical Technology Proficiency Exam given in the 1st week of the Exam Review Preparation course

b) Failure to Fulfill Exam Conditions

If the student does not pass the Surgical Technology Proficiency Exit Exam with a 70% score or higher, they will receive an "F" for the Exam Review Preparation course.

c) Grading for Exam Review Preparation Course

The Surgical Technology Proficiency Exit Exam score will be used as the midterm exam grade for the Exam Review Preparation Course. The Tech in Surgery TS-C (NCCT) certification pass or fail result will be used as the final exam grade for the Exam Review Preparation Course.

As per the National Center for Competency Testing the passing exam score for the Tech in Surgery TS-C certification is 575. For grading purposes in class, a failing exam result is recorded as a 0, while a passing result is recorded as 100.

Section 4.04 Professional Membership

Upon enrollment in the program, students are eligible for membership in the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST). In their final term, students will officially join AST as a cohort, gaining access to valuable benefits. Membership provides discounts on the national certification exam, as well as access to student resources, including articles and AST conference information.

Being part of AST encourages a commitment to lifelong learning by offering continuing education materials, professional events, and industry updates. The cost of membership is included in tuition fees, ensuring students can take full advantage of these opportunities as they prepare for their careers.

**Association of Surgical Technologists
6 West Dry Creek Circle, Ste. 200
Littleton, CO 80120**

www.ast.org

**Acceptance into, graduation from, and completion of the program do not guarantee national certification. **

Article V. Program at A Glance

Section 5.01 Course Completion

Total Lecture Hours: 745 Hours

Total Lab Hours: 385 Hours

Total Externship Hours: 570 Hours

Total Program Hours: 1700 Hours

Total Length of Program Time: 72 Weeks

Student Status:

Full Time Only

Program Delivery: Blended (Residential and Online) the program content is offered through lecture, laboratory, and externship experiences.

Surgical Technology students are required to finish all general education and core courses before clinical externship. Failure to complete general education and core courses will lead to the inability to continue to clinical externship, the inability to follow the sequence of the course curriculum for the Surgical Technology Program, and subsequent dismissal from the program with the possibility of readmission.

Section 5.02 Clinical Externship Requirements

To graduate with an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Surgical Technology from Southwest University, students must complete all required clinical experiences and activities as assigned by the program faculty. Failure to participate in these required clinical experiences and activities will prevent students from meeting graduation requirements.

Surgical Technology students should be able to meet the following physical and professional expectations to successfully perform their duties in the clinical setting:

- **Standing:** Students should have the ability to stand for up to 8 hours with only a 30-minute break.
- **Lifting:** Students should have the capability to lift between 35 to 80 lbs.
- **Strength & Coordination:** Students should have the ability to push, pull, and exert force as needed during clinical tasks.
- **Communication Skills:** Students should have the competence in understanding and following both written and verbal instructions to effectively carry out clinical duties.
 - English is the primary language used in hospitals and clinical settings to ensure clear and effective communication among healthcare professionals. Since hospital staff, including surgeons and nurses, are not employed by Southwest University, the language used in these settings cannot be modified.
- **Dexterity & Motor Skills:** Students should have strong manual dexterity and motor coordination to handle surgical instruments and equipment safely.
- **Professionalism:** Students should commit to maintaining a professional, positive, and proactive attitude at all times.
- **Emotional Readiness:** Students should have the preparedness to encounter traumatic or tragic situations in the clinical setting.

These expectations help ensure that students are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in the program and the surgical field. If you have any concerns about meeting these requirements or need further clarification, please speak with the Surgical Technology Program Director.

Section 5.03 General Education Course Sequence

Terms	Course Number	Course Name
Term 1	MS 101	Math Skills
	PS 101	Psychology of Success
	MS 101	Medical Terminology I
	CL 100	Introduction to Clinical Procedures
	AP 101	Anatomy and Physiology
Term 2	AP 102	Anatomy and Physiology II
	MT 102	Medical Terminology II
	SS 101	Spreadsheets for Medical Assistants
	JC 101	College Studies and Career Preparation
Term 3	PB 101	Patient Billing
	WP 101	Word Processing
	BM 101	Business Math for Social Sciences
	ME 101	Medical Law and Ethics
	ENG 133	Reading Comprehension
Term 4	PH 101	Pharmacology
	HP 101	Human Pathophysiology
	BC 110	Business Communication
	ENG 145	Technical Writing

