



Student Catalog

2023-2024



National Council for
State Authorization
Reciprocity Agreements

*A voluntary, regional approach
to state oversight of distance education*

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting

“The Leader in Surgical Training”

www.Meridian-Institute.edu

HISTORY AND OWNERSHIP

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting began operations in December of 1999 and is currently located at 1507 County Hospital Road, Nashville, TN 37218

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting is a proprietary post-secondary institution owned by:

Dennis A. Stover, CST, CSA, FAST

ADMINISTRATION:

President/Program Director - Dennis A. Stover, CST, CSA, FAST

Executive Vice President/Director of Student Affairs - Larry E. Stover, AS

Chief Financial Officer – April West, BS

Dean of Academic Affairs - Roy G. Zacharias, Jr. BS, CST, FAST

Financial Aid Director – Sugely Rodriguez, BA

Director of Regulation and Compliance - Celia White, MBA

Accreditation and Approval to Operate:

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting’s SFA Online Program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Programs (CAAHEP) upon the recommendation of the Subcommittee on Accreditation for Surgical Assisting (SASA) of The Accreditation Review Committee for Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARCST/SA). Contact Information:

6 W. Dry Creek Circle, Suite #110
Littleton, CO 80120

CAAHEP (www.caahep.org) - 727-210-2350 25400 US Highway 19 N, Suite 158, Clearwater, FL 33763
ARCSTSA (www.arcst.org) - 303-694-9262

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting is institutionally accredited by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools, (ABHES), a national accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. Contact Information: ABHES (www.abhes.org) – 301-291-7550 6116 Executive Blvd. Suite 730, North Bethesda, MD 20852

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting is authorized by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). This authorization must be renewed each year and is based on an evaluation by minimum standards concerning quality of education, ethical business practices, health and safety, and fiscal responsibility. Meridian’s staff and faculty are authorized by THEC in their respective positions.

Contact Information: THEC (www.tn.gov/thec) - 615-532-7495 404 James Robertson Parkway Nashville, Tennessee 37243. In addition to THEC, Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting is authorized by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) NC-SARA.org. Meridian Institute is eligible to operate in all states, except for California. Meridian Institute does not enroll in the state of California.

Contents

Mission Statement	2
American Disability Act (ADA)	2
Facility Description.....	3
Location	3
Faculty.....	3
Hours of Operation.....	3
Student Services.....	6
Admission Requirements and Procedures.....	6
Academic Calendar	6
Employment Assistance.....	7
Advance Placement and Credit for Experiential Learning	7
Clock hour Definition	7
Rules and Regulations	7
Gainful Employment	7
Technical Standards for Meridian Institute Students.....	7
Computer System Requirement Policy.....	8
Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting Grading System.....	10
Payment Options Available.....	10
Veterans Education Benefits	11
Cancellation and Refund Policy.....	12
Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy.....	13
Conditions for reinstatement:	14
Student Conduct Policy	15
Grievance Policy	16
Certificate Diploma in Surgical First Assisting.....	23
Academic Calendar	24
Enrollment Requirements	24
Cohort Start Policy.....	25
Tuition Information.....	26
Credential Offered at Completion	26
Attendance/Participation Policy	26
Program Objective	28
Overview	28
Transfer Credits	29

Textbook Requirement.....	29
Requirements for Graduation.....	29
Student Work Policy.....	30
Student Substitution for Paid Personnel.....	31
Test Retake Policy	31
Clock Hours and Credits Awarded.....	31
Required Courses:	32
Associates Degree of Applied Science in Surgical Assisting	38
Enrollment Requirements	39
Academic Calendar	39
Attendance	39
Tuition Information.....	39
Credential Offered at Completion	39
Program Objective	39
Overview	40
Transfer of credits	40
Method of Delivery	40
Textbook Requirement.....	40
Adding/Dropping a Class	40
Requirements for Graduation.....	40
Clock Hours and Credits Awarded.....	41
Required Courses	42

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1507 County Hospital Road
Nashville, TN 37218
Phone: 615-678-8196
Fax: 615-499-4795

Dear Prospective Student:

Thank you for your interest in Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting. This catalog will cover the details of the programs, as well as academic progression and student policies.

Meridian was formed and began operations in December of 1999. Since then, we have become the Nation's leading provider of surgical assisting education and training. Our goal is to implement and conduct courses that set the industry standard.

The **SFA Online Program Certificate** is a CAAHEP-accredited program with didactics and externship being delivered in a distance education format. It was developed with the concept that the student must understand **why** he/she is performing a specific task, followed by the knowledge and ability **how** to complete the actual task. We call this our "why-to-how" philosophy. Our curriculum adheres to the "*Core Curriculum for Surgical Assisting*," 4th Edition, published by The Association of Surgical Technologists. For several reasons, we firmly believe that Meridian has developed top level training for surgical assisting that prepares a person for a career as a first assistant:

1. The academic module utilizes an all-inclusive approach, enabling him/her to learn the particulars of each surgery while covering a wide-variety of stages of a patient. The program takes the patient from the General Practitioner's office to the post-operative stage. This allows students to understand symptoms, causes, and various treatment methods, as well as why certain surgeries may or may not be recommended. The academics then continue into the actual treatment module, followed by post-operative considerations. Incorporated within the academic module students will learn the fundamentals of assisting as well as legal, ethical, and business issues.

2. The hands-on portion of the SFA Online Program Certificate is our **Applied Sciences Lab**, which is conducted in Meridian's state-of-the-art lab facility. This facility sets us apart from any other surgical assisting training program. From our inception we realized that in order for our students to gain the experience necessary to move into the clinical externship module they must have more experience than just working on pieces of rubber in a hotel room setting. In this lab students work with live tissue, deal with real bleeding, and perform surgeries in a real-life setting. There can be no compromise on REAL training. **REAL training means REAL results.**

After successfully completing the SFA Online Program you have the opportunity to further your education by attending Meridian's degree completion, Associate of Applied Sciences (AAS) in Surgical Assisting program. Our Associates Program is currently only offered to Meridian graduates, allowing you to conveniently bridge your certificate to an associates degree.

3. Our commitment to **customer service** is a primary focus of Meridian. Every student receives individual attention and help from our staff and faculty.

As you begin your journey towards fulfilling your desire to become a surgical first assistant we hope that you will place your trust in us the same way as students from all over the country have done to this point. We truly want to help you achieve your goals and dreams and firmly believe that you will find Meridian's course to be of the highest standards available. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me personally. It would be my pleasure to assist you and answer whatever questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Dennis A. Stover

Dennis A. Stover, CST, CSA, FAST
President

Mission Statement

"It is our sincere goal and desire to train and graduate the highest quality assistants in the country. Meridian achieves this goal by implementing only programs that are of the highest standards and adhering to published surgical assisting education guidelines. Meridian graduates are thoroughly trained in all surgical disciplines, thus providing the ability for comprehensive surgical interventions leading to the best care available for all patients."

American Disability Act (ADA)

**It is the ongoing policy of our institute to afford equal educational opportunities to qualified individuals regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental handicap, veteran status or because they are disabled veterans, and to conform to all applicable laws and regulations.

Facility Description

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting is located in Nashville, Tennessee. It is comprised of approximately 12,000 square feet of administrative offices, classrooms, and a state-of-the-art lab that is equipped with six fully furnished operating room stations. These stations are supported with supplies and equipment to conduct “real time” surgery comparable to operating rooms across the country.

Location

Meridian’s facility is located at 1507 County Hospital Road, Nashville, TN 37218.

Faculty**Program Director (Surgical First Assisting): Dennis A. Stover CST, CSA, FAST****Status: Full Time**

Mr. Stover graduated from the Academy of Health Sciences in 1986 with a certificate in Surgical Technology and a certificate in Emergency Medicine. He became a CST in 1996 and a CSA in 1997. He provides oversight of the SFA Program and is also an Instructor for the SFA Program.

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Office Phone: (615) 678-8196

Program Director (Surgical Assisting, AAS): Gregory Salmon MBA, CST, CSFA, CDEI**Status: Full Time**

Mr. Salmon obtained a certificate in Surgical Technology in 1989. He earned his Associates Degree from Ivy Tech College in 1996, after which he received his CSFA and CSA in 1996. He earned a Bachelor of Applied Science degree from Siena Heights University in 2015 and a Master of Business Administration in Healthcare Management from Western Governors University in 2019. His responsibilities include oversight of the Associate Degree Program and Instructor.

