

# Master of Surgical Assisting

## Surgical Assisting (MSA)

The VHS Surgical Assisting program is the only CAAHEP-accredited surgical assistant program that does not require its students to be trained as surgical technicians. Our graduates earn a Master of Surgical Assisting degree and become certified in 22 months.

Our mission is to train competent surgical assistants in a dynamic academic environment and nurture future educators and leaders of the profession.

### Admission

Candidates must have completed all undergraduate degree requirements and have been issued a bachelor's degree prior to matriculating as an VHS student. If the bachelor's degree was issued by a U.S. college or university, as a general rule it should be from a regionally accredited institution. However, the program may grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis. Official transcripts from the awarding institution must specify the date upon which the degree was issued. All individuals must satisfy the admission requirements. Currently the program does not accept international students or medical graduates.

Candidates must:

- be a U.S. citizen or have proof of permanent residency status. Applicants born outside the U.S. must provide proof of U.S. citizenship or permanent residency status upon agreeing to accept a student position at VHS.
- have a baccalaureate degree (in any area of study) and a qualifying grade point average of 3.0 (B) or better.
- have completed all prerequisite courses listed ([https://www.evms.edu/education/masters\\_programs/surgical\\_assisting/admission/#prerequisites](https://www.evms.edu/education/masters_programs/surgical_assisting/admission/#prerequisites)) with a grade of B- or better.
- submit an online application (<https://gradcas.liasoncas.org/apply/>)
- pay a nonrefundable \$125 application fee
- submit two (2) evaluations of recommendation
- submit a personal statement
- submit official transcripts of all college-level coursework

Applications will be accepted between October 1 and May 31.

Following the online instructions, applicants must contact every college or university attended and request transcripts to be sent directly to GradCAS. GradCAS only accepts electronic transcripts from:

- Credentials Solutions (<http://www.transcriptsplus.net/order/>)
- Parchment (<https://www.parchment.com/order/>)
- National Student Clearinghouse (<https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/>)

To send transcripts to GradCAS by mail, download a transcript request form after you enter each institution in GradCAS. Send the transcript request form to the registrar at the institution and mail to:

**GradCAS Transcript Processing Center**  
**P.O. Box 9217**  
**Watertown, MA 02471**

The VHS SA program will not accept applications from practicing or retired physicians as these individuals can enter the surgical assistant profession by taking the Certified Surgical Assistant (CSA) Exam (<https://www.csaexam.com/>).

The application review process takes approximately eight weeks. The program director will send letters to all applicants indicating the determination of the admissions review committee. The program has a capacity to admit a maximum of 24 students a year. New classes are admitted in August, and students are enrolled for 22 consecutive months.

### Prerequisite Courses

All prerequisite courses must have been completed within the past 10 years with a B- or better for acceptance. Waivers may be granted based on experience and other factors.

- Anatomy and Physiology I and II with lab (human anatomy/physiology recommended): 6-8 credit hours
- General Biology with lab {*an equivalent or a higher-level course in this subject matter*}: 3 credit hours
- General or Intro Chemistry with lab {*an equivalent or a higher-level course in this subject matter*}: 3 credit hours
- Microbiology with lab: 3 credit hours

### TOEFL Scores

All applicants who entered the U.S. after the age of 12, have a foreign degree and/or English as a second language are required to provide TOEFL (<https://www.ets.org/toefl/>) scores. This requirement must be fulfilled before your application will be considered complete and eligible for review.

Due to the importance of communication in the English language for both learning and practicing, further demonstration of English proficiency may be requested as a condition of acceptance for applicants exhibiting difficulty with the written or spoken language.

To ensure an ability to function at the graduate level in this healthcare program, the following are acceptable TOEFL scores:

- Internet-based test (preferred): 85
- Computer-based test: 220
- Minimum of 25 in the speaking component

### Early Assurance Program

The Early Assurance Program (EAP) offers early acceptance to undergraduate students in their junior year at a participating institution. Applicants must have expressed interest in Surgical Assisting, are in good academic standing and are enrolled at an accredited undergraduate institution. The following institutions are participating in the Early Assurance Program with the VHS Surgical Assisting Program:

- Hampton University
- Norfolk State University
- Regent University
- Virginia Wesleyan University

### Eligibility

To be eligible for the Early Assurance Program, a student must:

- Be at least in their Junior Year at participating institution, having been enrolled as a "career student" at the institution from Freshman year of college (this program is not available to students transferring into the institution) and with only one academic year left to complete in their undergraduate education. Interested students should meet with the institution EAP Advisor during their freshman year or within the first semester of coursework to express interest in the EAP.
- Meet citizenship requirements of the Program.
- Meet all undergraduate institutional and degree requirements to continue as a student in good standing.
- Maintain an overall (cumulative) GPA of 3.00 or better.
- Have satisfactorily completed, by the time of application, 4 or 5 prerequisite courses at the institution as indicated on the Program's EAP website and not having withdrawn from or repeated any course(s) used to satisfy the prerequisites.
- Have no academic or other code of conduct violations.

### Technical Standards

The abilities and skills students must possess in order to complete the education and training associated with surgical assistant education are referred to as technical standards. These abilities and skills are essential for

clinical practice as a surgical assistant. These technical standards reflect five categorical areas - observation, communication, critical reasoning (intellectual), motor and sensory, and behavioral and social - and represent minimum competency levels.