Section 5.04 Pre-Core Curriculum Course Sequence

Pre-Core Curriculum		
Term 5	MBIO 101	Microbiology
	PS 102	Psychology of Patient Care
	PH 102	Surgical Pharmacology

Section 5.05 Core Curriculum Course Sequence

Core Curriculum		
Term 6	SURG 100	Surgical Risk Management
	SURG 201	Preoperative Procedures
Term 7	SURG 200	Intraoperative Procedures
	SURG 202	Perioperative Case Management
Term 8	SURG 101	Surgical Procedures I
	SURG 203	Postoperative Procedures
Term 9	SURG 102	Surgical Procedures II
	SURG 210	Technological Sciences
Term 10	EXT-ST 101	Externship I
Term 11	EXT-ST 102	Externship II
Term 12	EPST 100	Exam Review Preparation
	EXT-ST 103	Externship III

For Course Description Information please review Surgical Technology Program Catalog.
[Southwest University Catalog](#)

Article VI. Theory (Classroom/Didactic) & Laboratory

Section 6.01 Education Settings

Students are required to attend all scheduled theory, laboratory, and hands-on training in person. Attendance and completion of course material is required to receive full credit for the course.

a) Schedules

Each student is given a schedule for all classes, which includes start and end times for each day of the week. The total weekly hours will not exceed forty hours.

The theory and laboratory schedule for this program runs Monday through Friday, from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. **All theory and laboratory courses are offered during the day; no evening classes are available.**

Student schedules will not be adjusted to accommodate work commitments, other classes, or personal circumstances.

Section 6.02 Specific Course Stipulations

Specific to course PS 102: To complete the core course PS 102, Psychology of Patient Care, required for graduation with an AAS degree from Southwest University, students must participate in experiential modules identified by program faculty. Failure to participate may prevent meeting graduation requirements.

Confidentiality: Facilitators and faculty will maintain confidentiality of personal experiences, except where disclosure is required by law.

Facilitator Credentials: The modules are conducted by a facilitator who holds Certification of Personal Human Development in Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Transformation Coaching, and Training from an established transformational leadership academy.

Description of Experiential Cathartic Modules: These modules facilitate personal growth, self-discovery, and emotional release through guided emotional expression, group activities, mindfulness exercises, and interactive experiences. Participants may experience emotional release, introspection, and perspective shifts, which can be intense or challenging, these modules are not a substitute for medical or psychological treatment.

Article VII. Clinical Externship

Section 7.01 Clinical Education

During clinical education, students will apply the knowledge and skills acquired through classroom and laboratory studies on campus and in clinical settings where they can work with patients under the supervision of qualified professionals. Through this well-supervised “hands-on” experience, students develop competence and prepare to assume professional responsibility.

During clinical assignments, students must remember that the Operating Room is a service department. It exists to provide service to patients, medical staff, and the community. When students participate in clinical education in any of the program’s recognized facilities, they assume all the responsibilities of a healthcare professional. Practicing procedures and patient care skills to gain competence and proficiency is important, but students will also serve patients. Improving knowledge and skill are important components of clinical education, but significant attention will also be given to the demonstration of professional attitude, professional conduct, appropriate and effective interpersonal skills, responsibility, and dependability.

While at an assigned facility, students are first students at Southwest University and second, guests of that clinical education setting. Students are expected to follow the rules and protocols of Southwest University and the assigned facility unless they conflict with Southwest University or Program policy. All FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS must be completed, for the student to advance to clinical externship.

Specific to all externship core courses: To fulfill the competencies required for graduation with an AAS degree from Southwest University, students must complete clinical experience, and clinical activities as designated by the program faculty. Failure to participate in clinical experience, and clinical activities will prevent students from meeting graduation requirements.

Section 7.02 Clinical Settings

Southwest University maintains affiliations with hospitals and clinics in greater El Paso, Texas. These affiliates serve as Clinical Education Settings where students gain clinical experience under the supervision of qualified professionals. Enrollment in the program signifies the student’s agreement that they will attend the clinical education settings assigned by Southwest University for the hours and times assigned by the program.