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Office Phone: (615) 678-8196, Ext. 17

Office Email: Greg.Salmon@Meridian-Institute.edu

Director of Online Learning/Assistant SFA Program Director:**Tamra Roberts AAS, CST, CSFA, CDEI****Status: Full Time**

Mrs. Roberts graduated from Madisonville Community College in 2018 with an Associate Degree in Applied Science. Prior to receiving her associates, in 2013 she graduated from Meridian Institute with a certificate in Surgical First Assisting and in 2010. Ms. Roberts graduated Lonestar Tomball College in Tomball, Texas, with a certificate in Surgical Technology. She became a CST in 2010 and a CSFA in 2014.

Mrs. Roberts’ primary responsibility is online didactics. She is also an instructor for the SFA Certificate Program.

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Office Phone: (615) 678-8196

Office Email: Tamra.Roberts@Meridian-Institute.edu

Clinical Externship Coordinator: Candice Spencer, CST, CSFA, KCSA, CDEI
Status: Full Time

Ms. Spencer is a 2015 graduate of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting, SFA program and a graduate of Bowling Green Technical College in 2009 earning her AAS in Surgical Technology. CSFA Credential in 2015 is responsible for all aspects of the clinical externship.

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Office Phone: (615) 678-8196, Ext. 16

Office Email: Candice.Spencer@Meridian-Institute.edu

Applied Science Lab Director: Shannon Smith, M.H.Sc, CST, CSFA, FAST, CDEI
Status: Full Time

Ms. Smith graduated from Athens Technical College in 1989, with a diploma in Surgical Technology. She received her Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences with a minor in Management from Old Dominion University in 2006. She received her Master of Health Sciences in Higher Education from Nova Southeastern University in 2016. She was credentialed as a CSFA in 1998. Her responsibilities include classroom, didactic and hands-on instruction for the Applied Science Lab.

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Office Phone: (615)678-8196

Office Email: Shannon.Smith@Meridian-Institute.edu

Lead Lab Instructor: Josh Dixon, BS, CST, CSFA, CDEI
Status: Full Time

Mr. Dixon became a CST in 2009 from TCAT of Murfreesboro, TN. In 2012, he received his CFSA after graduation from Madisonville Community College in Madisonville, Kentucky. Mr. Dixon has a Bachelor Degree in Electronical Engineering before changing to focus on healthcare. He is responsible for Instruction in the Applied Science Skills Lab.

Office Hours: Wednesday -Friday 5:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Phone: (615) 678-8196

Office Email: Josh.Dixon@Meridian-Institute.edu

Lab Instructor: Trey Wiseman, AS, AAS, CST, CSA, CDEI
Status: Full Time

Mr. Wiseman was awarded an Associate Degree in Applied Science from Volunteer State Community College, Gallatin, Tennessee in 2005 and an Associate of Applied Science Degree in 2007 for Surgical Technology from Bowling Green Technical College in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Mr. Wiseman became a CST in 2007 and a CSA in 2011 after graduation from Madisonville Community College in Madisonville, Kentucky. He is responsible for Instruction in the Applied Science Skills Lab.

Office Hours: Wednesday -Friday 5:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Phone: (615) 678-8196

Office Email: Trey.Wiseman@Meridian-Institute.edu

Lab Instructor: Lance Stover, CST, CFSA, CDEI

Status: Full Time

Mr. Stover received his Surgical Technology training from Nashville State University in 2020. He was awarded the CST Credential after graduation in 2020. He continued his education at Madisonville Community College graduating from the Surgical Assisting Program in 2023 and subsequently awarded the CSFA credential in 2023. Mr. Stover area of responsibility is as a skills instructor in the Applied Science Lab.

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Office Phone: (615) 678-8196

Office Email: Lance.Stover@Meridian-Institute.edu

Instructor: Jeff Bidwell, MA, CSFA, CSA, KCSA, CST, FAST, CDEI

Status: Adjunct Facility

Mr. Bidwell graduated from the Madisonville Community College Surgical Technology Program in 1991, earned an AA degree from MCC in 1995, earned a BS degree from the University of Southern Indiana in 1997 and a Master's degree from Murray State University in 1999. His area of responsibility is online instruction for the SFA Certificate program.

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 6:00pm to 9pm

Office Phone: (615)678-8196

Office Email: Jeff.Bidwell@Meridian-Institute.edu

Instructor: Celia White, MBA, PMP

Status: Adjunct Facility

Ms. White graduated from University of Wyoming in 2006 and earned a Bachelor of Science. She went on to complete a Master in Business and Administration in 2020 from University of Northern Alabama. Her responsibility is general education courses in the Associate Degree Program.

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Office Phone: (615) 678-8196

Office Email: Celia.White@Meridian-Institute.edu

Hours of Operation

Meridian's hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Direct student support will be given during these hours. Email and online program issues are monitored during the evening and on the weekends. Meridian attempts to resolve all student inquiries within a 24-hour time period. **The office will be closed all major holidays, as listed below:**

New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, July Fourth, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the Friday after, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day

Student Services

Meridian has incorporated student career advisement by appointment, which is available through the student's instructor. During this time faculty will discuss with all students, field-related issues such as employment, reimbursement, career options, navigation, etc.

Along with career support Meridian also makes reasonable accommodations for disabilities and religious preferences that might impact the student's progression through the program.

Admission Requirements and Procedures

For a student to be enrolled at Meridian Institute, the following must take place **PRIOR** to beginning any portion of the program. For any additional requirements review the specific Meridian program section in this catalog.

1. Complete an application into the program. Applications are available by visiting www.meridian-institute.edu.
2. All prospective students must meet the entrance requirements listed in the enrollment requirements section of the program they are applying to.
3. The forms listed below must be received by Meridian Institute's Office of Student Affairs:
 - a. Completed Application with supporting attachments
 - b. Signed enrollment agreement
4. The Student must have made satisfactory payment arrangements, covered in payment options available in the student catalog.
5. Residents of New York, New Jersey, Washington, and the District of Columbia are required to have a hospital affiliation agreement executed prior to approval for enrollment.

Academic Calendar

There are no scheduled calendar breaks for the online coursework. Program specific calendars are made available to all students and in program specific portions of this catalog.

Employment Assistance

Upon completion of the program, Meridian cannot guarantee employment in the field of surgical assisting; however, we do work with various facilities across the nation and from time to time will be able to inform students of openings in the field. It is left up to each individual student to secure employment once he/she has completed the program.

Advance Placement and Credit for Experiential Learning

The surgical assisting program is an advanced level of study that is unique in the materials that are delivered. Meridian does not accept transfer credits from other institutions for the Certificate program. Credits may be given for experiential learning for Phase III. A student may transfer a maximum of 30 credits for the AAS Surgical Assisting degree completion program. This does not include the 28 credits awarded for the SFA Online Program Certificate.

Clock hour Definition

The unit of credit is the clock hour. A clock hour of credit is defined as a minimum of 50 minutes of supervised or directed instruction in any 60-minute period.

Rules and Regulations

Students are on campus during the one-week skills lab. No hats will be permitted, while closed toe shoes are required. Students are required to wear scrubs and meet the standards of operating room protocol.

Gainful Employment

GE disclosures for ALL programs can be found by visiting www.meridian-institute.edu/program-information/ under 'Important information about educational debt, earnings, and completion rates of students who attended this program.'

Technical Standards for Meridian Institute Students

Meridian Institute (the "School") is dedicated to providing its students with the skills and training they need to successfully enter the workforce upon graduation. For this reason, to successfully complete our Surgical First Assisting Program, students must learn about, practice, and provide essential Surgical Assisting abilities. This requires that students are able to meet certain essential physical and behavioral requirements ("Technical Standards"), which mirror the requirements to be a successful, practicing Surgical Assisting. These Technical Standards include the ability to:

- Use their hands to handle, control, or feel objects, tools, or controls.
- Repeat the same movements.
- Stand for long periods of time.
- Bend or twist their body.
- See details of objects that are less than a few feet away.
- Hold the arm and hand in one position or hold the hand steady while moving the arm.
- Use one or two hands to grasp, move, or assemble objects.
- Use fingers to grasp, move, or assemble very small objects.

- See differences between colors, shades, and brightness.
- Understand the speech of another person.
- Stand in close proximity to another person.
- Speak clearly so listeners can understand.
- Speak and understand English.
- Use effective interpersonal relationship skills

A student's inability to satisfy these Technical Standards will result in a student's removal from the program, without regard to whether the student claims a disability.

Accommodation

A prospective student with a disability who believes that he or she will require an accommodation to satisfy the Technical Standards identified above must apply to the school and should request an accommodation. If a prospective student does not apply, identify a disability, and request an accommodation, none will be provided.

If a prospective student with a disability applies to the school and requests an accommodation in order to satisfy the identified Technical Standards, the School will engage with the prospective student in an individualized assessment to determine whether the requested accommodation would permit the student to safely complete the program without resulting in a fundamental alteration of the program or placing an undue burden on the institution. If, following this assessment, the School and the prospective student are able to identify a reasonable accommodation that satisfies these various requirements (and all other admissions standards are satisfied), the prospective student and the School will complete an Accommodation Plan and the individual will be admitted to the program.

