

**Standards of Accredited
Educational Programs
for the
Histotechnician**

PREAMBLE

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of these Standards and the Description of the Profession is to establish, maintain, and promote standards of quality for educational programs in the clinical laboratory sciences and to provide recognition for educational programs which meet or exceed the minimum standards outlined in this document.

The Standards are to be used for the development and evaluation of histotechnician programs. Paper reviewers and site visit teams assist in the evaluation of the program's compliance with the Standards. Lists of accredited programs are published for the information of students, employers, and the public.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTOTECHNOLOGY PROFESSION

Histotechnology professionals are qualified by academic and applied science education to provide service and research in histotechnology and related areas in rapidly changing and dynamic healthcare delivery systems. They have diverse and multi-level functions in the areas of analysis and clinical decision-making, information management, regulatory compliance, education, and quality assurance/performance improvement wherever anatomic pathology testing is researched, marketed, developed or performed. Histotechnology professionals perform, develop, evaluate, correlate and assure accuracy and validity of laboratory testing and procedures; direct and supervise anatomic pathology laboratory resources and operations; and collaborate in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. They possess skills for financial, operations, marketing, and human resource management of the histopathology laboratory. Histotechnology professionals practice independently and collaboratively, being responsible for their own actions, as defined by the profession. They have the requisite knowledge and skills to educate laboratory professionals, health care professionals, and others in laboratory practice, as well as the public.

The ability to relate to people, a capacity for calm and reasoned judgment, and a demonstration of commitment to the patient are essential qualities. Communication skills extend to consultative interactions with members of the healthcare team, external relations, customer service and patient education. Histotechnology professionals demonstrate ethical and moral attitudes and principles that are necessary for gaining and maintaining the confidence of patients, professional associates, and the community.

DESCRIPTION OF CAREER ENTRY OF THE HISTOTECHNICIAN

At career entry, the histotechnician will be able to perform routine histologic procedures such as:

- a. Receiving and accessioning tissue specimens;
- b. Preparing tissue specimens for microscopic examinations, including all routine procedures;
- c. Assisting with gross examination and frozen section procedures in histopathology;
- d. Identifying tissue structures and their staining characteristics;
- e. Performing preventive and corrective maintenance of equipment and instruments or referring to appropriate sources for repairs;
- f. Recognizing factors that affect procedures and results, and taking appropriate action within predetermined limits when corrections are indicated;
- g. Performing and monitoring quality control within predetermined limits;
- h. Applying principles of safety;
- i. Demonstrating professional conduct and interpersonal communication skills with patients, laboratory personnel, other health care professionals, and with the public;
- j. Recognizing the responsibilities of other laboratory and healthcare professionals and interacting with them with respect for their jobs and patient care;
- k. Recognizing and acting upon individual needs for continuing education as a function of growth and maintenance of professional competence; and,
- l. Exercising principles of management, safety, and supervision,

as the primary analyst making specimen oriented decisions on predetermined criteria, including a working knowledge of criteria values. Communications skills will extend to frequent interactions with members of the healthcare team, external relations, customer service, and patient education. The levels of analysis range from routine tissue processing to complex histopathology laboratory procedures in the various major areas of anatomic pathology. The histotechnician will have diverse functions in areas of preanalytic, analytic, and post-analytic processes. The histotechnician will have responsibilities for information processing, training, and quality control monitoring wherever histologic procedures are performed.

**Standards of Accredited Educational Programs
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REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION**

I. SPONSORSHIP

1. Institutional Affiliation

The sponsoring institution and affiliates, clinical and/or academic, if any, must be accredited by recognized regional and/or national agencies.