All students rotate through all scheduled facilities. If you feel you have a reason that merits an exception, please see the Program Director for evaluation.

Clinical education settings affiliated with Southwest University’s AAS Surgical Technology program are subject to change. Recognized clinical education settings may include, but are not limited to, the following locations:

- Del Sol Medical Center
- Las Palmas Medical Center
- The Hospitals of Providence East Campus

- The Hospitals of Providence Memorial Campus
- The Hospitals of Providence Transmountain Campus
- The Hospitals of Providence Sierra Campus
- The Hospitals of Providence Specialty Campus
- The Hospitals of Providence El Paso Day Surgery
- University Medical Center

Some affiliated hospitals are recognized as Active Sites where SU ST Program is currently sending students. Some affiliated hospitals are recognized as Inactive sites, which means that SU ST is affiliated with the sites, but is not currently sending students to the site.

a) Clinical Education Schedule and Requirements

Each student assigned to a clinical education setting will follow a six-week schedule that has been pre-approved by the program director. This schedule will outline start and end times for each day of the week and will not exceed forty hours per week. If a student needs to stay beyond their scheduled clinical hours, they must obtain approval in advance from the clinical site leader, assigned clinical coordinator, and program director. This approval must be documented via email by the clinical coordinator and sent to the program director **before** the student is allowed to remain past their scheduled hours.

The Clinical Externship schedule runs Monday through Friday, from 5:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Clinical externship courses are typically scheduled during the day on weekdays. **However, if a student has not met the required number of cases to complete the externship successfully, they may be required to complete clinical hours during evenings and/or weekends.**

Students are given the same lunch break duration as staff Surgical Technologists at their assigned clinical site, and all students are required to take regular lunch breaks.

b) Smoke-free Environment

If you violate the hospital's no-smoking policy, you will be dismissed from the clinical externship and the program. This applies to all forms of tobacco use, including smokeless tobacco.

c) Drug Testing

Students in the Surgical Technology program are required to undergo drug testing before being allowed to enter clinical externship. A negative drug test result is a condition for participating in clinical rotations. The drug test must be conducted at an approved facility and comply with the program's standards.

Section 7.03 Commitment to Patient Care and Professionalism

As future healthcare providers, your primary responsibility is to serve the public and provide quality care to every patient. Patients have the right to receive respectful and professional treatment, regardless of their race, religion, background, or health condition. It is essential to care for all patients with compassion, professionalism, and without judgment.

Students must be prepared to work with a diverse range of patients and ensure that everyone receives the same level of care and attention.

Section 7.04 Pregnancy & Injury Safety Hazards

During your clinical externship, you may encounter various safety hazards. It is important to be aware of these risks and take necessary precautions to protect yourself and others.

a) Pregnancy Risks

- If you are pregnant or become pregnant during the program, be aware that exposure to bone cement and radiation poses a risk to an unborn fetus, especially during the first trimester.
- If you choose to declare your pregnancy, please inform your **program director** and complete a **Pregnancy Declaration Form** for further guidance and accommodations.

b) Injury Risks

- There is a risk of injury from exposure to contaminated or clean sharps, radiation, and hazardous materials.
- Using **proper body mechanics** is essential to prevent strain or injury while performing your duties.
- Be mindful of potential hazards such as **falls, spills, and facility emergency codes** that may pose a danger.

Staying informed and following safety protocols will help ensure a safe and successful clinical experience.

Section 7.05 Immunization & Clinical Externship Requirements

To participate in the clinical externship, students must meet all immunization requirements and submit the necessary documentation by the deadline set by the Career Services Coordinator. If you have concerns about the Immunization Requirement Policy, including Tuberculosis (TB) Testing, you must schedule an appointment with the Clinical Placement Coordinator and/or Program Director before the vaccination due date.

