



# SURGICAL ASSISTANT – CERTIFIED (SA-C) HANDBOOK

August 2024

35+ Years of Excellence to the Surgical Community

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The policies and procedures specified in this Handbook are subject to change. The current Handbook will always be available for download from the ABSA website.

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## Introduction

The SA-C Handbook provides information essential to the certification process from application, through examination and recertification.

### History

The American Board of Surgical Assistants was founded December 30, 1987 in the State of Colorado as a Non-Profit Organization. On October 1, 1998, the American Board of Surgical Assistants was administratively dissolved by the Colorado Secretary of State's Office due to nonreceipt of the two-year corporate report. On January 27, 2000, the American Board of Surgical Assistants was reincorporated as a privately held corporation under the name ABSA, Ltd.

On September 24, 2003, the American Board of Surgical Assistants, operating under the name ABSA, Ltd. was renamed American Board of Surgical Assistants, Inc. The American Board of Surgical Assistants, Inc., Colorado Secretary of State ID Number 20001018434, is still operated as a privately held corporation, functioning as a national surgical assistant credentialing organization.

### Mission

As a leading provider of surgical assistant examination and credentialing, the ABSA strives to develop and maintain quality standards for the surgical assistant, thereby promoting safety and protection of the public. These standards include furtherment of knowledge, education, and ethical conduct of the surgical assistant, through the continuation of the credentialing process and the promotion of pre and post educational training.

The ABSA shall not discriminate, at any time, among applicants as to age, sex, race, religion, national origin, handicap, marital or other protected status.

### Certification Council Scope

The ABSA Board of Directors is responsible for the business and affairs of the Corporation as established by the bylaws. The ABSA is solely responsible for essential decisions related to the development, administration/delivery, and ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the certification program. The ABSA is responsible for implementing policies and procedures for the certification program and overseeing the development of the certification examination.

### What is surgical assisting?

Surgical Assisting involves active participation of a trained individual who is capable and able to assist the surgeon in completing a surgical procedure safely and expeditiously. A surgical assistant functions in the role of a second physician, at the operating table. Ideally, this individual should be another qualified surgeon or surgical resident; however, other licensed physicians experienced in surgical assisting would be the next choice. Non-licensed physicians or non-physicians with additional formal training and national certification as a surgical assistant are also acceptable, as deemed appropriate by the primary responsible surgeon, for the type and complexity of the surgical procedure.

## First & Second Assistant Roles, as defined by the ABSA

The American Board of Surgical Assistants defines First and Second Assistants as follows:

### First Assistant

The first assistant on a surgical procedure is defined as the individual providing primary assistance to the primary (main) surgeon, during a surgical procedure. This individual CANNOT be involved in any other role or function, during the surgical procedure (i.e., first or second scrub and/or passing instruments). This individual must also be listed on the operative record as the first assistant, not as a first or second scrub.

Although descriptions may vary from institution to institution, the role of the first assistant requires active participation during the surgical procedure. This involves providing exposure, hemostasis, tying or sewing plus other functions (excluding acting as the scrub nurse or technician) as determined by the primary surgeon responsible for the patient and procedure.

An individual may not act as a first assistant, for example, on a simple hernia repair or similar case with only themselves and the surgeon. This is a surgeon/scrub role and not a surgeon/assistant role.

### Second Assistant

This individual is not the primary assistant to the primary surgeon and is hereby defined and designated as a retractor holder. An assistant as defined under this section does not qualify as a first assistant.

## United States Department of Labor Standard Occupational Classification

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Standard Occupational Classification (2018)

### 29-9093 Surgical Assistants

Assist in operations, under the supervision of surgeons. May, in accordance with state laws, help surgeons to make incisions and close surgical sites, manipulate or remove tissues, implant surgical devices or drains, suction the surgical site, place catheters, clamp or cauterize vessels or tissue, and apply dressings to surgical site. Excludes "Registered Nurses" (29-1141) and "Surgical Technologists" (29-2055).

## About the Surgical Assistant Certification

### Purpose: Surgical Assistant – Certified (SA-C)

The primary purpose of the American Board of Surgical Assistants is to protect the public through the establishment and maintenance of standards for the Surgical Assistant–Certified (SA-C) certification program. The role and function of a surgical assistant is to assist the surgeon in the performance of a surgical procedure. The ABSA has established certification requirements for surgical assistants practicing in the United States or its territories.

SA-C professionals typically practice in acute care facilities, such as medical centers, hospitals, and surgicenters.

Individuals who earn the SA-C credential have demonstrated advanced specialty knowledge of the professional domains that encompass the tasks and knowledge required of a surgical assistant working under the guidance of a surgeon.

Certification as a surgical assistant through the ABSA (SA-C) does not allow for independent performance of any medical or surgical procedures. Certification as a surgical assistant is not intended to define requirements for employment or scope of practice, nor does it restrict who may or may not function as a surgical assistant. Certification does not guarantee employment, nor does it relieve an employer from determining the background or professional responsibilities of the assistant.

The ABSA and its officers neither endorse nor reject any scope of practice established by any physician, hospital, or medical facility. Each SA-C must abide by the rules and regulations established for their scope of practice.

## Certification

Professional certification is a process by which an entity grants formal recognition to individuals that meet predetermined, standardized criteria. The certification process involves the determination of eligibility, an assessment of demonstration of competence, and requirements for regular recertification. Certification is usually voluntary and established by a non-governmental entity. The ABSA SA-C is a professional certification.

## Eligibility

ABSA has developed eligibility requirements to ensure that the certification application process is fair and impartial. Membership in any organization is not a prerequisite for the SA-C certification program.

## Eligibility Requirements

All individuals who seek certification must meet the established eligibility requirements. Professionals may apply for certification through one of three pathways, dependent on their professional discipline.

### **Physician Discipline (Medical Doctor, Dentist) Pathway**

1. **Education:** Completion of a medical program either in the United States or internationally recognized by the International Medical Education Directory (IMED).
2. **Experience:** Completion of residency or advanced training (e.g., surgical rotation) plus a minimum of two (2) years of primary or advanced surgical experience.

### **Licensed & Non-Licensed Allied Health Professionals (Physician Assistant, Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Surgical Technologist, and Surgical Assistant) Pathway**

1. **Education:** Completion of a formal surgical assistant training program that meets the published criteria established by the ABSA (see a-k below). Surgical Technology Programs do not qualify.
  - a. General Surgical procedures and anatomy
  - b. Gynecological surgical procedures and anatomy
  - c. Orthopedic surgical procedures and anatomy
  - d. Neurological surgical procedures and anatomy
  - e. Cardiothoracic surgical procedures and anatomy
  - f. Surgical Pharmacology and Anesthesia
  - g. Medical Terminology
  - h. Surgical Interpersonal Interactions



- i. Wound Healing and Infection Control
- j. Surgical Assisting Skills, Principals, and Technique
- k. First Assisting Clinical Case requirements
  - i. 50 Major, General cases
  - ii. 25 Major, Gynecological cases
  - iii. 25 Major, Orthopedic cases
  - iv. 35 Miscellaneous cases

A list of training programs ABSA has found to meet the published criteria is available on the ABSA website; however, the list is not intended to be all-inclusive, and candidates may submit training programs for review against the established criteria by contacting [office@absa.net](mailto:office@absa.net). ABSA does not recommend or endorse surgical assistant training programs.

2. **Experience:** Completion of a minimum of two (2) years of clinical surgical scrub experience.
3. **Manual Skills Assessment:** Satisfactory completion of an evaluation by a licensed surgeon who evaluates the applicant's ability to perform tying and suturing competently and smoothly.
  - a. Surgeons will indicate "Satisfactory" or "Non-Satisfactory" on the evaluation. Of the 10 skills listed on the Manual Skills Evaluation, a surgeon must indicate that the applicant has completed at least 7 satisfactorily.
  - b. Surgeons may allow the applicant two attempts to satisfactorily demonstrate each skill. Individual skills may be demonstrated in multiple procedures.
  - c. Surgeons must complete the evaluation following the instructions listed in the form available on the ABSA website. Incorrectly completed forms will not be accepted.

#### **Certified Surgical Assistant Pathway**

1. **Surgical Assistant certification:** hold an active certification in surgical assisting offered by another entity.
2. **Experience:** Completion of a minimum of two (2) years of clinical surgical scrub experience.
3. **Manual Skills Assessment:** Satisfactory completion of an evaluation by a surgeon who evaluates the applicant's ability to perform tying and suturing competently and smoothly. Guidelines for satisfactory completion of the skills assessment are detailed in the previous pathway.

#### **All Applicants**

1. **Code of Ethics and Application Accuracy Attestation and Application Acknowledgements:** Applicants must attest to comply with the ABSA Code of Ethics. Applicants and certificants must abide to practice surgical assisting in a manner consistent with the certification standards and responsibilities set forth in the ABSA Code of Ethics. Applicants must attest to the accuracy of information reported within the application. Applicants attest to the accuracy of the information submitted and agreement to adhere to certification program policies.
2. **Examination:** Passing score on the SA-C examination.