In programs in which the education is provided by two or more institutions, responsibilities of the sponsoring institution and of each affiliate for program administration, instruction, and supervision must be described in writing and signed by both parties. All provisions of the agreement must be active with written documentation of the following items:

A. General

1. Reason for the agreement
2. Responsibilities of the academic facility
3. Responsibilities of the clinical facility
4. Joint responsibilities

B. Specific

1. Supervisory responsibilities for the students
2. Student professional liability coverage
3. Student health and safety policies
4. Provision for renewal
5. Termination clause providing for program completion of enrolled students

2. Acceptable Institutions

Educational programs must be established in:

- A. colleges and universities;
- B. community and junior colleges;
- C. vocational technical schools authorized to grant the associate degree;
- D. hospitals and medical centers; or
- E. other post-secondary institutions or consortia which meet comparable standards for education in histotechnology.

3. Sponsoring Institution's Responsibilities

Accreditation is granted to the institution that assumes primary responsibility for curriculum planning and selection of course content; coordinates

classroom teaching and applied education; appoints faculty to the program; receives and processes applications for admission; and grants the associate degree or certificate documenting completion of the program.

- A. The sponsoring institution or consortium must be responsible for providing assurance that the activities assigned to students in the clinical setting are educational.
- B. There must be documented ongoing communication between the sponsoring institution and its affiliates for exchange of information and coordination of the program.

II. RESOURCES

4. General Resources

Resources must support the number of students admitted into the program. The instructor to student ratio must be adequate to achieve the stated program goals.

5. Program Administration

A. Program Director

1. The program must have a qualified program director.

2. Responsibilities

The program director must be responsible for the organization, administration, periodic review, planning, development, evaluation and general effectiveness of the program. The program director must have input into budget preparation and must be responsible for maintaining NAACLS accreditation of the program.

3. Qualifications

- a. The program director must:

- have a baccalaureate degree, and
- have three years of experience in medical or laboratory education that includes teaching courses, conducting and managing learning experiences, evaluating student achievement, providing input into curriculum development, policy and procedure formulation, evaluation of program effectiveness , and
- have knowledge of education methods and administration as well as current accreditation and certification procedures.

- b. The program director must be nationally certified in histotechnology, or, if the program director is not certified in histotechnology, a qualified, nationally certified in histotechnology education coordinator must be an employee of the sponsoring institution or a contractual relationship between the parties must be documented.

4. Faculty Appointments

The program director must have a faculty appointment at the sponsoring institution or must have faculty appointments in each affiliated academic institution. In the case of a clinically based program, the program director's appointment at affiliated academic institutions may be a regular one, a nonsalaried clinical or courtesy appointment, or an adjunct appointment, depending upon the regulations of the academic institution.

AA. Education Coordinator (when required)

1. Responsibilities

The education coordinator, when required, must provide supervision and coordination of the instructional faculty in the academic and clinical phases of the education program.

2. Qualifications

The education coordinator, when required, shall be a histotechnology professional who is certified in histotechnology by a nationally recognized certifying agency, and who has at least an associate's degree and three years of experience in histotechnology. The education coordinator must have knowledge of education methods and current accreditation and certification procedures.

B. Advisory Committee

1. There must be an advisory committee composed of individuals from the community of interest which may include pathologists, other physicians, scientific consultants, academic professionals, administrators, histotechnologists, histotechnicians, guidance counselors, or other medical professionals with a basic knowledge of laboratory medicine.

2. Responsibilities

The advisory committee of the program shall have input into aspects of the program / curriculum with regard to its current relevancy and effectiveness.

6. Faculty

The program must have qualified faculty (e.g., histotechnologists, histotechnicians, administrators, managers, or physicians).

A. Responsibilities

The faculty must participate in teaching courses, supervising applied laboratory learning experiences, evaluating student achievement, developing curriculum, formulating policy and procedure, and evaluating program effectiveness.

B. Qualifications

Faculty designated by the program must demonstrate adequate knowledge and proficiency in their content areas and the ability to teach effectively at the

appropriate level.

C. Professional Development

The program must assure and document ongoing professional development of the program faculty to assure that the faculty members are able to fulfill their instructional responsibilities.

7. Financial Resources

Financial resources for continued operation of the educational program must be ensured by an adequate, institutionally approved budget or by a statement of continued financial support from an executive officer of the sponsoring institution.