Failure to submit required documentation on time will result in the inability to proceed to clinical externship and may lead to disciplinary action. If you are unable to meet clinical facility mandates, you will not be allowed to attend the clinical externship. If you are found non-compliant with the immunization policy while in clinical externship, you will be required to immediately correct the issue. **Any time missed due to vaccination non-compliance will be recorded as an absence for each day you are unable to attend.**

Ensuring that you meet all immunization requirements is essential for maintaining your placement in the program and progressing toward graduation.

a) Required Immunizations:

Students in the Surgical Technology program must provide proof of immunity for the following:

- Measles
- Rubella
- Varicella-Zoster (Chickenpox)
- Hepatitis B
- Tetanus, Diphtheria & Pertussis (Tdap)
- Tuberculosis Testing: All students must complete a TB test before starting their clinical externship.
- Annual Influenza Vaccine: Students are responsible for ensuring compliance with their assigned clinical site's flu vaccination requirements.

All required immunization records and clinical externship documents must be submitted to the Specialty Program Placement Coordinator before the specified vaccination due date.

**Failure to meet these requirements may result in delays or restrictions in attending clinical externship. **

Section 7.06 CPR & BLS Certification

Before starting clinical externship, all students must provide the required documentation and obtain a valid CPR and BLS certification. The certification must meet the American Heart Association (AHA) Basic Life Support standards for Healthcare Providers, and the verification card must be issued by the AHA. All certifications must remain current for the entire duration of the clinical externship. Students are also required to sign and follow the guidelines outlined in the clinical attestation form.

Section 7.07 Criminal Background & Disclosure Policy

Before attending clinical externship, all students must undergo a background check. Texas law prohibits hospitals and other healthcare providers from allowing individuals with certain criminal convictions to care for patients. If a person has been convicted of, pled guilty or nolo contendere to, or has been found guilty of a crime that would be classified as a Class A or B felony in Texas, they cannot provide patient care. Crimes that may prevent clinical placement include offenses related to domestic violence, crimes against a person, sex offenses, robbery, arson, burglary, abuse, neglect, incest, or other related violations as defined by state law.

If a student's background check reveals a criminal history involving a Class A or B felony or if their name appears on a government sanction list, they may not be allowed to continue enrollment in the Southwest University Surgical Technology program.

Please see the following link for detailed information: [Texas Administrative Code \(state.tx.us\)](https://www.state.tx.us)

Section 7.08 Personal Medical Insurance

Personal medical insurance is required, throughout the Surgical Technology Program, including clinical externship. If you would like information on the personal medical insurance offered to students by SU, please speak to the Clinical Placement Coordinator

Article VIII. Program Attendance & Class Policies

Due to the complex nature of the Surgical Technology program, students are required to attend all scheduled classes. If a student misses a class, they are responsible for catching up on any content missed.

Students must provide proper documentation for the reason for each absence to the Director's Assistant within 48 hours. The documentation will be reviewed, then the student and instructors will be notified if the documentation qualifies for an excused absence. Without proper documentation, the absence will be considered unexcused, and this may affect disciplinary actions or grades.

Please view the [SU Student General Policies](#) to see what qualifies as an excused absence.

Laboratory competencies are a crucial part of the curriculum. If a student misses a laboratory competency due to an absence, they must make it up during scheduled tutoring hours.

Section 8.01 Core Class Attendance Policy

Your program has designated core classes for all students enrolled in the program. These classes contain some of the more critical technical training, and theory students will receive. These designated core classes will have additional attendance policies to ensure students are prepared for their careers.

Students are only allowed 2 absences in core classes, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. On the third absence (*excused or unexcused*), the student is dropped from the core class only. On the third absence, the student will be automatically removed from the core class and will receive an F grade for the course. When a student is dropped for any reason, it is equivalent to failure of the course, resulting in an "F" on their transcript and potentially incurring additional tuition charges.

Students who do not successfully pass a core course will be automatically dropped from the Surgical Technology Program and must go through the readmission process if they wish to return. Any failed core course, whether due to low grades or attendance issues, must be repeated and passed upon readmission. Approval for readmission is not automatic and will depend on program capacity and administrative approval.

The following are the Core Classes that apply to this attendance policy:

SURG 100	SURG 101	SURG 102	SURG 200
SURG 201	SURG 202	SURG 203	SURG 210
EX-ST 101	EX-ST 102	EX-ST 103	

Section 8.02 Tardiness & Early Departure Policy

Arriving late to class or leaving early, whether for theory, laboratory instruction, or clinical settings, is disruptive and reduces the amount of time available for completing coursework. Coursework, such as exams, quizzes, and assignments, may be assigned at any time during class, and missing a portion of the class could affect your ability to complete it. It is up to the instructor to decide if a student who arrives late or leaves early can make up for the missed work, especially if a significant amount of coursework was missed.