## Eligibility Rationale

Each eligibility requirement has been established to ensure that certified individuals have an acceptable level of knowledge, as evidenced by the examination and education requirements, and skill, as evidenced by the experience requirement, needed to provide advanced specialty services of surgical assisting.

A rationale for each eligibility requirement has been established as follows.

### **Physician Discipline (Medical Doctor, Dentist) Pathway**

1. **Education:** The level of education required for the physician pathway is consistent with the level of education required to practice as a medical doctor or dentist providing surgical services, which ensures that applicants have training that is specific to surgical assisting and the SA-C examination content.
2. **Experience:** The two (2) year experience requirement is necessary to ensure that applicants have adequate work experience and to give applicants a reasonable base from which they should be able to pass the SA-C exam.

### **Licensed & Non-Licensed Allied Health Professionals (Physician Assistant, Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Surgical Technologist, and Surgical Assistant) Pathway**

1. **Education:** The formal surgical assistant training program requirement ensures that applicants have training that is specific to surgical assisting and the SA-C examination content.
2. **Experience:** The two (2) year experience requirement is necessary to ensure that applicants have adequate work experience and to give applicants a reasonable base from which they should be able to pass the SA-C exam.
3. **Manual Skills Assessment:** Sewing and tying skills are part of a surgical assistant's requisites while working in the operating theater.

### **Certified Surgical Assistant Pathway**

1. **Certification:** The current surgical assistant certification is documentation that the applicant has completed a training program and passed another surgical assistant board ensuring that applicants have training that is specific to surgical assisting and the SA-C examination content.
2. **Experience:** The two (2) year experience requirement is necessary to ensure that applicants have adequate work experience and to give applicants a reasonable base from which they should be able to pass the SA-C exam.
3. **Manual Skills Assessment:** Sewing and tying skills are part of a surgical assistant's requirements while working in the operating theater.

### **All Applicants**

1. **Code of Ethics and Application Accuracy Attestation and Application Acknowledgements:** The requirement for adherence to the Code of Ethics provides increased awareness of expected ethical behaviors as well as increased public protection through a process that provides a reporting and investigation mechanism for Code of Ethics violations. Applicants attest to the accuracy of the information submitted and agreement to adhere to certification program policies.
2. **Examination:** Applicants are required to pass the SA-C examination to demonstrate that their education, experience, and training have resulted in sufficient understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to provide safe and competent evidence-based surgical assisting services as determined by the job analysis studies and represented on the examination content outline.

## Eligibility Verification

Only complete certification applications will be accepted. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant who may address the deficiencies and resubmit the application for review, adhering to established application deadlines.

Verification of each eligibility component will be conducted by certification staff as follows to ensure applicants have successfully satisfied each requirement:

### **Physician Discipline (Medical Doctor, Dentist) Pathway**

1. **Education:** Applicants will submit a copy of their diploma. The medical school will be verified against the IMED.
2. **Experience:** Applicants will submit a copy of their resume. The resume will be verified for applicable work experience.

### **Licensed & Non-Licensed Allied Health Professionals (Physician Assistant, Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Surgical Technologist, and Surgical Assistant) Pathway**

1. **Education:** Applicants will submit a certificate of completion verifying satisfactory completion of the surgical assisting training program. ABSA will verify the program meets the determined criteria by reviewing the program website or other publicly available materials. If needed and requested by ABSA, applicants may be required to submit a program agenda or outline to assist in this verification process.
2. **Experience:** Applicants will submit a copy of their resume. The resume will be verified for applicable work experience.
3. **Manual Skills Assessment:** If seven of the ten skills are marked “satisfactory” the evaluation is accepted. The surgeon is instructed to allow the applicant two attempts for each skill. If a minimum of seven skills are not marked “satisfactory,” the application is not approved.

### **Certification Pathway**

1. **Certification:** Applicants will submit a copy of their current certification (i.e., certificate).
2. **Experience:** Applicants will submit a copy of their resume. The resume will be verified for applicable work experience.
3. **Manual Skills Assessment:** If seven of the ten skills are marked “satisfactory” the evaluation is accepted. The surgeon is instructed to allow the applicant two attempts for each skill. If a minimum of seven skills are not marked “satisfactory,” the application is not approved.

### **All Applicants**

1. **Code of Ethics and Application Accuracy Attestation and Application Acknowledgements:**  
System rules will ensure the completion of the required attestations and acknowledgments and will not allow submission of the application without completion of the attestation.

ABSA reserves the right to verify any information provided on the application and/or as part of the application process.

## Applying for the Examination

### Application Requirements

Before submitting an application, carefully review the information contained in this handbook. Taking the certification examination is voluntary. The ABSA strictly adheres to its eligibility requirements for certification. It is the responsibility of the applicant to comply with all policies and procedures regarding eligibility, the application, and corresponding deadlines.

The online application is available via the ABSA website and must be completed in its entirety. To apply for the SA-C program, the certification application, appropriate fee and required forms/documentation must be submitted electronically before the application will be reviewed and an eligibility decision rendered. **The application will NOT be received and cannot be reviewed by ABSA until all steps, including payment, are complete.** Only complete certification applications will be accepted.

The application attestations include the following information as well as additional acknowledgments:

#### **ABSA Statement on Personal and Professional Demographic Information**

The ABSA abides by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Demographic Privacy Laws. ABSA collects personal and professional demographic information to better serve the organization. (e.g., Professional photo, name, address, telephone numbers, date-of-birth etc.). These demographics are required in order to fully process your application. Individual personal demographic information is not distributed or disseminated, without your approval.

#### **Role and Function of a Surgical Assistant**

I acknowledge that the role and function of a surgical assistant is to assist the surgeon, in the performance of a surgical procedure. I understand and acknowledge that certification as a surgical assistant through the ABSA does not allow for any independent performance of any medical or surgical procedures, within the United States of America or its territories.

Please Note: Anyone found guilty of "Practicing Medicine Without a License," in the United States of America or its territories, either by court trial or plea agreement, will lose their certification and never be eligible to certify with the ABSA again.

#### **Code of Ethics**

Applicants and certificants must abide to practice surgical assisting in a manner consistent with the certification standards and responsibilities set forth in the ABSA Code of Ethics.

Once the application is approved, candidates will receive an approval email that includes the weblink to take the exam.

## Testing Accommodations for Candidates with Disabilities

ABSAs and its test administration vendor will provide reasonable and appropriate testing accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended for individuals with documented disabilities who request and demonstrate the need for accommodation as required by law.

ADA regulations define a person with a disability as someone with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. ABSAs requires documentation to validate the type and severity of a disability to enable accommodations to be specifically matched with the identified functional limitation, in order to provide equal access to exam functions for all examinees.

The information provided by candidates and any documentation regarding such disability and special accommodation will be treated with strict confidentiality and will not be shared with any source, except for ABSAs and its test administration vendor and proctors, without the candidate's express written permission.

Reasonable accommodations are decided based upon:

- the individual's specific request,
- the individual's specific disability,
- the healthcare provider's recommendation,
- documentation submitted,
- the appropriateness of the request.

Reasonable accommodations do not include steps that fundamentally alter the purpose or nature of the examination. Reasonable accommodations generally are provided for candidates who:

- have a physical or learning impairment that substantially limits that person in one or more major life activities (e.g. walking, talking, hearing, performing manual tasks)
- have a record of such physical or learning impairment
- have been documented as having a physical or learning impairment

Reasonable accommodations include:

- Screen Readers
- Enlarged font
- Medical devices in the testing room

Requests for accommodations are reviewed by ABSAs staff who work in partnership with the test administration vendor to ensure appropriate arrangements for all approved requests and to ensure the request can be processed without jeopardizing the integrity or security of the examination. Special accommodations must be requested in advance by submitting the Requests for Accommodations Form in this Handbook.

Request forms are due at least 45 days prior to the preferred examination date. ABSAs will communicate with the candidate regarding approval of the requested accommodation and scheduling a testing appointment to accommodate their needs accordingly.

## Eligibility Appeals

Applicants who are notified that they do not meet the eligibility requirements may appeal this decision by sending a written notice of the appeal to the ABSA COO within 30 days of communication of the adverse eligibility decision. The COO will forward the notice to the Board of Directors for review.

The Board will review the applicant’s information and will make a final decision regarding eligibility. No new or additional information may be submitted with the appeal request. The eligibility appeal will be reviewed within 45 days of receipt. Written notice of the final decision will be sent to the applicant within 30 days of the review.

The ABSA Board may appoint a sub-committee or appeal review committee for the purpose of reviewing eligibility appeals and making final determinations regarding eligibility appeals.

## Examination Dates, Deadlines, and Fees

### Application Deadline

Exam applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Complete initial certification applications with all required documentation and fees should be submitted at least seven (7) business days prior to the candidate’s desired testing date to allow time for application processing. Application deadlines are enforced to ensure adequate time to process applications.