Computer System Requirement Policy *(Revised 07/01/2021)*

Meridian Institute's SFA ONLINE program didactics are delivered via distance education. Distance education means that the student will complete classroom studies utilizing a virtual classroom from their individual computer. Meridian utilizes the Canvas Learning Management System. If your computer does not have the proper hardware for Canvas it may run slowly, or may not run at all. Prior to using Canvas on your computer, compare your current system configuration with the system requirements below.

Computer Specifications

Canvas and its hosting infrastructure are designed for maximum compatibility and minimal requirements.

Screen Size

Canvas is best viewed at a minimum of 1366x768, which is the average size of a notebook computer. If you want to view Canvas on a device with a smaller screen, we recommend using the Canvas mobile app.

Operating Systems

- Windows 7 and newer
- Mac OSX 10.12 and newer
- Linux - chromeOS

Mobile Operating System

- iOS; Safari and Chrome
- Android 8.1 and newer

Computer Speed and Processor

- Chrome (default browser with limited Canvas support)
- Internet
- Firefox

Internet Speed

Along with compatibility and web standards, Canvas has been carefully crafted to accommodate low bandwidth environments.

Minimum of 512kbps

Screen Readers

- Macintosh: Voiceover (latest version for Safari)
- PC: JAWS (latest version for Chrome and Firefox)
- PC: NVDA (latest version for Chrome and Firefox)

Supported Browsers

Canvas supports the last two versions of every browser release. We highly recommend updating to the **newest version** of whatever browser you are using as well as the most up-to-date Flash plug-in. As of **July 13, 2015**, we support the most recent versions of Flash and popular web browsers:

- **Internet Explorer** Edge
- **Chrome** 91 and 92
- **Safari** 13 and 14
- **Firefox** 89 and 90 (Extended Releases are not supported)
- **Respondus Lockdown Browser** (supporting the latest system requirements)

Some supported browsers may still produce a banner stating *Your browser does not meet the minimum requirements for Canvas*. If you have upgraded your browser but you are still seeing the warning banner, try logging out of Canvas and deleting your browser cookies. Learn how to clear your cache on a Mac or a PC.

Required Components

JavaScript must be enabled to run Canvas

Computer System Requirement Policy Term Definitions:

- Hardware: Monitor, computer, mouse, keyboard, etc.
- Network Adapter: A printed circuit board that plugs into the bus of both user machines (clients) and servers in a local area network (LAN). Also commonly called a “network

interface card” (NIC) or “LAN card”. The network adapter transmits data onto the network and receives data from the network. It works at the data link protocol level.

- LAN : Local Area Network
- WiFi: wireless access network
- Operating System: The program running the function level (Windows, Google, ios, etc.)
- Web Browser: Presentation layer of World Wide Web (Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Firefox, etc.)
- Plug in: Software or Hardware that allows the use of certain functions on the program level (Flash, Adobe Reader, Silverlight, Java, etc.)

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting Grading System

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Percentage
A	4	90-100%
B	3	80-89%
C	2	70-79%
D	1	60-69%
F	0	0 – 59%

Payment Options Available

Several different payment options are available:

1. Student may pay for their tuition in full and upfront by utilizing a MasterCard, Visa, American Express, or Discover Card.
2. Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting offers **Federal Financial Aid** to those who qualify. This is administered through the U.S. Department of Education’s Title IV program.
3. Veteran Educational Benefits: Post 9/11 GI® Bill, Chapter 30, Chapter 35, Chapter 1606, Chapter 31, and Veterans Educational Assistant Program.
4. Other payment options as approved by the Director of Financial Aid. These options are available to all students.

In the event that the student is approved for a payment plan option, all monthly payments must be paid by means of either a bank check card or major credit card. No certificates or transcripts will be released to the student until payment is made in full.

***Most hospitals have excellent tuition reimbursement plans, so be sure to check into this option. Meridian would be glad to assist you in working with your hospital.

Veterans Education Benefits

Veterans Education Benefits are available to eligible Meridian students who are active duty or reserve military personnel, veterans, or in some cases, the child or spouse of a veteran. To determine eligibility you must first submit an application to Veterans Affairs ([VA Form 22-1990](#)) or [apply on-line](#) (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/apply-for-benefits/application>). Once you have been approved, you will receive a Certificate of Eligibility letter from the United States Department of Veteran Affairs approximately 2-3 weeks from your application date. Upon confirmation of your enrollment status, your certification will be electronically submitted via the VA-Once System.

Any covered individual will be to attend and participate in the course of education during the period beginning on the date on which the individual provides to the educational institution a certificate of eligibility for entitlement to educational assistance under chapter 31 or 33 (a "certificate of eligibility" can also include a "Statement Benefits" obtained from the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) website- eBenefits, or a CAF28-1905 form for chapter 31 authorization purposes) and ending on the earlier of the following dates:

1. The Date on which payment from VA is made to the institution.
2. 90 days after the date the institution certified tuition and fees following the receipt of the certificate of eligibility.

Meridian will not impose any penalty, including the assessment of late fees, the denial of access to classes, libraries, or other institutional facilities, or the requirement that a covered individual borrow additional funds, on any covered individual because of the individual's inability to meet his or her financial obligations to the institution due to the delayed disbursement funding from VA under chapter 31 or 33.

Additional Information:

- ☐ Students receiving need-based financial assistance from Meridian Institute must keep in mind that VA educational benefits will be coordinated with other institutional and federal financial aid funds as part of the "financial aid package".
- ☐ Student must submit a written request to use such entitlement.
- ☐ The Financial Aid Office may request additional information necessary to properly certify enrollment.
- ☐ Students are responsible for the processing and technical fee.
- ☐ Students are responsible for any remaining balance that is not covered by the VA educational benefits.
- ☐ Upon submission of the Certificate of Eligibility submitted to the VA, the student can remain in attendance for up to 90 days from enrollment without payment from the VA. Meridian will not impose a penalty, or require the beneficiary to borrow additional funds to cover tuition and fees due to late payments from the VA.
- ☐ Service members and reservist can be readmitted to any program if the student is temporarily unable to attend class or suspend their studies due to service requirements.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

(August 1, 2014)

You, the student, may cancel your enrollment any time prior to your start date for a full refund of all tuition and fees paid. Once you have enrolled in a program and you determine that it is necessary to withdraw, you should immediately notify their instructor through email.

The tuition refund amount shall be determined as follows:

If you withdraw from the program:	Tuition Refund Amount:
Prior to start date	100% refund (Tuition and Fees)
Within two weeks of the start date	80% refund **
Within three weeks of the start date	60% refund **
Within four weeks of the start date	40% refund **
5 weeks or more after the start date	0% refund **

Refunds will be issued within 45 days from the determined date of withdraw and are calculated using the last date of attendance.

A student's last day of attendance is the last day of academic activity and considered the official withdraw date.

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting date of determination of a student is (whichever is sooner):

- The date that the school is first notified of student's intent to withdraw
- The postmark of the withdrawal letter

Financial Aid Recipients:

Repayment calculation of unearned aid is used to determine any refund. As a result, any students who received federal funds will be required to repay any aid that is determined to be "unearned." The unearned repayment calculation is performed utilizing the federal government's repayment worksheet. The amount of assistance earned is determined on a prorated basis. For example, if the student completed 30% of the program, they earned 30% of the financial assistance that was originally awarded. Once the student has completed more than 60% of the program, the student earns all of the assistance they were scheduled to receive for the program. Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting will repay the amount on the student's behalf to the appropriate federal and institutional program(s), and will bill the student's account within 45 days of the student's date of determination. An invoice reflecting these charges will be sent to the student upon completion of the Repayment Calculation of Unearned Aid

Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

(Revised August 6, 2018)

Students must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as defined by the college. Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting has elected to apply the standards set forth below to **all students** including those students who received aid from any of the U.S. Department of Education Title IV programs. SAP for the certificate program is measured at the end of the 7th month of enrollment. SAP for the AAS degree is measured mid-semester of each semester. Additional requirements may be listed within individual course syllabi. Students can view their grades by logging into the learning management system student portal, or by visiting www.meridian-institute.edu and requesting a transcript.

The student's progress is measured in two components:

Qualitative and Quantitative Measures of Academic Progress

Minimum Qualitative Measures of Academic Progress

The qualitative measures of academic progress are based on achieving a C or better in all core classes, while a D must be achieved in general education classes. Students must maintain an accumulative GPA of 2.0.

Quantitative Measures of Academic Progress

All students who attend the SFA Certificate program must make arrangements for, and attend the Applied Science Lab within the initial 26 weeks of enrollment. Students must complete all three modules within a 52-week period of enrollment. All students enrolled in the AAS in Surgical Assisting must complete all degree requirements in 18 months.