8. Physical Resources

A. Facilities

Classrooms, laboratories, administrative offices and other facilities must be adequate, equipped for safety, and must be in compliance with pertinent governmental laws.

B. Equipment and Supplies

Each student must have reasonable access to and experience with modern equipment and supplies.

C. Information Resources

Each student must have reasonable access to information resources containing current editions of books, periodicals and other reference materials in contemporary formats related to all content areas of the curriculum.

D. Instructional Resources

Adequate instructional resources must be available to facilitate each student's attainment of entry level competencies.

E. Computer Technology

Each student must have access to and experience with contemporary computer technology.

III. CURRICULUM

9. Curricular Requirements

A. Curricular Structure

Instruction must follow a plan which documents a structured curriculum composed of basic sciences, mathematics, and professional courses including applied (clinical) education. The curriculum must include clearly written program goals and competencies with syllabi which include individual course goals and objectives.

The curriculum must include all the major subject areas currently offered in the contemporary clinical histopathology laboratory. Behavioral objectives which address cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains must be provided for didactic and applied aspects of the program and must include clinical significance and correlation. Course objectives must show progression to the level consistent with entry into the profession. The applied courses must be taught in a clinically equipped teaching laboratory on the college campus, in an affiliated clinical facility, or in both facilities sufficient for developing basic skills, understanding principles, and mastering the procedures involved.

B. Instructional Areas

The curriculum must include:

1. Methodologies for all major areas currently practiced by a modern histopathology laboratory, including problem solving and troubleshooting techniques;
2. Receiving and documenting, processing, and analyzing biological specimens and other substances;
3. Histopathologic examination utilization in diagnosis and treatment;
4. Communications sufficient to serve the needs of patients and the public;
5. Technical training sufficient to orient new employees;
6. Quality assessment in the laboratory;
7. Laboratory safety and regulatory compliance;
8. Information processing in the clinical histopathology laboratory;
9. Ethical and professional conduct; and,
10. Significance of continued professional development.

C. Learning Experiences

The learning experiences needed in the curriculum to develop and support entry level competencies must be properly sequenced and include instructional materials, classroom presentation, discussion, demonstrations, laboratory sessions, supervised clinical practice and experience.

1. Student experiences must be educational and balanced so that all competencies can be achieved.
2. Student experiences at different clinical sites must be comparable to enable all students to achieve entry level competencies. At all clinical sites, the students must be supervised by a nationally certified histotechnician or histotechnologist.
3. Policies and processes by which students may perform service work must be published and made known to all concerned in order to avoid practices in which students are substituted for regular staff. After demonstrating proficiency, students, with qualified supervision, may be permitted to perform procedures. Service work by students in clinical settings outside of academic hours must be noncompulsory.

D. Evaluations

Written criteria for passing, failing, and progression in the program must be provided. These must be given to each student at the time of entry into the program. Evaluation systems must be related to the objectives and competencies described in the curriculum for both didactic and applied education components. They must be employed frequently enough to provide students and faculty with timely indications of the students' academic standing and progress and to serve as a reliable indicator of the effectiveness of instruction and course design.

IV. STUDENTS

10. Program Description / Publications

Students must be provided with a clear description of the program and its content and current publications, which must include:

- A. program mission statement;
- B. program goals and competencies;
- C. course objectives;
- D. applied education assignments (if applicable);
- E. admission criteria, both academic and non-academic;
- F. a list of course descriptions;
- G. names and academic rank or title of the program director, education coordinator, if applicable, and faculty;
- H. tuition and fees with refund policies;
- I. causes for dismissal;
- J. rules and regulations;
- K. a listing of clinical facilities (if applicable);
- L. essential functions; and,
- M. policies and procedures when applied experience cannot be guaranteed.
- N. student liability insurance.

11. Admissions

Admission of students, including advanced placement, if available, must be made in accordance with the clearly defined and published practices of the institution. Specific academic standards and essential functions required for admission to the program must be clearly defined, published and provided to prospective students, and made available to the public. Required prerequisite course work for admission to a certificate program shall include chemistry, biology, and mathematics, all at either the high school or college level. The signature of the student, indicating full understanding of the policies for progression in the program and completion of the program, must be secured.