In clinical settings, being late or leaving early makes it harder to achieve the necessary clinical competencies. Punctuality is a key part of professionalism in the healthcare field. Consistent tardiness or early departures could lead to perceptions of unreliability and lack of professionalism, which can impact your ability to succeed in the clinical environment and may affect your employability.

a) Tardiness

- Tardiness is defined as arriving 10 minutes or more after the scheduled start of class or clinical hours.
- If a student arrives 11 minutes or later after the scheduled start time, they will be considered absent. No exceptions will be made.

Instructors have the discretion to deny entry to tardy students and may refuse to allow them to make up any missed work. Students who are denied entry will be marked as absent from the class.

b) Leaving Early

- Leaving early is defined as leaving before the scheduled end time of class or clinical hours without prior approval from your instructor or clinical coordinator.

Students must remain for the entire class or clinical session unless given explicit permission to leave early.

**Employment is not a legitimate reason and or excuse for absence, tardiness, or leaving before scheduled end class time/scheduled clinical hours end time. **

Article IX. Academic and Clinical Progression Standards

Students are expected to meet the following standards due to the sensitive nature of the field and the competitive workforce:

- Students may only reenroll and attempt completion of the Surgical Technology Program only twice. Students will **not** be readmitted for a third time if they are not successful in completing the program in the first two attempts.
- Any grade below 75% (0-74%) is an “F” in core curriculum courses.
- Students who fail two core curriculum courses will be dropped from the Surgical Technology Program.
- If readmitted, students will re-enter the program only if space is available.
- To progress through core curriculum courses, students must maintain a final course grade of 75% or higher in each ST course.
- Students must score at least 70% on the Surgical Technology Proficiency Exit Exam (EPST 100) to pass.
- Passing the Tech in Surgery TS-C (NCCT) certification exam is required to pass EPST 100.
- Students must complete 125 surgical procedures while meeting all NCCT and NBSTSA clinical case log standards.

Section 9.01 Grading

Grading scales can be located on the course syllabus made available to students via SU Learning. Each student must review the course syllabus to know each class's course details and grading scale. The course syllabus will also detail additional criteria needed to pass the class.

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY PRE-CORE & CORE CURRICULUM GRADING SCALE:

Grading Scale	
A	90 – 100%
B	80 – 89%
C	75 – 79%
F	Below 75%

Foundational Competency Performance Assessments – Laboratory Grading

Laboratory Competencies

Purpose: Demonstrate safe, proficient performance of all skills taught in the course to ensure readiness for competent clinical practice.

- Grading: Pass/Fail (Pass or Needs Review)
- Completion Requirement: All assigned competencies must be passed to advance to the next lab course or clinical externship. Failure to pass blocks course progression.
- Retake Policy: Any failed or incomplete competency must be retaken until passed.

- Retake Penalty: 10 points deducted from the final course grade for each attempt after the first.
- Rubrics: Provided in advance for all competencies.

Laboratory Practicum (Core Course Capstone)

Purpose: Integrate and apply skills from this course and all prior lab courses to confirm readiness for professional practice.

- Grading: Pass/Fail only
- First attempt: Pass = 100% | Fail = 0%
- Second attempt: Pass = 75% (maximum) | Fail = 0%
- Attempts: Maximum of two (2). The final attempt determines course pass/fail.
- Completion Requirement: All practicums must be passed to advance. Failure to pass results in:
- F in the lab course
- Immediate drop from the program due to inability to progress in the curriculum
- Recording Policy: All practicum exams are video-recorded for grading and self-assessment. Students may request a copy from the instructor.
- Rubrics: Provided in advance for full transparency of expectations.

Section 9.02 Core Curriculum Failure

Students who fail a core course will be dropped from the Surgical Technology Program and must follow the readmission process if they wish to re-enroll. Any core course failed due to poor grades or attendance must be retaken and successfully passed upon readmission. Readmission is not guaranteed and is subject to program capacity and approval. Students are encouraged to seek academic support and utilize available resources to improve their chances of success in future attempts.