Maximum Timeframe

The student may not exceed 150% of the published length of the program. Federal regulations allow financial aid recipients to receive financial aid for a maximum number of attempted credits. If at any point in time it is determined that a student cannot complete their program of study within 150% of the program length, the student will be ineligible for additional financial aid.

Effect on Student not completing the course within the specified timeframe:

The policy below will outline the procedure and general effects in the event that any student does not finish the entire program within the allotted timeframe.

AAS STUDENTS ARE ALLOTTED 150% OF CREDITS ATTEMPTED TO COMPLETE THE AAS DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAM.

ALL SFA CERTIFICATE STUDENTS ARE ALLOTTED 52 WEEKS TO COMPLETE ALL THREE MODULES OF THE SFA ONLINE PROGRAM FROM THEIR INITIAL START DATE*, IN ACCORDANCE WITH MERIDIAN'S GRADING POLICY.

* The start date for the certificate program is the first of the month following the month in which the student signs the Enrollment Agreement if openings permit. If openings are unavailable the student will start in the earliest month available following the month in which the student signs the enrollment agreement in which openings do exist. All students will be notified by the Director of Student Affairs via email when they are 60 days away from their completion date.

Students will receive an additional email notification when they are 30 days out from their completion date.

Extension

If a student does not complete the program in the allotted timeframe, they **may** be eligible for a one-time six-month extension**. The final approval for the extension is at the discretion of the Program Director and will involve a \$250.00 extension fee.

** Extensions will only be granted in extenuating circumstances as determined by the Program Director.

NOTE: EXTENSIONS WILL ONLY BE GRANTED ONE TIME FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS.

If the student does not apply for **or** is not granted an extension and fails to complete the program within the time-frame they will be terminated from the program.

SFA Certificate students who receive a “W” grade in courses attempted will become ineligible for financial aid for those particular courses, but can regain eligibility for financial aid once the course is successfully completed. A student who receives, “F” in Module III and is on an extension will still be considered as completing of the enrollment period for financial aid purposes. All students must retake and pass these modules in order to graduate.

Repeat courses will be counted in attempted clock/credit hours. (Note: ALL courses attempted and earned, except audited courses, count in the total clock/credit hours attempted.

Conditions for reinstatement:

If the student does not apply or is not granted an extension within the final 30 days of their initial enrollment expiration date or fails to complete the program requirements they will be withdrawn and must re-enroll to complete their studies. If a student is on a current enrollment extension and does not complete the program requirements by the end of the extension period, they will be withdrawn and required to re-enroll to complete the program.

Students that are permitted to re-enroll will be given credit for completed work but must finish any uncompleted classes, labs or externship requirements. **Students must attend and pass a three-day skills remediation lab at the Nashville, TN Campus.** All students must have an executed affiliation agreement to be considered for re-enrollment.

Failure to apply for re-enrollment within ten years of the last completed course will require the student to enroll as a new student.

Re-enrollment to complete the externship phase of the program will be for 6 months. If additional coursework including the externship is required, the enrollment period will be for one years.

All applicable tuition and fees will be applied and **must be paid by the student.** All previous financial obligation must be met by the student prior to enrollment.

Fees Below:

Re-Enrollment

Re-Enrollment Fee	\$250.00
Remediation Processing Fee	\$500.00
Payment Plan Fee	\$500.00

☐ **Financial Aid Warning:** Warning status will be assigned to a student who fails to meet progress standards at the conclusion of an evaluation period. A student assigned a Financial Aid Warning will be notified by email. This will delay all financial aid disbursement until the student regains satisfactory academic progress.

A student who is placed on financial aid and SAP warning must do the following to regain satisfactory academic progress.

1. Remedial Coursework

If a student falls below SAP, the student will work with the instructor utilizing a customized remedial training program. Clear objectives will be outlined for the student to achieve success and be removed from remedial training. The following actions will take place concerning remediation.

If the student defers the remediation, they may be withdrawn from the program.

If the student successfully completes the requirements and passes the course, they will be removed from remediation.

If the student fails the class a second time they will be required to retake the course.

2. Documentation: Submit third-party documentation (if applicable) supporting the reason(s) why the student failed to maintain academic progress; i.e., a letter from a mental health professional or police officer, medical or legal documentation, death certificate, etc.

3. Notification of Status: The Academic Department will notify students and the Financial Aid office when students are on **Warning** status. However, it is the student's responsibility to know their academic progress status, academic plan, and how it affects financial aid eligibility.

Student may not be eligible to reenroll if they withdrew due to not meeting SAP.

Student Conduct Policy

Students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner at all times. All academic assignments, including papers, tests, or other assignments, are to be the work of the individual student. The following are examples of unethical or unprofessional behavior:

- Plagiarism
- Unprofessional behavior in communication with faculty and staff
- Completing an assignment for another student in part or in whole

Consequences

Any student who acts in an unethical manner will receive a failing grade. Any second academic incident or unprofessional communication with staff or faculty can result in administrative termination from the Institute. Students who were withdrawn due to poor student conduct may not be reconsidered for reenrollment.

Grievance Policy

1. Introduction

Meridian is committed to mutual respect among all constituents of the institute's community. This commitment includes students, faculty, staff, and administration alike. In all concerns about fair treatment, we seek to work together to understand and address those concerns without having to resort to formal grievance procedures. When that is not possible, we are at all levels committed to a fair and reasonable resolution of issues through a formal grievance process guided by the information and documentation provided in the process. The regulation described below guides the orderly procedure of grievance, and attempts at resolution.

2. What May Be Grieved

- 2.1 This procedure is to be used to resolve grievances against decisions or actions that were made by employees or agents of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting.

All grievances of an academic nature should be sent to:

Roy Zacharias Jr., Dean of Academics, 1507 County Hospital Road, Nashville, TN 37218
(615) 678-8196

All grievances for non-academic related issues should be sent to:

Larry Stover, Vice President, 1507 County Hospital Road, Nashville, TN 37218 (615) 678-8196

- 2.2 An action or decision is grievable only if it involves a misapplication or misinterpretation of institute policy, regulation, or rule, or a violation of state or federal law. Grievances may not be used to challenge policies or procedures of general applicability.

- 2.3 Claims against an employee on matters that are unrelated to the employee's job or role at the Institution may not be grieved.

3. Who May Grieve

The procedures set forth below may be used by grievants who are enrolled as students at Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting, at the time of the incident being grieved. The person filing the grievance must be the alleged victim of unfair treatment; a grievance cannot be filed on behalf of another person.

4. Other Remedies

The existence of this procedure does not bar grievants from also filing claims in other forums to the extent permitted by state or federal law.

5. Time Limits

The formal resolution process described below must be initiated within 60 days of the decision, action, or events giving rise to the grievance. This time limit may be extended by the Program Director or Administrator with jurisdiction over the grievance, if the grievant makes the request for extension within the 60-day period, for good cause shown (e.g., an active effort at informal resolution).

6. Informal Resolution, Generally

6.1 The grievant should first discuss the issue with the person(s) responsible for the action or decision being grieved, and with that person's supervisor (or higher administrative authority), if feasible. This is not required in cases where the grievant believes that efforts at informal resolution may result in retaliation or other unfair treatment.

6.2 On those occasions where contact between the Program Director and the student is inevitable or deemed potentially useful the Program Director should clarify for the student the difference between his/her role at the informal stage of resolution and what it would be at the formal stage of resolution.

7. Informal Resolution, Civil Rights Grievances

If a student believes that he or she has been discriminated or retaliated against based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability he/she should notify the Director of Student Affairs. The Director may discuss the issue with all parties and attempt to facilitate an informal resolution. The Director shall make efforts to resolve the issue as soon as practical and shall maintain a record of all communications and documents. This record shall be kept confidential to the extent required and allowed by law.

8. Grade Grievances - Formal Resolution

8.1 Students should first pursue informal resolution of grade grievances. If informal resolution is not satisfactory or the time limit for filing a formal grievance is about to expire, then the student may proceed as follows.

8.2 Otherwise, grade grievances must be presented in writing to the program director for resolution. The Program Director shall inquire into the matter and send a written decision to the student and faculty member. These procedures are laid out to guide the formal grievance of final grades only. Test grades and partial grades are not deemed appropriate for formal grievance.

8.3 In no event shall persons who review a grade grievance substitute their subjective judgment about academic quality for the judgment of the instructor. However, grievances may be substantiated if it is determined on the basis of the evidence that the grade was based on a factor other than academic merit, or if there has been a clear error in grading based on objective criteria.