Students must attest that they meet these technical standards prior to or at the time of matriculation into the surgical assisting program. Students found to be in violation of technical standards are at risk for dismissal from the program. Each standard is defined and includes examples of indicators of minimum competence in that area.

### 1.0 Observation Skills Technical Standard

1.01 Demonstrate sufficient attention and accuracy in observation skills (visual, auditory and tactile) in the lecture hall, laboratory and the operating room and or clinical settings.

1.02 Indicators include, but are not limited to, these examples:

1. Accurate identification of changes in color of fluids, skin and culture media.
2. Accurate visualization and discrimination of text, numbers, patterns, graphic illustrations and findings on X-ray and other imaging texts.

### 2.0 Communication Skills Technical Standard

2.01 Demonstrate effective communication skills with healthcare professionals and with people of varying cultures, ethnicities and personalities.

2.02 Indicators include, but are not limited to, these examples:

1. Clear, efficient and intelligible articulation of verbal language.
2. Legible, efficient and intelligible written English language.
3. Accurate and efficient English language reading skills.
4. Accurate and efficient expressive and receptive communication skills.
5. Ability to accurately follow oral and written directions.

### 3.0 Critical Reasoning Skills Technical Standard

3.01 Demonstrate critical reasoning skills, including, but not limited to, intellectual, conceptual, integrative and quantitative abilities.

3.02 Indicators include, but are not limited to, these examples:

1. Demonstrate ability to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize information.
2. Demonstrate ability to acquire, retain and apply new and learned information.

### 4.0 Motor and Sensory Function Technical Standard

4.01 Demonstrate sufficient motor and sensory function to perform typical surgical assistant duties.

4.02 Indicators include, but are not limited to, these examples:

1. Functional and sufficient sensory capacity (visual, auditory and tactile) to use surgical tools and perform procedures.
2. Execute motor movements that demonstrate safety and efficiency in the various learning settings, (i.e., classroom, laboratories and clinical settings) including appropriate negotiation of self and patient's in-patient care environments.
3. Proper use of clinical instruments and devices for clinical intervention including, but not limited to, suturing needles, catheters, retractors, etc.
4. Ability to lift over 50 lbs. with good body mechanics or 25-50 lbs. with improper body mechanics.
5. Physical stamina sufficient to complete the rigorous course of didactic and clinical study, which may include prolonged periods of sitting, standing, rapid ambulation and/or wearing personal protective equipment, such as lead aprons, for extended periods of time.

### 5.0 Behavioral and Social Attributes Technical Standard

5.01 Demonstrate the behavioral and social attributes vital to participation in a professional program and service as a practicing professional surgical assistant.

5.02 Indicators include, but are not limited to, these examples:

1. Possess the emotional health required for full utilization of mental faculties (judgment, orientation, affect and cognition).
2. Ability to develop mature and effective professional relationships with faculty, patients, the public and other members of the healthcare team.
3. Possess personal qualities that facilitate effective therapeutic interactions (compassion, empathy, integrity, honesty, benevolence, confidentiality).
4. Demonstrate impartial motives, attitudes and values in roles, functions and relationships.
5. Ability to monitor and react appropriately to one's own emotional needs and responses.
6. Display appropriate flexibility and adaptability in the face of stress or uncertainty associated with clinical encounters and clinical environments.
7. Compliance with standards, policies and practices set forth in the VHS Student Handbook and the SA Academic Student Handbook.

Our 71-credit-hour program includes 36 credits of training in our 10 month didactic phase and 35 credits of clinical practice in the second year.

#### Didactic Phase

Our immersive experience allows for direct observation and active participation with the surgical team to develop the critical clinical skills surgical assistants need. Students are exposed to surgical services, including perioperative, intraoperative and postoperative patient care, and ancillary surgical services, such as central sterile services and pathology.

This training complements the hands-on instruction students receive in the surgical environment. Our students enter the clinical phase of the program with practical experience in the operating room and a strong foundation of surgical knowledge.

#### Clinical Phase

In contrast to other accredited programs, our program manages and assigns students' clinical placements. At the end of the clinical phase, students:

- Have completed eight clinical rotations.
- Have performed the duties of and served in the role of the surgical assistant in at least 240 cases.
- Have the equivalent competencies expected of a junior surgical resident.
- Are eligible to sit for a national certification exam.

#### Course Sequence

<i>Term 1 - Fall</i>		<i>18</i>
MSA 602	Medical Terminology	
MSA 603	Surgical Microbiology w/Lab	
MSA 604	Advanced Topics of SA I	
MSA 606	Operative Practices	
MSA 610	Advanced Surgical Pharmacology	
MSA 612	Surgical Physiology	
MSA 613	Principles of SA I Lecture	
MSA 614	Principles of SA I Lab	
<i>Term 2 - Spring</i>		<i>18</i>
MSA 605	Advanced Topics of SA II	
MSA 607	Surgical Rounds	
MSA 608	Clinical Anatomy for HP	
MSA 611	Minimally Invasive Surgery	
MSA 615	Principles of SA II Lecture	

MSA 616	Principles of SA II Lab	
MSA 617	Clinical Reasoning for SA	
<i>Term 3 - Summer</i>		9
MSA 620	Medical Ethics of SA	
MSA 622	Leadership in Healthcare	
<i>Clinical Rotation - choose two</i>		
MSA 700	General Surgery	
<i>Term 4 - Fall</i>		14
MSA 618	Trauma	
MSA 619	Business of SA Services	
<i>Term 5 - Spring</i>		12
MSA 621	Capstone Project	