Article X. Readmission

Section 10.01 Program Readmission

Any student who wishes to re-admit following any interruption in enrollment must complete the admission process again before starting the program. All students applying for readmission following a drop or withdrawal must prove they can pay for tuition and other related charges (financial aid or payment plan). Additional readmission wait times may be applicable based on financial aid policies or when courses are offered.

If a student wishes to be readmitted, they must submit a Petition for Readmission form to the program director before the start of the term they wish to rejoin. Readmission is at the discretion of the program director. Students are allowed two chances to successfully complete the program. A student can only be readmitted to the program once through a petition. If the student drops out, is dismissed, or fails to maintain good academic standing after readmission, they will not be allowed to rejoin the program. To qualify for transfer credit evaluation, students have until the day before the first day of their first term to submit their transcripts.

Section 10.02 Classes to Re-take

If re-enrollment occurs within 12 months, the student is eligible to return to the program at the point where they left off given that there is space available. If re-enrollment occurs after 12 months of their initial drop/withdraw date, additional restrictions apply to ensure that the student remain proficient in essential career-specific theories, knowledge, practices, and techniques. Please see section 10.02 (a).

**Please see Clinical Externship Reenrollment Requirements for additional restrictions for returning from externship.*

a) Course Retake Requirements and Restrictions

Restrictions for students returning after 12 months:

If a student is readmitted into the program after 12 months from their initial drop/withdraw date, they must retake the course they last completed, along with the necessary pre-requisite courses before continuing the program.

Please refer to the table below for the list of courses along with their pre-requisite:

Course	Pre-Requisite Courses
SURG 100	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102
SURG 101	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 200, SURG 202, SURG 201, SURG 100
SURG 102	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 203, SURG 101, SURG 202, SURG 200, SURG 201, SURG 100
SURG 200	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 201, SURG 100
SURG 201	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102
SURG 202	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 100, SURG 201
SURG 203	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 202, SURG 200, SURG 201, SURG 100
SURG 210	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 203, SURG 101, SURG 200, SURG 202, SURG 201, SURG 100
EPST 100	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 203, SURG 101, SURG 200, SURG 202, SURG 201, SURG 100, SURG 102, SURG 210
EX ST 101	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 203, SURG 101, SURG 200, SURG 202, SURG 201, SURG 100, SURG 102, SURG 210
EX ST 102	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 203, SURG 101, SURG 200, SURG 202, SURG 201, SURG 100, SURG 102, SURG 210, EX ST 101
EX ST 103	AP 102, MT 102, HP 101, MBIO 10, PH102, SURG 203, SURG 101, SURG 200, SURG 202, SURG 201, SURG 100, SURG 102, SURG 210, EX ST 101, EX ST 102

b) Program Pathway Course Retake

If a student is readmitted into the program after 12 months from their initial drop/withdraw date, they must also retake any courses that are typically taken alongside the course they are repeating in the standard program pathway.

Please refer to the table below for the list of courses that include a corresponding pathway course:

Course to Retake	Pathway Course Taking Alongside Course to Retake
MBIO 101	PH 102
PH 102	MBIO 101
SURG 100	SURG 201
SURG 101	SURG 203
SURG 102	SURG 210
SURG 200	SURG 202
SURG 201	SURG 101
SURG 202	SURG 200
SURG 203	SURG 101
SURG 210	SURG 102
EPST 100	EX ST 103
EX ST 101	N/A
EX ST 102	N/A
EX ST 103	EPST 100

c) Retaking Courses Due to Low Grades

Additionally, a student readmitted into the program will be required to retake any courses previously taken at Southwest University that they did not pass with a “C” or higher. Any class with a grade of “D” or lower will be required to be retaken.

d) Clinical Externship Reenrollment Requirements

If a student failed, withdrew, or was dropped at any point during clinical externship (EX ST 101, EX ST 102, or EX ST 103) and is granted a second opportunity for readmission within a 12-month period from their initial drop/withdraw date, they must first retake and pass SURG 210 before being allowed to continue with their clinical externship courses. Retaking and passing SURG 210 ensures the student meets the necessary safety standards for patient care.

Student must also restart and complete all clinical externship courses (EX ST 101, EX ST 102, and EX ST 103) from the beginning regardless of where the student left off or their previous grades in externship courses. Any previously completed clinical case logs, operative procedures, or externship competencies from prior enrollment will be considered invalid and must be redone during the second enrollment.