12. Acceptable Conduct

Rules and regulations governing acceptable personal and academic conduct

must be defined and provided to all students upon entering the program.

13. Student Records

Student records must be maintained for admission, evaluation, and counseling or advising sessions. Individual grades and credits for courses must be recorded and permanently maintained by the sponsoring institution. The program must maintain the student records, conforming to any governmental regulations and the regulations of any other accrediting agencies.

14. Health and Safety

There must be a procedure for determining that each applicant's or student's health will permit the individual to meet the written essential functions of the program. Students must be informed of and have access to the usual student health care services of the institution. The health and safety of students, faculty, and patients associated with educational activities must be safeguarded. Emergency medical care must be available for students while in attendance.

15. Guidance

Guidance must be available to assist students in understanding and observing program policies and practices, for advising on professional and career issues, and for providing counseling or referral for personal and financial problems that may interfere with progress in the program. Confidentiality and impartiality must be maintained in dealing with student problems.

16. Appeal Procedures

Appeal procedures must be distributed to students upon entering the program. They must include provisions for academic and non-academic types of grievances and a mechanism for neutral evaluation that ensures due process and fair disposition.

V. OPERATIONAL POLICIES

17. Fair Practices

- A. Programmatic announcements must accurately reflect the program offered and include NAACLS' name, address, and phone number.
- B. Student recruitment and admission must be non-discriminatory in accordance with existing governmental regulations and the regulations of any other accrediting agencies applicable to the institution.

- C. Faculty recruitment and employment practices must be non-discriminatory in accordance with existing governmental regulations and the regulations of any other accrediting agencies applicable to the institution.
- D. Academic credits and costs to the student must be accurately stated, published, and made known to all applicants.
- E. Policies and procedures for student withdrawal and refunds of tuition and fees must be published and made known to all applicants.
- F. If more than one histotechnology program is offered at an institution, the sponsoring institution must demonstrate that each program is being conducted to assure appropriate instruction for the students at the different educational levels.
- G. The program must culminate in a certificate or an associate degree, as appropriate. The granting of the certificate or degree must not be contingent upon the student's passing any type of external certification or licensure examination. Academic standards for the program must be acceptable to the institution that grants the certificate or degree.
- H. A written record of all formal student complaints and resolution must be maintained.
- I. Program evaluation information, including graduation, placement, and any certification pass rates must be made available to NAACLS upon request.

VI. PROGRAM EVALUATION

18. Systematic Review

There must be a mechanism for continually and systematically reviewing the effectiveness of the program to include survey and evaluation instruments that incorporate feedback from a combination of students, employers, faculty, graduates, exit or final examinations, and accreditation review.

19. Outcome Measures

A review of outcomes measures (e.g. external certifying examination results, results from capstone projects) from the last three active years must be documented, analyzed, and used in the program evaluation.

20. Graduation and Placement Rates

A review of graduation rates and placement rates must be documented, analyzed, and used in the program evaluation.

21. Program Evaluation and Modification

The results of program evaluations must be documented and reflected in ongoing curriculum development and program modification, followed by an analysis of the effectiveness of any changes implemented.

VII. MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

22. Program / Sponsoring Institution Responsibilities

Programs are required to comply with administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation, including:

- A. Submitting the Self-Study Report, an Application for Continuing Accreditation, or a required Progress Report as determined by NAACLS;
- B. Paying accreditation fees, as determined by NAACLS;
- C. Informing NAACLS of relevant administrative and operational changes within 30 days. This includes changes in program official names, addresses or telephone numbers; affiliates, status (e.g., inactivity, closure) or location; and institution name.
- D. Completing an Annual Report prescribed by NAACLS and returning it by the established deadline;
- E. Verifying compliance with these Standards upon request from NAACLS; and,
- F. Agreeing to a site visit date before the end of the period for which accreditation was awarded.