9. Other Grievances - Formal Resolution

9.1 Step One:

If informal resolution is not successful, the student may file a grievance by sending a request for hearing along with the following information to a Vice President. The grievance must:

1. be in written form;
2. state how the decision or action is unfair and harmful to the grievant and list the Institute's policies or state or federal laws that have been violated, if known;
3. name the respondent parties (the person(s) against whom the grievance is filed);
4. state how the respondents are responsible for the action or decision,
5. state the requested remedy.

9.1.1 If it is clear on the face of the written grievance that the grievance has not been filed within the time limit, or pertains to a matter not grievable under this procedure, or is from a person without grievance rights under this grievance, the Director of Student Affairs shall so indicate in a letter to the grievant and the grievance shall be dismissed. If the grievance is not dismissed, the Director of Student Affairs, or a designee, shall appoint a panel of four persons to hear the grievance and shall provide them with a copy of these procedures and the written request for hearing. Panel members shall include two students and two faculty members.

9.2 Step Two:

The panel shall meet, elect a chair, and send the grievant's hearing request to the respondent(s), all within ten business days of being appointed. The chair shall offer respondent(s) an opportunity to provide a written response to the allegations within ten business days to the panel chair. The chair may also instruct the parties that they have ten business days to provide each other and the panel with (i) copies of any exhibits they wish to introduce as evidence, and (ii) a list of witnesses that each party will call. The chair may extend the deadlines for submitting a response and for exchanging proposed exhibits upon a showing of good cause.

9.2 Step Three:

9.2.1 The chair shall notify the parties of the hearing date, time, and place at least ten business days in advance of the hearing. (The panel may schedule additional days for hearing, if needed, after the hearing is underway, so long as all parties receive reasonable advance notice of the additional dates.). The response to the grievance must be distributed to the panel and all parties at least ten University business days prior to the hearing.

9.2.2 The hearing must be tape recorded so that all persons can be clearly heard.

9.2.3 Each party may choose to have one observer present who is not a witness. Observers may not provide representation or otherwise participate in the proceeding, but may speak to their respective parties off the record so long as it does not interfere with the hearing.

9.2.4 The panel may request procedural advice from an attorney.

9.2.5 The panel has the authority to rule on procedural matters. The panel may decline to consider evidence for reasons of excessive redundancy, immateriality, irrelevance, and other good cause.

9.2.6 Formal rules of evidence will not apply, and the panel may consider any evidence it believes to be relevant and reliable.

9.2.7 Each party may make an opening and closing statement (grievant first and respondent(s) second in opening; grievant first, respondent(s) second, and grievant last in closing) of a time duration to be determined by the panel. After any opening statements, the grievant shall present his/her testimony and exhibits, and present any witness testimony. The respondent(s) shall have an opportunity to ask questions of the grievant and witnesses. The next step is for the respondent(s) to present any testimony, exhibits, and witnesses, to be followed by questioning from the grievant. Rebuttal and other follow-up testimony are at the discretion of the panel. Closing statements from each party conclude this step of the hearing process. Panel members may ask questions or request additional information, documents, or witnesses at any time prior to adjournment. At the conclusion of this step of the procedure, the parties and witnesses shall be excused.

9.3 Step Four:

9.3.1 The panel shall deliberate and reach a decision on the grievance in closed session. Deliberations are not tape recorded or transcribed. The decision must be based solely on material presented in the grievance. The panel should be careful not to substitute its judgment for that of the respondent(s). Rather, the panel should decide if the decision being grieved was the result of a misapplication or misinterpretation of university policies, regulations, or rules or a violation of state or federal law. The burden is on the grievant to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the grievant has experienced an injury that would entitle the grievant to relief and that such injury is remediable.

9.4.2 The chair of the panel shall compile an official record of the proceeding that includes a copy of all correspondence with the parties, all evidence submitted to the panel (documentary evidence that the panel declined to consider must be so marked and segregated), the recording or transcript of the hearing, and anything else considered by the panel in reaching its recommendation. The chair of the panel shall be responsible for ensuring that a written report is prepared that addresses and resolves all material factual issues in dispute, that states a conclusion as to whether the student was subjected to misapplication or misinterpretation of policy or state or federal law, and if so recommends remedies as appropriate. The report and official record shall be delivered to the President, with copies of the report to be sent to the parties, within sixty calendar days after the hearing. A dissenting panel member may file a minority report at the same time.

9.4 Step Five:

The President shall issue a written decision within twenty business days of receipt of the panel's report and official record. The decision may either adopt the panel report in whole, modify it in part, or reject the report and reach different findings or conclusions for reasons expressly stated to clarify the record or cure. This decision shall be sent to the parties (certified mail return receipt, or personal delivery with a signed and dated receipt, to the grievant) and may be shared with the panel members.

10. Confidentiality

Panel members, witnesses, parties, and all other persons involved in the grievance proceeding are expected to maintain strict confidentiality regarding the proceeding. State and federal laws govern the privacy rights of students and employees.

11. ex Parte Contacts

Once a hearing (formal resolution) has been requested, there should be no ex parte communication between parties and panel members concerning the merits of the case. An ex parte contact or communication is one sided; it occurs when one person shares information with a panel member without including all other parties. To prevent this from occurring, all communications that (a) occur outside the recorded hearing, and (b) are between one or more parties and one or more panel members, should be in written form and distributed simultaneously to all parties and panel members. Discussion of the merits of the case or presentation of evidence outside the hearing should be avoided. The rule against ex parte contacts also applies to communication with the final decision-maker and everyone who is responsible for deciding appeals.

12. Appeal Routes

Grievance decisions may be appealed as follows:

All grievances may be appealed to The Board of Directors for the institution.

13. Appeal Procedures

13.1 The aggrieved party may appeal by delivering written notice of appeal to the Board of Directors. Appeals received more than ten days after the decision was received (or delivery of the decision was attempted) will not be allowed.

13.2 Written notice of appeal must (i) identify the person whose decision is being appealed, (ii) provide a brief statement of the grounds for appeal, which at minimum should contain a list of alleged errors in the decision or decision-making process, (iii) to the extent possible, state which law(s), or institution policy(ies) has been violated by each of the alleged errors, (iv) indicate what remedy is requested, (v) be signed by the appellant and dated, and (vi) include a copy of the decision being appealed.

13.3 Once notice of appeal has been delivered, the Institute President whose decision is being appealed shall forward the record of the case to the Board of Directors hearing the appeal. The record shall consist of all information considered in the decision-making process, the panel's recommendation, and the decision(s) of the President. The record shall be compiled in chronological order to the extent feasible, and shall include a table of contents for ease of reference.

13.4 The Board hearing the appeal may ask the parties to submit written statements of their positions for purposes of appeal and will render a decision based on review of the record of the case and any written appeal statements submitted by the parties. The Board's decision is final. There is no right to a hearing or oral presentation in appeals.

14. Arbitration

At any point if the student wants to seek legal action, it should be noted that all proceedings must go through the entirety of the grievance policy. If the student is still unsatisfied with the results, then arbitration will be utilized prior to any litigation. It is hereby agreed that grievance shall be referred to the United States Arbitration and Mediation for arbitration prior to initiating any legal actions.

The arbitrator's decision shall be final and binding and judgment may be entered thereon. In the event the student fails to proceed with arbitration, unsuccessfully challenges the arbitrator's award, or fails to comply with arbitrator's award, the other part is entitled to costs of suit including a reasonable attorney's fee for having compel arbitration or defend/enforce the award.

15. If the grievant is still unsatisfied with the Board of Directors final decision they may file a complaint with:

1. Tennessee Higher Education Commission: Parkway Towers, Suite 1900; James Robertson Parkway; Nashville, TN 37243-0830 (615/741-5293)
2. Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs: 1361 Park Street; Clearwater, FL 33756(727/210-2350)
3. Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools: 7777 Leesburg Pike, Suite 314; N. Falls Church, VA 22043(703/917-9503)

Transferability of Credits Disclosure

Credits earned at Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting may not transfer to another educational institution. Credits earned at another educational institution may not be accepted by Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting. You should obtain confirmation that Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting will accept any credits you have earned at another educational institution before you execute an enrollment contract or agreement. You should also contact any educational institutions that you may want to transfer credits earned at Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting to determine if such institutions will accept credits earned at Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting prior to executing an enrollment contract or agreement. The ability to transfer credits from Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting to another educational institution may be very limited. Your credits may not transfer and you may have to repeat courses previously taken at Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting if you enroll in another educational institution. You should never assume that credits will transfer to or from any educational institution. It is highly recommended, and you are advised to make certain, that you know the transfer of credit policy of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting and of any other educational institutions you may in the future want to transfer the credits earned at Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting before you execute an enrollment contract or agreement.

**Certificate Diploma in Surgical First Assisting
(SFA Program)**

Academic Calendar

Students will receive an academic calendar for their online courses as part of their Canvas classroom instruction and are required to adhere to all academic deadlines. Please refer to the Computer System Requirement Policy on pages 8-10).