Recertification application deadlines are described in the [Maintaining Your Certification](#) section of this Handbook.

### Certification Fees

Initial Certification	\$455
Initial Certification – Active Military and Veterans (must provide current orders or DD-214)	\$400
Retest Exam Attempt	\$275
Recertification by Professional Development and Experience	\$135
Recertification by Exam	\$275
Recertification – Active Military and Veterans (must provide current orders or DD-214)	No charge
Late Recertification	\$325
Reinstatement from Inactive Status	\$350
Reinstatement from Lapsed Status	\$455

### Other Fees

Optional 40-item Practice Exam	\$45 (discounted to \$30 for applicants)
Certificate Replacement	\$10
Lapel Pin	\$9

All fees are collected online via credit card. If you are unable to complete the online payment, please contact ABSA for further instructions.

## Refunds

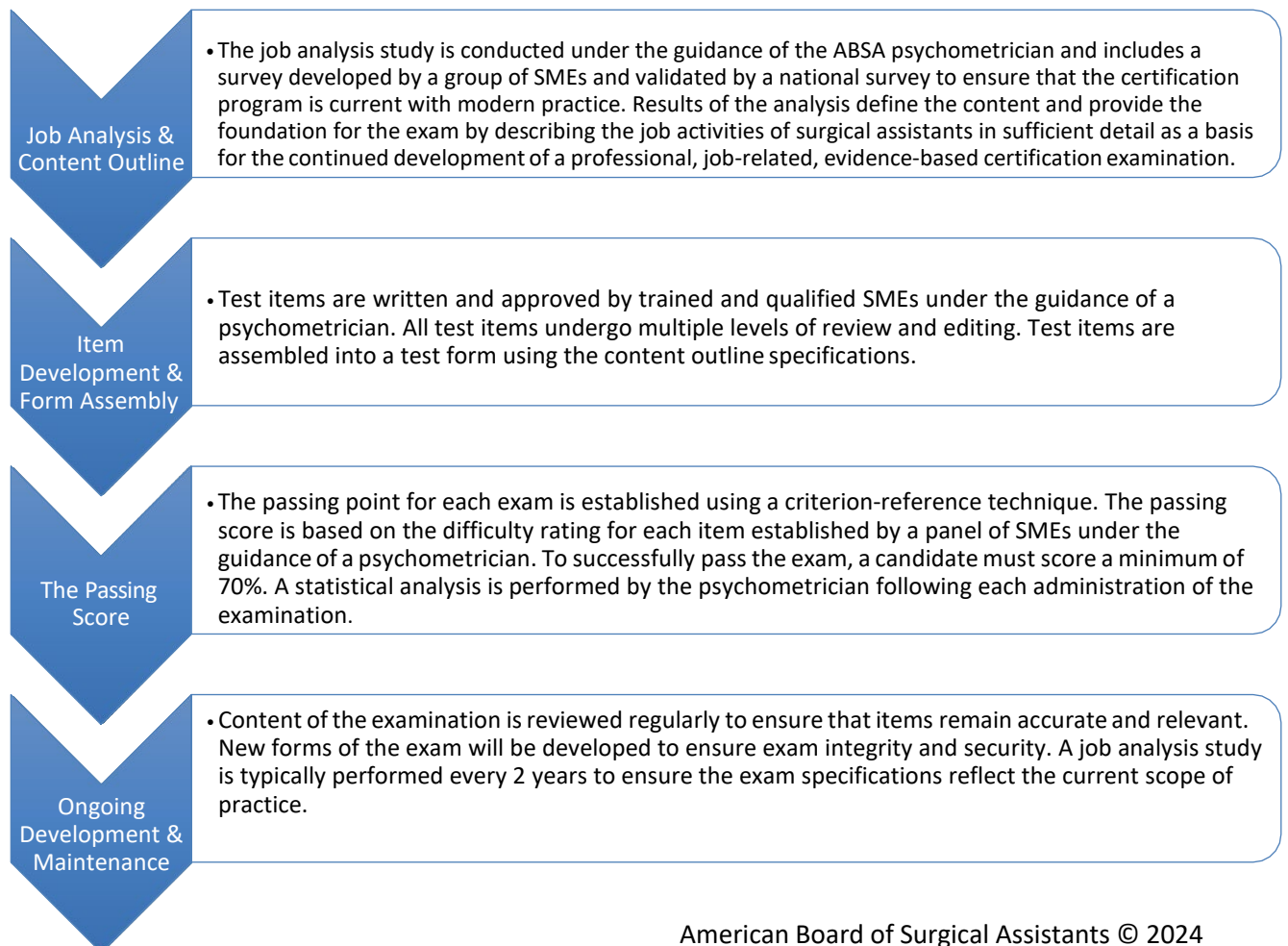
If an individual wishes to cancel an application for initial certification or retesting the request must be submitted in writing (via email) to ABSA. A \$100 administrative fee will apply. Refunds will be issued within six weeks. Refunds will not be issued once the individual has taken the exam for which he/she applied.

If an individual wishes to cancel a recertification application, the request must be submitted in writing (via email) to ABSA prior to awarding recertification. To reinstate the credential all application procedures and fees will apply.

## Preparing for the Examination

### How the Examination Is Developed

The ABSA participates in and provides oversight for the development and ongoing maintenance of the certification examination(s). The Board of Directors and COO work in partnership with the ABSA psychometrician to ensure the examination is developed and maintained in a manner consistent with generally accepted psychometric, education testing practices, and national accreditation standards for certification programs. The Board of Directors selects diverse groups of qualified subject matter experts (SMEs) to participate in exam development activities throughout the exam development process.



## Examination Content

The SA-C examination consists of 150 questions, of which 140 are scored items and 10 are pretest items that do not count toward the candidate's score. Candidates will have three (3) hours to complete the computer-based examination. Examination questions are single-select, multiple-choice with four options. The exam covers the topic areas detailed in the content outline. All exam content is developed based on practice in the United States. The SA-C exam is offered only in English.

## Examination Content Rationale

Multiple-choice test items are an effective tool for assessing factual recall, understanding levels, and the application of educational learning, particularly in analyzing and evaluating. They are less prone to guessing than true/false questions, thereby making them a more dependable method of assessment. The reliability of these items is further improved when the number of multiple-choice questions related to a specific learning objective is increased.

Candidates have three (3) hours to complete the computer-based examination. To calculate the time available per question, divide the remaining time by the number of questions. (For example, according to industry standards, if there are 150 questions, this would result in approximately 1½ minutes per question).

An overlap of questions on each exam form is a result of the importance of the content and the inclusion of additional questions designed to assess knowledge across each domain sub-section.

The ABSA's role is in developing and administering certification examinations to determine the qualifications of candidates for certification. The ABSA does not require, provide, accredit, or endorse any specific study guides, training or review courses, or other examination preparation products, for the SA-C Certification Examination. The ABSA Board, certification staff, and certification SMEs do not have involvement in the creation, accreditation, approval, endorsement, or delivery of examination review courses, preparatory materials, educational programs, or training programs/products that prepare candidates for the SA-C certification examination.



SA-C Exam Content Outline

Candidates are encouraged to review the SA-C content outline in preparation for the examination.

SA-C Examination Content Domain	Weight
<b>01 Perioperative</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>01.01 Preoperative</b>	4%
<b>01.02 Operative</b>	<b>43%</b>
01.02.1 General Surgery	11%
01.02.02 Orthopedic Surgery	8%
01.02.03 Plastic/Reconstructive Surgery	8%
01.02.4 Gynecological Surgery	8%
01.02.5 Varied other Surgical Specialties	8%
<b>01.03 Postoperative</b>	3%
<b>02 General Surgical and Medical Knowledge</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>02.01 Asepsis</b>	3%
<b>02.02 Surgical Anatomy</b>	13%
<b>02.03 Terminology</b>	6%
<b>02.04 Basic Life Support (BLS)</b>	3%
<b>02.05 Surgical Instrumentation &amp; Equipment</b>	4%
<b>02.06 General Medical Knowledge</b>	10%
<b>03 Professional Practice Knowledge</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>03.01 Patient Safety/Risk Management/Emergency Protocols</b>	4%
<b>03.02 Code of Ethics/Scope of Practice</b>	4%
<b>03.03 OSHA/HIPAA</b>	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150 items</b>