Article XI. Code of Conduct

Section 11.01 Dismissal from Program

Students may be dismissed from the program for severe or repeated violations of program policies, university policies, and procedures. This includes but is not limited to, violations related to attendance, academic standing, professional conduct, and adherence to clinical site requirements. Disciplinary actions may be taken for unprofessional behavior, failure to meet academic standards, excessive absences, tardiness, or failure to follow clinical placement guidelines. Any violations of these policies may lead to dismissal from the Surgical Technology Program, as determined by the program director and university administration. Students are expected to maintain a high standard of professionalism and comply with all rules and expectations to remain in the program.

Section 11.02 Use of Electronics Policy

a) Cellphones, Headphones/Earbuds, Smart/AI Glasses & Smart Watches

All personal electronic devices must be powered off and not on your person during class, laboratory, and clinical externship sessions. This includes:

- Cell phones
- Headphones and earbuds
- Smart/AI glasses
- Smart watches

Exception for smart/AI glasses used for vision correction or eye protection: You may wear them only if medically necessary, but they must remain completely powered off. The following actions are strictly prohibited at all times in class, lab, or clinical settings:

- Recording audio or video
- Taking photographs
- Connecting or communicating with any other device
- Any other smart/AI functionality

b) Use of laptop and/or tablet/iPad

If it is determined that the use of laptops and or tablets/iPads is needed during classroom or laboratory time, the laptop and or tablet/iPad must be used ONLY to access student university email via Outlook, SU Learning, and the courses and course material/assignments therein. Use of the Internet for research for classroom or laboratory purposes will be allowed ONLY if given express permission or at the discretion of the instructor, lab manager, and program director.

Section 11.03 Dress Code Policy

At all scheduled educational time and settings (classroom, laboratory, and clinical) must be attended in full dress uniform, and if effective, the first day of term 5 of program curriculum.

Full dress uniform includes:

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- Students are required to solely wear university sold black scrub suits and black jackets, with all the required patches that are issued out by Southwest University. Scrub suits, and jackets must be clean, laundered and pressed. Scrub suit must not be tight fitting, show cleavage, be altered to have accessories that dangle or can be a source of an infection control hazard, or be considered unprofessional in any way.
- You will be required to wear complete operating room attire, including scrub suits, while in the laboratory and clinical setting
- University-provided identification badge must be worn and visible at all times.
- Hair should be neat, clean, and worn appropriately. Men and women with hair length below the neck shall have hair pulled back off the face and tied securely.
- Facial hair is prohibited. A student's face must be clean-shaven to not interfere with the protection of the surgical mask or respirator.
- Extreme hair styles and/or non-natural/fantasy colors, including sprayed coloring, gel coloring, or powder coloring are prohibited.
- Natural fingernails must be short (less than one quarter inch) and clean.
- No artificial nails, nail tips, nail extenders, and nail jewelry or polish of any kind.
- All types of jewelry are prohibited. Jewelry must be removed, including but not limited to facial, oral, and dermal piercings. Gauge holes must be filled with a flesh-colored, or clear plug. Piercings or jewelry contained within the scrub suit is allowed.
- Closed-toe and closed-heel shoes (no open toes, open heels, sandals, flip-flops, slippers, Crocs with holes/vents, mesh panels, or similar)
 - Made of non-porous, impermeable material that is protective (no holes, vents, mesh, or fabric that cannot be fully sanitized)
 - Clean, in good repair, and easily sanitizable with standard disinfectants
 - Comfortable and appropriate for prolonged standing and clinical/lab work
 - Non-slip with a safe, slip-resistant sole (no smooth leather soles or known slipping hazards)

Acceptable examples (not an exhaustive list):

- Solid leather, vinyl, or synthetic leather athletic/training shoes that meet the above criteria
- Dedicated medical/nursing/healthcare clogs or shoes designed for clinical environments that meet the above criteria
- Other professional healthcare footwear that fully covers the foot and can be thoroughly sanitized, and meets the above criteria
- Students must be free of any non-natural item on face, ears, neck, hands, or arms.
- Cosmetics compose hazards during the classroom, laboratory and clinical settings.
- Cosmetic products (liquid or powder foundation, non-natural items) of any kind, including tinted moisturizer is prohibited. Only un-tinted, glitter free lip balm is permitted for moisturization of the lips, this would include pimple patches or facial wound aids.
- Enhancement of any type to natural eyelashes (such as mascara, false eyelashes, extensions, etc.) is prohibited.
- Tattoos/Body Art: Tattoos must not be offensive in nature based on racial, sexual, religious, ethnic, or other characteristics or attributes of a sensitive or legal protected nature.