The **SFA Online Program Certificate enrolls 12 cohorts (starts) per year.** The student may enroll at any time during the year to start with the upcoming cohort (See Cohort Start Policy).

The Applied Science Lab is scheduled three times a month in support of the Phase III requirements. Student Services will provide support during the enrollment process to schedule lab attendance. If the student becomes aware of any conflict in attending a scheduled lab, they must contact the Director of Student Services immediately to discuss the conflict. It is the student's responsibility to contact Meridian to verify lab availability if rescheduling is required. Lab dates for the month of December are scheduled to meet the needs of the program.

Enrollment Requirements

(Revised October 13, 2021)

The minimum requirements for admission to the surgical assisting certificate program are outlined below. These requirements apply to all students who are interested in pursuing a career in surgical assisting. Depending upon the experience of the applicant, additional requirements or verification may be requested to support enrollment. Enrollment approval is at the discretion of the Dean of Academic Affairs. Currently, Nebraska and Virginia require licensure to work as a surgical assistant. Students will be informed of this requirement should it impact the success of their enrollment. No portion of the program is offered in a language other than English.

Minimum Eligibility Requirements

- Must be a high school graduate or the appropriate equivalent.
 - Official high school transcript or General Education Development (GED) certificate must be provided.
- Employment
 - All applicants must be employed at a healthcare care facility.
 - Traveling surgical technologists must provide verification of externship availability prior to beginning online classes.
 - Currently in a scrub role
- BLS Certification
 - Proof of current certification must be provided.
- Computer Access
 - All students must have daily access to a computer that complies with the computer system requirement policy in this catalog (pages 6 – 8).

Prospective student must meet one of the following:

- Graduate of a surgical technology program.
 - Certification (CST or TS-C) is preferred but not mandatory.
 - Military trained surgical technologists.
 - Must have current multi-specialty surgical scrub experience.
- Surgical Assistants
 - Applicants that have not attended a SA CAAHEP accredited program will be required to complete all the academic requirements for graduation including attendance to the Applied Science Lab.
 - CSFA's and CSA's that have earned credentialing through experiential practice will be required to complete all academic requirements for graduation and attend the Applied Science Lab. They may not be required to complete the externship portion of the program.
- Nurse Practitioner/Registered Nurse/Licensed Vocational Nurse
 - Must hold a valid license for the state in which they are currently practicing.
 - Have current surgical scrub experience. Shadowing is not acceptable.
 - Circulating responsibilities do not qualify as surgical scrub experience.

Cohort Start Policy

****All SFA Online Program Certificate students will start the program on the first of the month following the month in which the student signs the Enrollment Agreement, if openings permit. If openings are unavailable the student will start in the earliest month (in which openings do exist) following the month in which the student signs the enrollment agreement. ****

Tuition Information

Meridian has developed the most comprehensive surgical assistant course available. By utilizing online modules, combined with the hands-on lab, our courses can be offered at a lower tuition than many other distance education programs.

The program cost, which includes all online modules, Applied Sciences Lab, and clinical support as well as all materials total cost is \$7745.00. **NOTE: As with everything else, program rates are subject to change periodically.** The only additional expense is your transportation, lodging, and food for the week-long Applied Sciences Lab, as well as your malpractice insurance fee of approximately \$29 to \$100.00, and book costs.

Revised 02/07/2024

Tuition and Fees Information (Students starting 07/01/2024 and after)

Tuition (\$243.30 per credit):	\$ 6995.00
Technology Fee	\$ 500.00
Processing Fee	\$ 500.00
<u>Applied Science Lab and Technology Fee</u>	<u>\$ 750.00</u>
Total Program Cost	\$8745.00

Tuition and Fees Information (Prior to 07/01/2024 Start)

Tuition (\$214.11 per credit):	\$ 5995.00
Technology Fee	\$ 500.00
Processing Fee	\$ 500.00
<u>Applied Science Lab and Technology Fee</u>	<u>\$ 750.00</u>
Total Program Cost	\$7745.00

Additional Fees:

Book: Appox. \$125.00

Malpractice Insurance: Approx. \$100.00 per year.

Certification Exam Fee: Approx. \$100.00-\$200.00

Credential Offered at Completion

Upon successful completion of the SFA Online Program requirements the student will receive a Certificate of Completion.

Attendance/Participation Policy

Weekly attendance in the online classroom is required for the entire 52-week enrollment period. Online participation and attendance is required according to the academic calendar for each student. This calendar is provided in the Canvas Learning Management System. Students are required to complete all assignments on time. The timeline for this policy is as follows:

- Instructor will grade the discussion questions within 24 – 48 hours of due date and verify completion date of weekly test.
- The instructor will notify the Academic Dean of any student who has an unexcused absence for the class.

- The instructor will notify the student by email of their status.
- All assignments (discussions, video quizzes, tests) must be completed. Students not completing assignments for the last week of a class will receive a “0” grade for the assignments not completed.

Phase Two Attendance

All students are required to attend the Applied Science Lab within the first 6 months of enrollment. If a student cancels their lab date with less than 30 days' notice they will be assessed a \$500.00 rescheduling fee. Failure to attend a scheduled lab impacts the student's ability to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress and is grounds for dismissal from the program. Participation in the Applied Science Lab is important for success and students are expected to be on time for all lab sessions. Continual tardiness can be grounds for immediate dismissal. If a student is absent from a lab session they will be dismissed from the lab and required to schedule attendance to a future lab. If a student is dismissed from the lab and they cannot schedule a lab date to meet the 6 month enrollment requirement for Satisfactory Academic Progress, they will be withdrawn from the program.

Program Objective

The goal of the SFA Online Certificate Program is to train and graduate the highest quality surgical assistants nationwide. This goal is achieved by adhering to published surgical assisting education standards and guidelines through a distance education format. This program prepares students for entry into the surgical assisting field as well as eligibility to sit for the Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA) and the Certified Surgical Assistant (CSA) national examinations. The program is designed to provide the finest care for all patients.

Overview

Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting is institutionally accredited by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) and the SFA Online Certificate is programmatically accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Students are required to complete the course of study in 12 months (52 weeks). The course consists of three phases of study presented in a distance education format which includes an online didactic classroom. Upon successful completion of all three phases of the program the student will receive a Certificate of Completion.

Phase 1:

This aspect of the program consists of 12 online courses including anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, anesthesia, procedural fundamentals, legal aspects for the first assist and additional courses pertinent to surgical assisting. Textbooks and other materials are provided electronically or in paper form as dictated by the course requirements. Student will complete all didactics utilizing the online Canvas Learning Management System. Please refer to the computer system requirements in this catalog (pages 6 – 8). Students are required to obtain the 16th edition Alexanders Care of the Patient in Surgery for the program.

Phase 2:

This phase incorporates 20 hours of asynchronous instruction through the Canvas Learning Management System as it relates to the Applied Science Lab. and 40 hours of synchronous on campus for 5 consecutive days. The lab must be completed within the first 6 months of enrollment. It is highly suggested that lab dates be scheduled as quickly as possible after enrollment since they fill up very fast.

Phase 3:

The clinical externship portion of the program is incorporated in this phase. Each student must complete 140 qualified surgical assisting cases. Breakdown of the case requirements includes 20 general surgery cases, and 120 various specials (can include general). Surgical assisting cases can be logged in other specialties. Preceptors (MD, DO, DPM, CSFA, CSA) must be approved prior to the start of the externship.

Transfer Credits

Transfer credits are not accepted into this program.

Method of Delivery

The SFA Online Program is a blended computer-based educational program. Each student is required to have access to a computer and an internet connection on a regular basis. Testing, quizzing, and grading are completed online.

Textbook Requirement

The SFA Online Program utilizes a total of five books throughout the course. The pharmacology text will be provided to the student when they attend the Applied Science Lab. Three additional electronic texts will be available through the Canvas Learning Management System. All textbooks are included in the price of tuition except for Alexander's Care of the Patient in Surgery, 16th edition, by Jane C. Rothrock. ISBN 978-0-323-47914-1 estimated cost: \$125.00. The book charges are non-institutional charges and will not show up on student account card. The Alexander's textbook can be purchased online and may also be available to rent. It is the student's responsibility to obtain this text in the form that will best suit their study needs.

Requirements for Graduation

To be qualified to graduate, the student must:

- Complete and receive a passing status in all three modules of the **SFA Online Program**.
- Receive a minimum of C or better on all modules.
- Meet all financial obligations to Meridian.
- CAAHEP standards now require that all students sit for a national certification exam.

Therefore, all students will be required to schedule a date to sit for the **CSFA exam** offered by the NBSTSA prior to graduation. The test date should not be prior to the student's graduation date.