<b>01 Perioperative 50%</b>
<b>01.01 Preoperative 4%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chart Review</li> <li>• Patient Consent</li> <li>• Regional Anesthesia</li> </ul>
<b>01.02 Operative 43%</b>
<b>01.02.01 General Surgery 11%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgical Anatomy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Abdomen</li> <li>○ Esophago-gastrointestinal Tract</li> <li>○ Gallbladder</li> <li>○ Thyroid</li> <li>○ Liver</li> <li>○ Spleen</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Radiological studies</li> <li>• Surgical Considerations</li> <li>• Blood Supply to the Gut</li> <li>• Surgical Procedures             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cholecystectomy</li> <li>○ Colectomy</li> <li>○ Gastrectomy</li> <li>○ Appendectomy</li> <li>○ Thyroidectomy</li> <li>○ Hernia Repairs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Surgical &amp; Procedural Terminology</li> </ul>
<b>01.02.02 Orthopedic Surgery 8%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgical Anatomy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Superior Extremities</li> <li>○ Inferior Extremities</li> <li>○ Rotator Cuff</li> <li>○ Fractures</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Radiological studies</li> <li>• Surgical Procedures             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total Hip Replacement</li> <li>○ Total Knee Replacement</li> <li>○ ACL Reconstruction</li> <li>○ Cast Applications</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Surgical &amp; Procedural Terminology</li> </ul>
<b>01.02.03 Plastic Reconstructive Surgery 8%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgical Anatomy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Head and neck</li> <li>○ Skin grafts &amp; flaps</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Surgical Procedures             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mesh grafting</li> <li>○ Facial suturing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgical &amp; Procedural Terminology</li> </ul>
<p><b>01.02.04 Gynecological Surgery 8%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgical Anatomy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Uterus &amp; Adnexa</li> <li>○ Placenta</li> <li>○ Vagina</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Surgical procedures             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hysterectomies</li> <li>○ Tubal's</li> <li>○ Caesarean Section</li> <li>○ Anterior &amp; Posterior Repairs of Vagina</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Surgical &amp; Procedural Terminology</li> </ul>
<p><b>01.02.05 Varied Other Surgical Specialties 8%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urological Surgery             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Surgical Anatomy                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kidneys and ureters</li> <li>• Bladder and urethra</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Surgical Procedures                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nephrectomy</li> <li>▪ Bladder suspension</li> <li>▪ Renal transplantation</li> <li>▪ Vasectomy</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Surgical &amp; Procedural Terminology</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cardio-Thoracic Surgery             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Surgical Anatomy                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heart</li> <li>• Great vessels</li> <li>• Coronary arteries</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Surgical Procedures                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CABG</li> <li>• Vascular harvesting</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Radiological Studies</li> <li>○ Surgical &amp; Procedural Terminology</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neurological Surgery             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Surgical Anatomy                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cervical nerves</li> <li>• Brachial plexus</li> <li>• Vertebral bodies</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Surgical Procedures                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lumbar Laminectomy</li> <li>• Cervical Laminectomy</li> <li>• Cervical Plating</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Radiological Studies</li> <li>○ Surgical &amp; Procedural Terminology</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Robotic Surgery             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Types of surgical robots</li> <li>○ Setup &amp; Draping</li> <li>○ Positioning of robotic arms</li> <li>○ Robotic limb movements</li> <li>○ Robotic Instrumentation</li> <li>○ Complications</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Surgical &amp; Procedural Terminology</li> </ul>
<b>01.03 Postoperative 3%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phases of wound healing</li> <li>• Immediate postop complications</li> </ul>

<b>02 General Surgical and Medical Knowledge</b>
<b>02.01 Asepsis 3%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of sterilization &amp; disinfection                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High speed steam sterilizer</li> <li>○ Ethelene oxide</li> <li>○ Chemical</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Hand washing and surgical scrub</li> <li>• Microbiology</li> </ul>
<b>02.02 Surgical Anatomy 13%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major body systems</li> </ul>
<b>02.03 Terminology 6%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surgical and Procedural Terminology</li> </ul>
<b>02.04 Basic Life Support (BLS) 3%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A- Airway</li> <li>• B- Breathing</li> <li>• C- Circulation</li> <li>• Rates and rhythms</li> <li>• EKG interpretations</li> </ul>
<b>02.05 Surgical Instrumentation &amp; Equipment 4%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Operating Room Equipment</li> <li>• Clamps &amp; Forceps                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clamps (general &amp; vascular)</li> <li>○ Tissue forceps</li> <li>○ Needle Holders</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Retractors                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Self-retaining retractors</li> <li>○ Handheld retractors</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Miscellaneous                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Electrocautery instrumentation</li> <li>○ Suctions</li> <li>○ Staplers</li> <li>○ Laparoscopic</li> <li>○ Blades and sutures</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>02.06 General Medical Knowledge 10%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General knowledge                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Normal laboratory values</li> <li>○ Blood products &amp; usage</li> <li>○ Trendelenburg positioning</li> <li>○ Anesthesia types</li> <li>○ Patient positioning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>03 Professional Practice Knowledge</b>
<b>03.01 Patient Safety/Risk Management/Emergency Protocols 4%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient Safety</li> <li>• Risk Management</li> <li>• Emergency Protocols</li> </ul>
<b>03.02 Code of Ethics/Scope of Practice 4%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Ethics</li> <li>• Scope of Practice</li> <li>• Primary Responsibilities</li> <li>• American College of Surgeons Guidelines</li> </ul>
<b>03.03 OSHA/HIPAA 3%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSHA</li> <li>• HIPAA</li> </ul>

### Study Guide

Once the certification examination application is approved, ABSA will send approved candidates a study guide that includes reminder information about exam day rules and exam policies, study and preparation tips, a reference list, the exam content outline, and seven sample questions and answers to help familiarize candidates with the type of questions that may be presented on the exam.

## Taking the Examination

### Test Administration

Once SA-C eligibility is approved by ABSA, candidates will receive notice that their application has been approved and instructions for taking the examination. Once approved, candidates have access to test on-demand. Testing is not available on the following holidays: Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and US Independence Day.

The SA-C examination is delivered on a secure testing platform and administered via live-remote proctoring. Candidates may take their exam from a home or office location so long as the hardware, software, and room requirements are met to ensure a controlled and secure environment for testing.

Hardware and software requirements to take the exam include:

- Laptop or personal computer
- Private internet connection (i.e., may not use public internet such as at a library)
- Internet Explorer browser is not compatible
- Integrated or external computer web camera
  - If the video feed fails for any reason exam is terminated.
- Cell phone with a camera and audio connection
  - Candidate will use the phone to scan the room prior to exam launch as instructed by the proctor.
  - The proctor will instruct the candidate where to place the phone to monitor the applicant's computer screen

- If any connection between the video connection is lost (phone battery dies, internet connection is interrupted, etc.), the exam is automatically stopped, and the test taker cannot proceed until the video connection is re-established and the proctor secures the exam area again.
- Audio connection so that the candidate may hear and be heard throughout the administration

Candidates who present to the test administration without the proper identification and/or the proper admission letter will not be admitted.

Candidates may not use any form of aid (notes, phones, other persons, books, etc.) during the examination. The testing vendor's platform will restrict access to navigating from the browser and track browser events (i.e., suspicious keystrokes). The proctor will verify the workspace meets requirements (no materials, etc.) prior to allowing access to the exam. Any suspicious events during the test administration will trigger an alert to the proctor.

Candidates should take the exam in a private, quiet, well-lit room where other persons are not present. Candidates should use a desk or table to place the computer on and should not take the exam from a mobile device.

Candidates should test their connection prior to the exam to ensure that all requirements are met. Information is available on the MonitorEDU website: <https://monitoredu.com/faq>.

No breaks are allowed during the administration.

## Test Proctor

All exam administrations are monitored by qualified proctors who are trained by ABSA's exam administration vendor, MonitorEDU. Proctors receive directions and are accountable for checking candidate identification, verifying the candidate's workspace, security of test materials, proctoring, and dealing with candidate misconduct.

## Identification

Candidates are required to present a valid, government-issued, photo identification and approval letter from the ABSA to gain admission to the examination session. The identification is checked against the approval letter which includes the candidate's photo and the person presenting to the examination to ensure all align.

Acceptable forms of primary identification (both photograph and signature required) include:

- Driver's license
- Passport
- Alien registration card
- National/state/country identification card
- Military identification card

The name and photo on the identification presented must match the examinee.

If a candidate legally changes their name after submitting the application and before testing, the candidate must contact ABSA and provide a legal document confirming the name change (i.e., Marriage License, Divorce Decree, Naturalization Certificate).

Candidates will not be admitted to the test administration without proper identification.

## Testing Security

To provide a fair and consistent environment for all candidates, the exams are delivered using standardized procedures following strict security protocols. Candidates are required to follow all test administration rules at all times. Failure to follow these rules may result in termination of a candidate's testing session, invalidation of the candidate's exam score, and/or disciplinary action.