- Extreme Body Modification/Body Altering Subdermal Implants are not commonplace in a professional or healthcare environment and are prohibited.
- University purchased scrub suit and scrub jackets cost is not part of student tuition.

Non-Compliance with any part of the “Professional Appearance (Dress Code) Policy” may lead to disciplinary action, and or dismissal from class, or laboratory class, with no possibility of making up FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS, or class assignments or quizzes. The student must remedy the noncompliance, in order to return to class, or laboratory.

Section 11.04 Personal Hygiene

- Students must bathe, apply deodorant, and effectively brush teeth to minimize body odor, and bacteria that can lead to infections.
- Use of perfume/cologne/oil, scented body sprays, and scented lotions is prohibited.

Section 11.05 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Surgical Attire for laboratory, restricted and unrestricted clinical areas

The laboratory setting is intended to mimic clinical restricted and unrestricted areas, and surgical suites thus Southwest University’s Surgical Technology Program will uphold and adhere to all guidelines for personal protective equipment (PPE) and surgical attire for clinical restricted and unrestricted clinical areas, in the laboratory setting as well, and clinical externship.

Section 11.06 Practicing Professionalism

- Students are required to dress in a professional manner while representing SU’s Surgical Technology program.
- No smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages in uniform.
- Students should be free from the odor of smoke or other offensive odors.

Section 11.07 Community Outreach and Service

As future healthcare providers, students in the Surgical Technology Program are expected to embody compassion, leadership, and service. These qualities are essential in delivering quality care and supporting the well-being of patients and communities. To cultivate, understand, and practice these skills, students will participate in community outreach through service activities, to reach a cohort established goal. Community service will be integrated and tracked throughout the program, beginning with the transition to core courses and continuing through the final clinical externship course. The Program Director will monitor students' progress toward achieving service goals. This initiative aims to reinforce the values essential for becoming an effective healthcare professional while making a positive impact in the community.

Article XI. Closing

In conclusion, this orientation handbook serves as a valuable resource for our new surgical technology team members. We hope that the information provided within these pages has equipped you with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in your role. Remember that as

you embark on this rewarding journey in the world of surgical technology, continuous learning, adaptability, and teamwork are key. Welcome to the dynamic and fulfilling field of surgical technology, and we wish you a successful and fulfilling career ahead!

This Handbook may be amended at the discretion of the Surgical Technology Program Director or Southwest University. Students will be provided with written electronic and/or hardcopy notification of any changes, and the amended version of the Handbook.

***Note:** Failure to return the signed or failure to sign the “Acceptance of Responsibility Form” does not exclude student from adhering to the policies and procedures set forth in this Handbook, throughout the student’s enrollment in the program. All policies and procedures set forth in the Handbook will stand with or without the student’s signature of the “Acceptance of Responsibility Form”.*

Notice of Non-Discrimination: Southwest University does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status.

Questions Regarding Policy: If you have questions regarding any of the policies applicable to students at Southwest University, they can be directed to your Program Director. Please contact your Program Director via email with your student information and any questions you may have.

NOTE: All students should be familiar and responsible for the contents of this handbook, just as they are familiar and responsible for compliance with all SU General Policies, and SU Student Handbook Policies. The university reserves the right to change any policy at any time.

Article XI. AAS Surgical Technology Program Student Handbook
Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the *AAS Surgical Technology Program Student Handbook*.

I recognize that this handbook contains essential information regarding the program's policies, rules, and expectations, and I agree to adhere to the guidelines outlined within it. I also understand that failure to comply with these policies may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to dismissal from the program and/or the university.

I accept responsibility for seeking clarification from school administrators or faculty members if I have any questions regarding the content of the handbook.

Student Name (PRINTED): _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____