Student Work Policy

Meridian understands that all of our students are employed at healthcare facilities while completing the Phase III Externship module. Please refer to the policy below regarding working as a student during your externship.

Student Substitution for Paid Personnel

Student must not be substituted for paid personnel to conduct the work of the clinical facility. However, after demonstrating proficiency, students may be permitted to undertake certain defined activities with appropriate supervision and direction. Clinical modules of instruction should be educational. The substitution of students for regular departmental staff in performing departmental services is not considered to be educationally directed and, therefore, should not be used to fulfill the clinical requirements of the program.

Test Retake Policy

Should a student receive a failing test grade of 59 or below then the instructor may allow the student to retake the test with the highest recorded grade of a 70. A max of six retakes a year, with no more than two per eight-week class and no more than one for a three or four week class is permitted. Should a student receive a failing grade for the Applied Science Lab they will be withdrawn.

Clock Hours and Credits Awarded

Total Clock Hours: 648.75
Total Credits: 28
Total Length of Program: 12 Months/ 52 Weeks

Number	Course Name	Clock	Credit
SFA 201	Surgical Anatomy and Physiology	45	3
SFA 202	Microbiology	45	3
SFA 203	Pharmacology	45	3
SFA 204	Anesthesia, Methods and Agents	15	1
SFA 205	Bioscience	15	1
SFA 206	Role, Definition, Interaction	15	1
SFA 207	Ethical, Moral, Legal Responsibilities	15	1
SFA 208	Fundamentals	15	1
SFA 209	Wound Healing, Knot Tying and Suturing	15	1
SFA 210	Surgical Procedures	30	2
SFA 211	Complications in Surgery	15	1
SFA 212	Computer and Business Issues with the First Assistant	15	1
SFA 301	Applied Science Lab	60	3
SFA 401	Clinical Externship:	303.75	6

Required Courses:

Phase I (Didactics)

SFA 201- Surgical Anatomy and Physiology

Credit Hours: 3
Clock Hours: 45
Course Length: 8 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: None
Primary Text: Mastery of Medicine Series: Surgery I & II Alexander's Care of the Patient in Surgery

Course Description: This module covers all surgical specialties, affording the student an opportunity to understand the process which brings patients into the operating room; i.e., symptoms, clinical features, and principles of treatment. Each chapter covers various treatment options and particular surgeries for a given situation. The module includes chapter quizzes, along with two module exams.

SFA 202- Microbiology

Credit Hours: 3
Clock Hours: 45
Course Length: 8 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: None
Primary Text: Mastery of Medicine: Microbiology and Infection Microbiology PDF (Text for weeks 1 – 8)

Course Description: This Module consists of three main components: fundamental concepts in microbiology and infection, major clinical syndromes corresponding to the clinical specialties, and supplementary chapters on bacteriology, virology, parasitology, mycology, and entomology, with notes on laboratory tests and antibiotics. Since students learn in different ways this module has been written to accommodate different learning approaches. As a basic course in microbiology, all chapters are self-contained units.

SFA 203- Pharmacology

Credit Hours: 3
Clock Hours: 45
Course Length: 8 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: None
Primary Text: Clinical Pharmacology Made Ridiculously Simple
Course Description: This module (1) blends the essentials of basic pharmacology and clinical pharmacology so that the transition from classroom to hospital is less abrupt, (2) organizes related drugs in tables, and (3) allows the student to learn about prototype drugs and the important ways that related drugs differ. Text surrounding each table emphasizes key issues pertaining to therapeutic rationale, basic pharmacologic principles, and clinical use of drugs.

SFA 204- Anesthesia, Methods and Agents

Credit Hours:	1
Clock Hours:	15
Course Length:	3 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	None
Primary Text:	Alexander's Care of the Patient in Surgery Assigned PDF materials
Course Description:	This module covers the basics of anesthesia, as well as the different methods and the agents used, along with their relation to surgical circumstances. It also covers the ASA classification system.

SFA 205- Bioscience

Credit Hours:	1
Clock Hours:	15
Course Length:	3 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	None
Primary Text:	Alexander's Care of the Patient in Surgery Assigned PDF materials
Course Description:	This module offers instruction in surgical events related to wound healing and the integrity of the surgical wound. Also covered are different diagnostic tests and the relationship between those tests and management of the surgical patient. Also discussed in detail are issues surrounding the care and handling of surgical specimens, management of the critically ill patient, thermoregulatory devices, fluid balances and related issues and, finally, skin assessment.

SFA 206- Role, Definition, Interaction

Credit Hours:	1
Clock Hours:	15
Course Length:	3 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	None
Primary Text:	Roles and Definitions PDF First Assistant and Collaborative Practice PDF
Course Description:	This module deals mainly with factors that will result in positive team relationships, the practice of professional ethics, and the parameters of one's specific role. Understanding that teamwork and interpersonal relationships are such an integral part in the overall care of the surgical patient, this module seeks to identify certain possible crises and problems areas, then gives the student an understanding as to how he/she should deal with each given situation. The module includes chapter quizzes, along with two module exams.

SFA 207- Ethical, Moral, Legal Responsibilities

Credit Hours: 1
Clock Hours: 15
Course Length: 3 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: None
Primary Text: Ethical, Moral, and legal Responsibilities
PDF Institutional Credentialing PDF

Course Description: This module enables the student to understand different legal definitions and terminology, and to understand and identify OR situations that could lead to ethical conflict. Students also gain an understanding of appropriate (and legal) decision-making as well as what determines negligence, basic patient and caregiver rights, OR incidents that could result in litigation, and problems peculiar to the surgical first assistant's role. The module includes chapter quizzes, along with two module exams.

SFA 208- Fundamentals

Credit Hours: 1
Clock Hours: 15
Course Length: 3 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: None
Primary Text: Alexander's Care of the Patient in
Surgery Monitoring Device PDF
Hemostasis PDF

Course Description: In this module the student will learn basic fundamentals and the surgical first assistant's role in regard to monitoring devices, bladder catheterization, positioning the surgical patient, applying pneumatic tourniquets, proper skin preparation, drapes and draping, operative instrumentation, visualization techniques, hemostasis, postoperative pain control, and transportation of the critically ill patient.

SFA 209- Wound Healing, Knot Tying and Suturing

Credit Hours: 1
Clock Hours: 15
Course Length: 3 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: None
Primary Text: Alexander's Care of the Patient in
Surgery Anastomosis in Surgery PDF
Minimal Access Surgery PDF
Wound Closure Manual PDF

Course Description: This module provides the student with principles and techniques, interactive didactics, and laboratory practicums, and examines and reviews wound healing and care, with specific focus on interventional techniques such as suturing, tying, and wound closure for a variety of injuries and incisions.

SFA 210- Surgical Procedures

Credit Hours:	2
Clock Hours:	30
Course Length:	4 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	None
Primary Text:	Meridian Institute's Manual X PDF
Course Description:	This module will break down most major surgeries performed in the OR today. Each surgery listed in the text will be explained step-by-step, from skin incision through final closure. The module includes chapter quizzes, along with two module exams.

SFA 211- Complications in Surgery

Credit Hours:	1
Clock Hours:	15
Course Length:	3 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	None
Primary Text:	Complications in Surgery PDF Tissue Handling PDF
Course Description:	During this module the student will recognize different surgical complications (hemorrhage, perforation of viscous or cavity, contamination, exposure, retraction, compression injuries, cardiac events, sudden hypoxia, sudden shock, interruption of surgical supervision, critical equipment failure and corrective measures, and how to initiate the appropriate course of action).

SFA 212- Computer and Business Issues with the First Assistant

Credit Hours:	1
Clock Hours:	15
Course Length:	3 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	None
Primary Text:	Surgical First Assistant Resource Guide
Course Description:	The student will understand the basics of computer usage in a clinical setting, as well as business issues relating to the surgical first assistant such as starting and running your own assisting business, insurance reimbursement, etc.

Phase II (Applied Science Lab)

SFA 301- Applied Science Lab

Credit Hours:	3
Clock Hours:	60
Course Length:	20 hours of asynchronous through LMS, 40 hours of synchronous on campus for 5 consecutive days.
Delivery Method:	Blended
Prerequisite:	None
Instructional Resources:	Lab manual and lab videos

Course Description: The second phase of the **SFA Online Program** is the Applied Science Lab. The lab is delivered in a blended format. The student will have assignments in Canvas prior to attending the lab. The lab is 60 hours in length. All labs take place in our state-of-the-art animal laboratory facility. Labs run from Monday through Friday and are scheduled several times a month. This lab is a very intense but extremely rewarding week. All procedures are done on anesthetized pigs, affording the benefit of understanding how to handle real tissue, real bleeding, and actual surgical emergencies.

Phase III (Externship)

SFA 401- Clinical Externship

Credit Hours: 6
Clock Hours: 303.75
Course Length: Student must successfully complete SFA 301 and will have until the end of SFA 212 to complete the Clinical Externship.