The following rules will be enforced on exam day:

- Candidates must present acceptable identification and the approval letter. Please see the [Identification](#) section above.
- Candidates may not use or bring any form of aid (notes, other persons, books, etc.) to the testing area. Backpacks, purses, and other personal items are not permitted within the candidate's reach.
- Candidates are observed at all times during testing and should be aware that security procedures are in place and will be enforced.
- Candidates may not bring any electronic devices other than the required cell phone for monitoring, into the examination area.
- The candidate may not ask any questions concerning the content of the examination before, during, or after the examination. Proctors are not qualified, nor are they permitted, to answer any questions about the content of the examination. Proctors may answer questions about processes (e.g., time limit) but cannot interpret or explain any information on the SA-C exam.
- Examination content is confidential. No exam questions are to be discussed before, during, or after the exam administration with anyone. Any violation of this policy is considered misconduct/cheating, and any candidate engaged in this behavior may be subject to score cancellation and not be allowed to sit for future administrations of the exam. See the disciplinary policy for additional information.
- Candidates should dress comfortably and are responsible for the temperature environment of their chosen testing location. Hats and large coats are not allowed during the testing administration.
- No food or beverage is permitted while testing.
- Candidates may not communicate with anyone except the proctor during the exam.
- No one, including a minor, except the candidate is allowed to enter the testing area.
- Candidates may not read questions aloud while testing.
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## Candidate Feedback

Exam candidates may provide feedback about the testing experience by contacting ABSA at [office@absa.net](mailto:office@absa.net). Feedback received from candidates will be reviewed by the ABSA as part of the overall examination review and quality assurance process for the program.

Candidates will not receive direct feedback regarding specific item decisions.

## Candidate Misconduct

Individuals suspected of cheating will be subject to ABSA's disciplinary policies and procedures.

Any incidents of suspected cheating, violation of any ABSA policies, disturbances, attempts to copy or retrieve test materials, or other exam-related irregularities will be reported immediately to ABSA by the testing vendor. All serious incidents will be investigated by ABSA with assistance from the testing vendor. Testing irregularities may result in termination of a candidate's participation in the examination administration, invalidation of exam scores, or other disciplinary action.

ABSA and the testing vendor reserve the right to investigate any incident of suspected misconduct or irregularity.

## Copyright Information

All proprietary rights to the SA-C examination, including copyright, are held by the ABSA. To protect the validity of the scores reported, candidates must adhere to strict guidelines regarding proper conduct in handling these copyrighted proprietary materials. The law strictly prohibits any attempt to reproduce all or part of the SA-C examination. Such attempts may include but are not limited to, copying or retrieving test materials, aiding others by any means in reconstructing any portion of the exam, posting content on any discussion forum or website, and selling, distributing, receiving, or having unauthorized possession of any portion of the exam. Alleged copyright violations will be investigated and, if warranted, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. It should be noted that examination scores might become invalid in the event of this type of suspected breach. Permanent revocation of certification may occur if allegations are substantiated. See the disciplinary policy for further information.

## Testing Irregularities

Irregularities observed during the testing period, including but not limited to giving or receiving unauthorized information or aid to or from other persons or attempting to copy or remove test materials, may be sufficient cause to terminate candidate participation in the examination administration or to invalidate scores.

Irregularities may also be evidenced by subsequent statistical analysis of testing materials. When testing irregularities occur, ABSA investigates with assistance from its testing vendor. Based on this investigation, ABSA may direct either not to score the test or to cancel the test score. When it is appropriate to do so, the ABSA will give affected test takers the opportunity to take the test again as soon as possible, without charge. Affected test takers will be notified of the reasons for the cancellation and their options for retaking the test.

## After the Examination

### Notification of Exam Results

Preliminary results are provided on screen immediately following the examination, and candidates may email the results to themselves at that time. Within one week of the exam, ABSA will email a pass/fail notification to the candidate.



Passing score notifications include a decision outcome (“pass”), percent correct in each content domain, information about official notification of certification (e.g. certificate), and recertification requirements.

Failing score reports include a decision outcome (“fail”), the candidate's total score, the passing score, performance in each content domain, the type of score reported (e.g. raw), appropriate uses, and potential misuses of reported score information and reexamination information.

Examination results are not discussed or given out by ABSA via telephone or fax. Results are not released to anyone other than the candidate who took the examination unless written consent is provided by the examinee. Score reports are provided to medical licensure boards as required.

## Understanding Your Scores

A criterion-referenced standard-setting process is used to establish the passing point for the exam. The cut score for a multiple-choice examination is the result of a study that is intended to define the minimum acceptable performance level and link this level to an examination score by relying on data collected from a panel of SMEs. This means that each candidate’s performance on the exam is measured against a predetermined standard. Candidates are not graded on a curve and do not compete against each other or against a quota.

The SA-C examination is designed to measure a candidate’s overall performance. Examination content area scores are not used to determine pass/fail status but are provided to offer a general indication of a candidate’s performance and may be used to assist in evaluating relative areas of strengths and weakness in each content area.

Scores are reported as raw scores. Each item is worth one point, so the sum of correct responses is a raw score. A candidate’s total score determines whether he/she has passed or failed the examination after a comparison to the cut score. Scores are reported as a percent of items correct for each domain subsection.

## Validation of Scores

ABSA reserves the right to cancel scores if their validity and integrity are compromised. Discrepancies such as misconduct of a candidate may cause a score to be suspect. ABSA will investigate the occurrence and may cancel or withhold the examination results if a violation of regulations is found.

## Verification of Exam Results

Because of the sophistication of computerized online scoring, errors in scoring are virtually nonexistent.

Due to the secure nature of the examination, ABSA will not disclose examination questions or a candidate’s response to individual questions nor provide any exam preparation feedback. Examinees who question or dispute their test score can request, in writing, to have their score verified. The request must be emailed to ABSA no later than seven (7) days after receipt of the exam score report. ABSA verifies scoring by calculating the number of questions the examinee answered correctly and confirming that the number matches what was reported on the score report.

## Re-Examination

Candidates who fail the examination may test up to four times in a calendar year. Failing candidates must wait a minimum of 30 days from the previous testing attempt to submit a retest application. A retake application and retest fee must be submitted for each retake attempt.

Candidates who fail more than four times in a calendar year must complete additional formal training in surgical assisting prior to re-applying for certification.

## Exam Appeals

Candidates who fail the exam and believe irregular testing conditions were a contributing factor may file an appeal to the ABSA. Examples of irregular testing conditions include a medical or personal emergency during the testing session, exam vendor technical issues, and other significant testing disruptions. All appeal requests must be made in writing and emailed no later than seven (7) days after the receipt of the exam score report. All appeals must describe the suspected error or problem and the requested remedy. The Board will review the information and make a final decision within 30 days of receipt. The decision of the Board shall be final.

Because of the secure nature of these examinations, ABSA will not disclose examination questions prior to, or after, the administration. Candidate responses to test questions (correct or not correct) will not be discussed or disclosed.

# Maintaining Your Certification

## Purpose and Rationale

ABSA supports the ongoing professional development of its certificants. The mandatory recertification process provided is designed to ensure that the Surgical Assistant – Certified continues their education and experience in health science and medicine by reinforcing and expanding their knowledge and skills and retaining knowledge of current practice.

Recertification encourages and acknowledges professional development participation. To support this purpose, the recertification requirements include the attainment of recertification points through the completion of professional development activities such as continuing medical education, ACLS/PALS/CPR certification, and relevant work experience or recertification by passing the current certification exam. These activities support ongoing professional development, encourage opportunities for new learning, and provide a process for utilizing updated skills/knowledge through relevant work experience.

The two-year period established for recertification is based on ABSA's assessment that new practices, research, and information are introduced in the field with enough frequency that professional development activities should be conducted routinely so that certificants remain up to date with both current best practices and emerging knowledge.

## Recertification Requirements

Certification is valid for a two-year period, and the certification expiration date is indicated on the individual's certificate. Certification expires on June 30 of the expiration year.

Recertification applications and fees are accepted beginning January 1 of the expiration year and due by June 30 of the expiration year. Certificants will receive a courtesy recertification reminder to the email on file; however, it is the responsibility of the certificant to submit a timely recertification application and retain appropriate documentation of their professional development activities.

To maintain an active SA-C certification status all certificants must complete the online SA-C Recertification Application and submit all required documentation and fees for their selected recertification method by the applicable deadline to document compliance with the following recertification requirements:

Candidates recertifying by completion of professional development and experience must meet each of the following requirements:

1. **Professional Development:** Complete eighty (80) recertification points during the 2-year certification period. Forty (40) points must be obtained each year of the certification period.
  - a) Eleven (11) points per year are awarded for completion of Continuing Medical Education. Any continuing medical education is acceptable for recertification.
  - b) Four (4) points per year are awarded for ACLS, PALS, or CPR active certification which is a required professional development activity.
2. **Experience:** Complete a minimum of 400 clinical surgical procedures or 1,500 clinical surgical hours in the role of a surgical assistant - certified (SA-C) (first assistant) during the 2-year certification period.
  - a) Twenty-five (25) points per year are awarded for completion of the required surgical assisting experience activity.

## Recertification by Examination

Candidates recertifying by exam must take and successfully pass the exam prior to their expiration date. Re-examination procedures apply.

## All Recertification Candidates

All recertification candidates must complete the following requirements.

1. **Code of Ethics and Application Accuracy Attestation and Application Acknowledgements:** Agree to comply with the ABSA Code of Ethics and accuracy of the information reported in the recertification application and attest to the application acknowledgments.

## Recertification Requirements Rationale

Frequent changes in the operating theater necessitate ongoing and frequent assessment of the continuing competence of the ABSA Surgical Assistant-Certified (SA-C).

Medical/surgical standards prescribe that certificants should acquire new surgical knowledge on a continuing basis. The ABSA has determined that a two-year re-certification cycle is appropriate in assessing the medical and surgical competence of the Surgical Assistant-Certified (SA-C).

All candidates successfully acquiring certification as Surgical Assistant-Certified (SA-C) through the ABSA will be required to document their surgical skills and continuing medical education, by renewing their certification every two years.

Renewal may be accomplished by submission of an application for renewal along with the appropriate documentation or by re-examination through the ABSA.

## Recertification by Professional Development and Experience

1. **Professional Development:** The recertification points requirement ensures certificants participate in or lead professional development activities that contribute to maintaining knowledge and skills and supplementing knowledge and skills with updates to current practice.
  - a) Allocating points for the required surgical assisting experience recognizes that practice in the specialty contributes to maintenance of surgical assisting knowledge and skills.
  - b) Allocating points for ACLS, PALS, or CPR active certification recognizes that maintenance of basic life-saving knowledge and skills are necessary attributes to the safe performance of surgical assisting services.
2. **Experience:** The experience requirement ensures certificants are actively practicing their surgical assisting skills and able to apply the knowledge gained through ongoing professional development in the practice setting.

## Recertification by Examination

Passing the current certification exam demonstrates recertification candidates have maintained advanced specialty knowledge of the professional domains that encompass the tasks and knowledge required of a surgical assistant working under the guidance of a surgeon.

## All Recertification Candidates

1. **Code of Ethics and Application Accuracy Attestation and Application Acknowledgements:** The requirement for adherence to the Code of Ethics provides increased awareness of expected ethical behaviors as well as increased public protection through a process that provides a reporting and investigation mechanism for Code of Ethics violations. Candidates acknowledge the accuracy of their application and agreement to adhere to ABSA policies related to certification.

## Acceptable Continuing Medical Education

All continuing medical education activities are subject to review and approval by ABSA. Credit is only granted after the activity has been completed and documented. Credit is not granted for time spent networking, in social functions, or for breaks.

## Recertification Application Verification

To maintain the credibility and integrity of the certification process, ABSA reserves the right to verify any information provided on recertification applications. Only complete recertification applications will be accepted. Incomplete applications will be returned to the certificant who may address the deficiencies and resubmit the application for review, adhering to established application deadlines.

ABSA will review all recertification applications for adherence to the recertification requirement. In addition, ABSA will select a percentage of recertification applications for audit. Candidates should keep documentation information for up to one year in the event they are selected for audit.

Verification of each recertification requirement will be conducted by certification staff as follows:

**1. Professional Development:**

- a) Completion of required CME is verified through submission of the Continuing Medical Education Tracking Form.
- b) Points for applicable experience are verified through the experience requirement (see#2).
- c) ACLS, PALS, or CPR active certification is verified through submission and review of the active certification card.
- d) If selected for audit, certificants are required to submit additional documentation to validate the claimed activities, such as CME certificates of completion or transcripts.

**2. Experience:**

- a) If employed by a hospital, surgicenter, SA group, or physician, a work verification form must be completed by the supervisor attesting to the caseload experience.
- b) If self-employed, completion of the case log form and attestation by the certificant is required.
- c) All completed forms must be uploaded to the application at the time of submission.
- d) If selected for audit, certificants must submit documentation verifying the case count submitted in the case log.

**3. Exam:** Staff will verify the certification exam is passed prior to the expiration date.

**4. Code of Ethics and Application Accuracy Attestation and Application Acknowledgements:** System rules will ensure completion of the required attestations and acknowledgments and will not allow submission of the application without completion.

If any areas of non-compliance are identified during the verification and review process, the individual will have 30 days to submit any required information. If the required information is not provided the individual's certification will expire at the end of the 30 days or on the normal expiration date (whichever comes last).

## Recertification Acceptance

ABSA will issue a renewal notice to the certificant once all recertification requirements have been met. New certificates will be mailed to ABSA certificants.

Recertification applications will not be accepted from individuals whose certification is in a state of suspension or has been revoked.

## Failure to Recertify

Recertification is mandatory for all certificants. If certification is not renewed it will expire on June 30 two years after the certification was last earned. Individuals whose certification has expired or been suspended or revoked may not represent him/herself as an ABSA certificant and may not use the credential until he/she receives official notice that the recertification requirements have been satisfied or that certification status has been reinstated.

Certificants who fail to recertify in accordance with ABSA policy will be changed from an active to inactive status in the online registry of certificants and the verification letter.

Certificants who fail to recertify in accordance with ABSA policy will receive an official notification. Notifications address the expiration of the SA-C certification, status change from active to inactive in the ABSA online registry, and policies and procedures for reinstatement.

## Reinstatement

If the certification is not renewed by June 30, the certification is in inactive status. The credential may not be used in any way while the credential is inactive and recertification requirements have not been met.

Inactive credential holders are allowed a one-month grace period to complete the recertification process and submit the required fee by July 31. No late fee applies during the grace period; however, the credential is inactive until recertification is satisfactorily completed.

Following the grace period, if certification has been expired for two years or less, an individual may recertify by meeting all recertification requirements, submitting a complete recertification application, and paying any associated late fees.

Certificants who meet the eligibility requirements of the reinstatement policy will be moved from inactive to active status in the ABSA online verification registry.

If certification has been expired for more than two years, the certification is considered to be lapsed. Individuals who want to reinstate their SA-C credential from a lapsed status must complete and submit a reinstatement application, submit the application fee, meet all eligibility requirements in effect at the time of reapplication, and pass the ABSA Certification Examination.

## Recertification Appeal

Individuals who are notified that they do not meet the recertification requirements may appeal this decision by sending a written notice of the appeal to the ABSA COO within 30 days of receipt of the adverse recertification decision. The COO will forward the notice to the Board of Directors for review.

The Board will review the information and will make a final decision regarding eligibility. No new or additional information may be submitted with the appeal request. The recertification appeal will be reviewed within 45 days of receipt. Written notice of the final decision will be emailed to the applicant within 30 days of the review.

The Board may appoint a sub-committee or appeal review committee for the purpose of reviewing recertification appeals and making final determinations.

# Code of Ethics

## Introduction

The ABSA Code of Ethics (Code) applies to each certificant of the ABSA and each individual seeking certification from ABSA (candidates or applicants).

All applicants and certificants agree to the ABSA Code of Ethics as a condition of certification during the application process. Violation of any portion of the Code may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Disciplinary Policy.

## Purpose

The Code establishes the basic ethical standards for the professional behavior of ABSA certificants and candidates. The Code is designed to provide both appropriate ethical practice guidelines and enforceable standards of conduct for all certificants and candidates.

## Code of Ethics

The ABSA supports appropriate, professional standards designed to protect the public. ABSA certificants and candidates for certification provide surgical assisting services in a manner that promotes integrity and reflects positively on the profession, consistent with accepted moral, ethical, and legal standards and within the relevant scope of practice. The role and function of a surgery assistant is to assist the surgeon in the performance of a surgical procedure.

Certification as a surgical assistant through the ABSA does not allow for any independent performance of any medical or surgical procedures within the United States of America or its territories.

Certificants and candidates have the obligation to practice in a manner consistent with the ABSA certification standards and responsibilities set forth below. This includes the obligations to maintain and demonstrate high standards of integrity and professional conduct; accept responsibility for their actions; continually seek to enhance their professional capabilities; practice with fairness and honesty; and encourage others to act in a professional manner.

## Code of Ethics Pledge

As an ABSA Surgical Assistant–Certified (SA-C),

- I pledge to pursue and uphold the highest attainable ethical standards.
- I will place the physical and psychological well-being of my patients above all else.
- I will continue to improve my medical knowledge and surgical skills.
- I will conduct myself in a manner that is honest and above reproach, always, especially when dealing with my patients, colleagues, and medical staff.
- I will assist my colleagues when requested and will seek their guidance when my own abilities are in doubt.
- I will support and strive to advance the objectives and goals of the surgical profession and specifically those of the American Board of Surgical Assistants

## Miscellaneous Policies

### Fairness and Nondiscrimination

ABSA adheres to principles of fairness and due process and endorses the principles of equal opportunity. In administering the certification program, ABSA does not discriminate or deny opportunity to anyone on the basis of race, color, creed, age, gender, national origin, religion, disability, marital status, parental status, ancestry, sexual orientation, source of income, or any other status protected by applicable law. All candidates for certification will be judged solely on the published eligibility and recertification criteria determined by the Board of Directors.

### Confidentiality

The ABSA is committed to protecting confidential and/or proprietary information related to applicants, candidates, certificants, and the examination development, maintenance, and administration process. The confidentiality policy applies to all ABSA employees, ABSA directors, committee members, subject matter experts, consultants, and other individuals who are permitted access to confidential information. These individuals are required to sign confidentiality forms/attestations.

Confidential materials include but are not limited to an individual's application status, personal applicant/certificant information, exam development documentation (including job analysis study reports, technical reports, and cut score studies), exam items and answers, exam forms, item banks, and individual exam scores.

The ABSA will not disclose confidential applicant/candidate/certificant information unless authorized in writing by the individual or as required by law.

Information about an applicant/candidate/certificant will only be released to that applicant/candidate/certificant unless release of the information is authorized in writing by the individual or is required by law. Personal information submitted by applicants/candidates/certificants with an application or recertification application is considered confidential. Personal information retained within the ABSA database will be kept confidential.

All application information is confidential and will not be shared with any party other than ABSA's examination development or administration vendors for certification processing purposes.

Information about candidates/certificants and their examination results is considered confidential. Exam scores will be released only to the individual candidate unless a signed release is provided.

Aggregate examination statistics for a minimum of three years (including the number of examination candidates, pass rates and the current total number of certificants) will be made publicly available. Aggregate examination statistics, studies and reports concerning applicants/candidates/certificants will contain no information identifiable with any applicants/candidates/certificants, unless authorized in writing by the individual.



## Changes in Contact Information

Candidates and certificants are responsible for maintaining their mailing and email addresses with the ABSA. ABSA may send certification materials to the mailing address and/or email addresses on file. Candidates and certificants should contact [office@absa.net](mailto:office@absa.net) to update contact information.

Legal documentation must be sent to [office@absa.net](mailto:office@absa.net) before a name change will be made.

## Records Retention

All documents are retained according to the ABSA's document management policy. Confidential documents that are no longer required to be retained are securely destroyed. Examination results and applicant, candidate, and certificant data are permanently retained as are records of disciplinary actions and investigations.

## Statement of Compliance with All Laws

ABSA is committed to compliance with all applicable federal, state/provincial, and local laws and regulations including, but not limited to confidentiality, nondiscrimination, employment, business, privacy, maintenance of records, and disabilities.

Reports of unlawful activity will be referred to appropriate law enforcement and/or licensing officials.

## Certification Verification

The names and credential of ABSA-certified individuals and their certification status are not considered confidential and are published by ABSA for credential verification purposes.

Verification will be accessible via the certification program's web page on the ABSA website or by contacting the ABSA office. Online verification of certification status will include the certification number, name (first & last), status, original certification date, recertification date and certification expiration date. Certificants may opt-out of inclusion in the online verification system by contacting the ABSA via email.

Written verification of credentialed status may be obtained if requested by providing the certificant name and certification number or certificant's date of birth via email to the ABSA certification staff. Only the certification status (i.e., currently certified or not currently certified) may be shared. No other data may be shared without written permission from the credentialed practitioner.

Application status, information about whether an individual has taken the examination, and score information will not be released to those requesting verification and are treated as provided in the ABSA Confidentiality Policy.

## Designation & Certificate

### Use of the Certification Mark

After receiving official notification of SA-C certification, the credential may be used only as long as the certification remains valid and in good standing. Individuals may not use the credential until they have received specific written notification that they have successfully completed all requirements, including passing the examination and documenting the specified experience. Certificants must comply with all recertification requirements to maintain the use of the credential.

Certification is a non-transferable, revocable, limited, non-exclusive license to use the certification designation “SA-C” or “Surgical Assistant-Certified”, subject to compliance with the policies and procedures, as may be revised from time to time.

Except as permitted by this policy, any use or display of ABSA certification marks and/or logos without the prior written permission of the ABSA is prohibited. Any candidate or certificants who manufacturers, modifies, reproduces, distributes, or uses a fraudulent or otherwise unauthorized ABSA certificate, ABSA designation or other credential may be subject to disciplinary action, including denial or revocation of eligibility or certification. Any individual who engages in such behavior also may be subject to legal action.

Education and training providers may not use the ABSA name, logos, or certification marks to state or imply any approval or endorsement by ABSA or any affiliation with ABSA.

### Proper Use of the Credential

After meeting all eligibility requirements and passing the examination, individuals may use their credential in all correspondence and professional relations and on promotional materials, such as stationery, websites, business cards, etc. The mark or logo may be used only on business cards, stationery, letterhead, and similar documents on which the name of the individual certified is prominently displayed.

Individuals who have met the certification standards established by the ABSA are authorized to use the following certification mark in communications and marketing materials:

- The credential may be used as SA-C or Surgical Assistant-Certified.
- The credential is typically used after the certificants name following any academic degrees and licensure (e.g. Jane Smith, RN, SA-C).
- The mark must be clearly associated with the individual(s) certified by the ABSA.
- Correct Use:
  - John Doe is a Surgical Assistant-Certified.
  - John Doe is a SA-C certificants.
- Misuse:
  - ACME company employs three Surgical Assistant-Certified professionals.
  - The mark should not be used in a plural or possessive manner.
- Correct Use:
  - John Doe and Jane Smith are Surgical Assistant-Certified certificants.
- Misuse:
  - John Doe and Jane Smith are Surgical Assistants-Certified.
  - The Surgical Assistant’s-Certified seminar was sold out.

The certification mark may be used only as long as certification is valid. Should the certification be suspended or withdrawn for any reason or is otherwise inactive, the individual must immediately cease the use of the certification designation and acronym on stationery, websites, business cards, and any and all promotional materials.

### Ownership of the Mark and Logo

The certification marks and logo are the property of the ABSA. Permission to use the certification mark or logo is granted to credentialed persons at the discretion of the ABSA Board of Directors, for permissible uses only.

The SA-C marks and logo may not be revised or altered in any way. They must be displayed in the same form as produced by ABSA and cannot be reproduced unless such reproduction is identical to the mark provided by ABSA.

The mark or logo may not be used in any manner which could bring ABSA into disrepute or in any way is considered misleading or unauthorized. This includes any use of the mark or logo that the public might construe as an endorsement, approval or sponsorship by ABSA of a certificant's business or any product thereof.

### Certificates

Candidates who complete their SA-C candidacy will receive a non-transferable certificate specifying that the SA-C designation has been awarded. Certificants will receive a certificate that includes their name, credential awarded, certification number, issue date, and expiration date. The certificate may only be displayed during the period for which the credential is valid. Certificates remain the property of ABSA and must be returned to ABSA upon request.

## Complaints and Disciplinary Actions

### Disciplinary and Appeals Policy

To maintain and enhance the credibility of the ABSA certification program, the ABSA has adopted the following procedures to allow individuals to bring complaints concerning the conduct of individuals who are candidates or certificants of the ABSA certification program.

In the event an individual candidate or certificant violates the ABSA Code of Ethics, certification rules, or ABSA policies the Board of Directors may reprimand or suspend the individual or may revoke certification.

The grounds for sanctions under these procedures may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Violation of the ABSA Code of Ethics.
2. Violation of established ABSA policies, rules and requirements.
3. Conviction of a felony or other crime of moral turpitude under federal or state/provincial law in a matter related to the practice of, or qualifications for surgical assisting.

4. Found guilty of independent performance of any medical or surgical procedure (i.e., practicing medicine without a license).
5. Failure to maintain professional licensure
6. Gross negligence, willful misconduct, or other unethical conduct in the performance of services for which the individual has achieved certification from ABSA.
7. Fraud or misrepresentation in an initial application or renewal application for certification.

Information regarding the complaint process will be available to the public via the ABSA website or other published documents. A complete copy of this policy will be publicly available.

Actions taken under this policy do not constitute enforcement of the law, although referral to appropriate federal, state/provincial, or local government agencies may be made about the conduct of the candidate or certificant in appropriate situations. Individuals initially bringing complaints are not entitled to any relief or damages by virtue of this process, although they will receive notice of the actions taken.

### Complaints

Complaints may be submitted by any individual or entity. Complaints should be reported to ABSA in writing and should include the name of the person submitting the complaint, the name of the person the complaint is regarding along with other relevant identifying information, a detailed description of factual allegations supporting the charges, and any relevant supporting documentation. Information submitted during the complaint and investigation process is considered confidential and will be handled in accordance with ABSA's Confidentiality policy. Inquiries or submissions other than complaints may be reviewed and handled by the ABSA or its staff members at its discretion.

Upon receipt and preliminary review of a complaint involving the certification program the ABSA COO in consultation with the President of the Board of Directors may conclude, in their sole discretion, that the submission:

- contains unreliable or insufficient information, or
- is patently frivolous or inconsequential.

In such cases, the ABSA COO and President may determine that the submission does not constitute a valid and actionable complaint that would justify bringing it before the Board of Directors for investigation and a determination of whether there has been a violation of substantive requirements of the certification process. If so, the submission is disposed of by notice from the COO and President to its submitter, if the submitter is identified. All such preliminary dispositions by the President are reported to the Board of Directors at its next meeting.

Preliminary review will be conducted within 30 calendar days of receipt of the complaint.

If a submission is deemed by the President to be a valid and actionable complaint, the President shall see that written notice is provided to the candidate/certificant whose conduct has been called into question. The candidate/certificant whose conduct is at issue shall also be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint. The President also shall ensure that the individual submitting the complaint receives notice that the complaint is being reviewed by the ABSA Board of Directors.

## Complaint Review

For each complaint that the President concludes is a valid and actionable complaint, the ABSA authorizes an investigation into its specific facts or circumstances to whatever extent is necessary to clarify, expand, or corroborate the information provided by the submitter.

The President appoints a Review Committee of three or more individuals, who may or may not be members of the ABSA Board of Directors to investigate and make an appropriate determination with respect to each such valid and actionable complaint; the Review Committee may review one or more such complaints as determined by the President. The Review Committee initially determines whether it is appropriate to review the complaint under these Procedures or whether the matter should be referred to another entity engaged in the administration of law. The timeline for responses and for providing any additional information shall be established by the Review Committee. The review and investigation will be completed in an appropriate amount of time, not to exceed 6 months, unless there are extenuating circumstances that require an extended period. The Review Committee may be assisted in the conduct of its investigation by other members of the ABSA or by ABSA staff or legal counsel. The President exercises general supervision over all investigations.

Both the individual submitting the complaint and the candidate/certificant who is the subject of the investigation (or his or her employer) may be contacted for additional information with respect to the complaint. The Review Committee, or the ABSA Board of Directors on its behalf, may at its discretion contact such other individuals who may have knowledge of the facts and circumstances surrounding the complaint.

All investigations and deliberations of the Review Committee and the ABSA are conducted in confidence, with all written communications sealed and marked "Personal and Confidential," and they are conducted objectively, without any indication of prejudice. An investigation may be directed toward any aspect of a complaint that is relevant or potentially relevant. Formal hearings are not held, and the parties are not expected to be represented by counsel, although the Review Committee and ABSA may consult their own counsel.

Members of the Review Committee shall be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the activities of the Committee.

## Determination of Violation

Upon completion of an investigation, the Review Committee recommends whether the ABSA should decide that there has been a violation of ABSA policies and rules. When the Review Committee recommends that the Board of Directors find a violation, the Review Committee also recommends imposition of an appropriate sanction. If the Review Committee so recommends, a proposed determination with a proposed sanction is prepared under the supervision of the President and is presented by a representative of the Review Committee to the ABSA along with the record of the Review Committee's investigation.

If the Review Committee recommends against a determination that a violation has occurred, the complaint is dismissed with notice to the candidate/certificant, the individual's employer (if applicable), and the individual or entity who submitted the complaint; a summary report is also made to the Board of Directors.

The ABSA reviews the recommendation of the Review Committee based on the record of the investigation. The ABSA may accept, reject, or modify the Review Committee's recommendation, either with respect to the determination of a violation or the recommended sanction to be imposed. If the ABSA determines that a violation has occurred, this determination and the imposition of a sanction are promulgated by written notice to the candidate/certificant, and to the individual submitting the complaint, if the submitter agrees in advance and in writing to maintain in confidence whatever portion of the information is not made public by the ABSA.

In certain circumstances, the ABSA may consider a recommendation from the Review Committee that the candidate/certificant who has violated the certification program policies or rules should be offered an opportunity to submit a written assurance that the conduct in question has been terminated and will not recur. The decision of the Review Committee to make such a recommendation and of the ABSA to accept it are within their respective discretionary powers. If such an offer is extended, the candidate/certificant at issue must submit the required written assurance within thirty days of receipt of the offer, and the assurance must be submitted in terms that are acceptable to the ABSA. If the ABSA accepts the assurance, notice is given to the individual's employer and to the submitter of the complaint, if the submitter agrees in advance and in writing to maintain the information in confidence.

### Sanctions

Any of the following sanctions may be imposed by the ABSA upon a candidate/certificant whom the ABSA has determined to have violated the policies and rules of its certification program(s), although the sanction applied must reasonably relate to the nature and severity of the violation, focusing on reformation of the conduct of the member and deterrence of similar conduct by others:

1. written reprimand to the candidate/certificant; or
2. suspension of the certificant for a designated period; or
3. suspension of the candidate's application eligibility for a designated period; or
4. termination of the certificant's certification from the ABSA; or
5. termination of the candidate's application eligibility for a designated period.

For sanctions that include suspension or termination, a summary of the final determination and the sanction with the individual's name and date is published by the ABSA. This information will be published only after any appeal has either been considered or the appeal period has passed.

Reprimand in the form of a written notice from the President normally is sent to a candidate/certificant who has received his or her first substantiated complaint. Suspension normally is imposed on a candidate/certificant who has received two substantiated complaints. Termination normally is imposed on a candidate/certificant who has received two substantiated complaints within a two-year period, or three or more substantiated complaints. The ABSA may at its discretion, however, impose any of the sanctions, if warranted, in specific cases.

Anyone found guilty of "Practicing Medicine Without a License," in the United States of America or its territories, either by court trial or plea agreement, will lose their ABSA certification and will be ineligible to certify with the ABSA at any future date.

Certificants who have been terminated shall have their certification revoked and may not be considered for ABSA certification in the future. If certification is revoked, all certificates or other materials requested by the ABSA must be returned promptly to the ABSA.

## Appeal

Within thirty (30) days from receipt of notice of a determination by the ABSA that a candidate/ certificant violated the certification program policies and/or rules, the affected candidate/certificant may submit to the ABSA in writing a request for an appeal.

Upon receipt of a request for appeal, the President of the ABSA establishes an appellate body consisting of at least three, but not more than five, individuals. This Appeal Committee may review one or more appeals, upon request of the President. No current members of the Review Committee or the Board of Directors may serve on the Appeal Committee; further, no one with any personal involvement or conflict of interest may serve on the Appeal Committee. Members of the Appeal Committee may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the activities of the Committee.

The Appeal Committee may only review whether the determination by the ABSA of a violation of the certification program policies and/or rules was inappropriate because of:

- material errors of fact, or
- failure of the Review Committee or the ABSA to conform to published criteria, policies, or procedures.

Only facts and conditions up to and including the time of the ABSA's determination as represented by facts known to the ABSA are considered during an appeal. The appeal shall not include a hearing or any similar trial-type proceeding. Legal counsel is not expected to participate in the appeal process unless requested by the appellant and approved by the ABSA and the Appeal Committee. The ABSA and Appeal Committee may consult legal counsel.

The Appeal Committee conducts and completes the appeal within ninety days after receipt of the request for an appeal. Written appellate submissions and any replies may be made by authorized representatives of the appellant and of the ABSA. Submissions are made according to whatever schedule is reasonably established by the Appeal Committee. The decision of the Appeal Committee either affirms or overrules the determination of the ABSA but does not address a sanction imposed by the ABSA.

The Appeal Committee decision is binding upon the ABSA, the candidate/certificant who is subject to the termination, and all other persons.

## Resignation

If a certificant who is the subject of a complaint voluntarily surrenders his or her ABSA certification at any time during the pendency of a complaint under these Procedures, the complaint is dismissed without any further action by the Review Committee, the ABSA, or an Appeal Committee established after an appeal. The entire record is sealed, and the individual may not reapply for certification by the ABSA. However, the ABSA may authorize the President to communicate the fact and date of resignation, and the fact and general nature of the complaint, which was pending at the time of the resignation, to or at the request of a government entity engaged in the administration of law. Similarly, in the event of such resignation, the individual's employer and the person or entity who submitted the complaint are notified of the fact and date of resignation and that ABSA has dismissed the complaint as a result.



## ABSA Request for Testing Accommodations Form

The Special Testing Accommodations Request form, Professional Documentation and Evaluation form, and Healthcare Professional’s letter on letterhead must all be submitted for the testing accommodation to be considered. The document should be submitted together.

### Special Testing Accommodations Request

*\*To be completed by the candidate.*

#### Candidate Information

First Name	Last Name	Credentials
Address		
City	State/Province	Zip/Postal Code
Country	Phone	Email
Email		

Please list the requested testing accommodation(s).

Candidate’s Name	Signature	Date
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### Professional Documentation and evaluation

*\*To be completed by the healthcare professional.*

#### Healthcare Professional

Professional’s First Name	Professional’s Last Name	Credentials
Professional License Number	State/Province of Issue	



Employer		Job Title
Address		
City	State/Province	Zip/Postal Code
Country	Mobile Phone	Work Phone
Email		

### Healthcare Professional Description of Candidate Disability

On the healthcare professional’s letterhead, provide a description of the candidate’s disability that is based on your professional evaluation made within the previous three (3) years.

The letter must include:

- Full name and professional title of the individual performing the professional evaluation
- Date of the evaluation
- Full description of the candidate’s disability and recommendation for testing accommodation
- Agreement statement: **“I have been informed of the nature of the examination to be administered. It is my opinion that because of this candidate’s disability as described, he/she should receive the special testing accommodations requested.”**
- Signature of the provider