Delivery Method: Residential (at student's home facility)
Location: Conducted at facility of students choosing active affiliation agreement.

Prerequisite: SFA 301

Primary Text: Clinical Externship Manual and Preceptor Evaluation Form

Course Description:

The clinical phase is intended to provide training and clinical practice in basic surgical skills applicable to the surgical first assistant student. Thus, the following are required:

1. Completion of 140 cases with synchronous instruction.
2. Training under direct supervision and guidance of a Meridian-approved preceptor.
3. Student is required to complete SFA 301 within the first six months of enrollment and will have a minimum six months to complete the externship leading to graduation.
4. Students are required to identify and secure their individual externship site and preceptors.

Course Outline:

Clinical Externship is the third phase of the course, in which each student must complete 140 cases in the following areas:

- A. General Surgery: Minimum of 20 cases
- B. Various Specials: 120 Cases (In addition to the 20 general surgery case requirement)

Suggested additional specialties:

1. Pediatric surgery
2. Neurosurgery
3. Hand surgery
4. Plastic surgery
5. Obstetric and Gynecologic surgery
6. Thoracic surgery
7. Genitourinary surgery
8. Trauma surgery
9. Transplant surgery
10. Ear, nose, and throat surgery
11. Cardiovascular surgery
12. Orthopedic surgery
13. Robotic Surgery

All cases must be supervised by a Meridian-approved preceptor. Students must fill out case logs on a daily basis, as well as have one signed preceptor agreement form for each verified preceptor and signed evaluations on each case.

**Associates Degree of Applied Science in Surgical Assisting
(Degree Completion)**

Enrollment Requirements

The AAS Surgical Assisting program is currently limited to graduates of Meridian's SFA Online program. No portion of the program is offered in a language other than English.

Academic Calendar

Students will receive an academic calendar for all online courses provided through the Canvas Learning Management System. Adherence to the calendar and assignment deadlines is required. Please refer to the computer system requirement policy on pages 6-8 of the catalog.

The AAS Program offers three class starts per year; winter, spring and fall. If class capacity of 25 students has not been met a student will be able to enroll on the first day the coursework begins. Students can register for a maximum of 12 credits per semester unless additional credits are authorized by the program director.

Attendance

Students who do not participate in classes for 15 consecutive days will be removed from that class.

Tuition Information

Meridian has developed the most comprehensive surgical assistant course available. By utilizing online modules, combined with hands-on workshops and online instruction, our course can be offered at a lower tuition than many other distance education programs.

The program cost, which includes all online modules, processing fee and technology fee is \$7601.52. **NOTE: As with everything else, program rates are subject to change periodically.**

Tuition and Fees Information

Total cost for 32 credits (\$214.11 per credit)	\$6851.52
Processing Fee:	\$500.00
<u>Technology Fee:</u>	<u>\$250.00</u>
Total Program Cost:	\$7601.52

The typical costs for books in this program: \$1312.96

Credential Offered at Completion

Upon completion of the AAS in Surgical Assisting (degree completion), each student will receive an Associates in Applied Science.

Program Objective

The AAS Degree Completion Associates Degree Program's goal is to train and graduate the highest quality surgical assistants in the country. The course achieves this goal by implementing a program that is of the highest standards and adheres to published surgical assisting education guidelines. AAS Program's didactics are delivered through a distance education format. The AAS Program allows the surgical assistant to further their

education and refine their knowledge while earning an associate degree. Meridian graduates are thoroughly trained in all surgical disciplines, thus providing the ability for comprehensive surgical interventions leading to the best care available for all patients.

Overview

Meridian's Applied Science in Surgical Assisting program is an 18-month degree program that provides a convenient method for professional surgical assistants to continue their online education experience.

Transfer of Credits

Each student will be given credit for the 28 semester credits earned through the SFA ONLINE program. This leaves a remaining 32 credits needed prior to earning a degree completion. Of the 32 remaining credits needed up to 30 can be transferred in from another institution; 15 of which can be any general education courses and must match the core classes offered at Meridian. Transfer in credits are based on approval by the Program Director. If the student needs general education courses, they may choose from any of the options (GEN 102-106) provided by Meridian Institute. The student always has the option to complete ALL required credits from Meridian Institute. Transferability of credits must be earned from an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and will be at the discretion of the Program Director. Credits and or clock hours earned will not be accepted from institutions located outside of the United States or its territories. Transfer credits are not required.

Method of Delivery

The AAS is a full distance education program. Each student is required to have access to a computer and an internet connection on a regular basis. Testing, Quizzing, and grading are completed online.

Textbook Requirement

The book requirement for AAS in Surgical Assisting (degree completion) will be listed on each class syllabus located in this catalog.

Adding/Dropping a Class

Students may drop and/or add courses via notifying the Program Director. Adding a class must be done prior to classes beginning according to the semester schedule. Drops made within two weeks of class starts will be considered a drop without penalty to academic reporting, but will result in a "W" on the transcript. Drops after this period would be considered Fail (F), and recorded on your transcript as such. Financial obligation and refunds will follow Meridian's refund policy.

Requirements for Graduation

In order for the student to be awarded the AAS in Surgical Assisting they must have a total of 60 credits completed, prior to graduation and degree confirmation. **This degree program is open only to those who have graduated from Meridian's SFA ONLINE program.**

Students must also:

- Complete and retain a cumulative GPA of a 2.0 in all online academics associated with the AAS Degree Completion program.
- Meet all financial obligations to Meridian.

Clock Hours and Credits Awarded

Transfer from SFA Online Program:	28 semester credits
GEN 101-105:	225 hours, 15 semester credits
HLTH 201-206:	255 hours, 17 semester credits
Total Length of Program:	18 Months/72 Weeks

GEN102	Communication	3
GEN103	Introduction to Psychology	3
GEN104	Introduction to Sociology	3
GEN105	Introduction to Business	3
GEN106	Introduction to Chemistry	3
HLTH201	Introduction to Radiology	3
HLTH202	Advanced Principles of General and Peripheral Vascular Surgery	3
HLTH203	Advanced Principles of Obstetrics and Gynecological Surgery	3
HLTH204	Advanced Principles of Orthopedic Surgery	3
HLTH205	Advanced Principles of Cardiothoracic Surgery	3
HLTH206	Surgical Safety	2

Required Courses**GEN 102- Communication**

Credit Hours:	3
Course Length:	15 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text:	<i>Real Communication: An Introduction</i> Jones & Bartlett Learning, O'Hair, Wiemann, Mullin, Teven, 3 rd Edition.
Course Description:	Examines the elements affecting speech communication at the small group, individual, and public communication levels with emphasis on practice of communication at each level.

GEN 103- Introduction to Psychology

Credit Hours:	3
Course Length:	15 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text:	<i>Introduction to Psychology: Gateways to Mind and Behavior</i> , Coon and Mitterer, 13 th Edition, 2012.
Course Description:	In this course you will receive a broad introduction to the science of psychology: from the history of the field, to the latest research on topics such as perception, memory, intelligence, morality, sexuality, mental illness, religion, and creativity.

GEN 104- Introduction to Sociology

Credit Hours:	3
Course Length:	15 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text:	<i>Introduction to Sociology</i> , Basirico, 5 th Edition, 2013.
Course Description:	This course provides an introduction to sociology, "the scientific study of social behavior and human groups through readings, discussions and tests.

GEN 105- Introduction to Business

Credit Hours:	3
Course Length:	15 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text:	<i>Foundations in Business</i> , Pride, Hughes, Kapoor 4 th Edition, 2014.
Course Description:	This course presents an integrated view of business organization by studying the business process that are common to most businesses. This will include the acquisition of capital and human resources, purchasing, production and sales.

GEN 106- Introduction to Chemistry

Credit Hours: 3
Course Length: 15 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program
Primary Text: *Fundamentals of Chemistry*, David E. Goldberg, 5th Edition, 2007.
Course Description: In this course you will receive a broad introduction to the fundamentals of general chemistry: from basic concepts, measurements, nomenclature, chemical bonding, phase changes, chemical equations, and introductory chemical reactions.

HLTH 201- Introduction to Radiology

Credit Hours: 3
Course Length: 15 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text: *Learning Radiology: Recognizing the Basics*. Herring, W, 4th Edition, 2020.
Course Description: This course will examine the imaging process of the human body with emphasis on application and evaluation of numerous imaging techniques.

HLTH 202- Advanced Principles of General and Peripheral Vascular Surgery

Credit Hours: 3
Course Length: 15 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text: *Essentials of General Surgery*, Lawrence, Bell, Dayton, Herbert LWW Publishing, 6^{5h} Edition, 2012.
Course Description: This course of study will provide the student with a thorough understanding and knowledge of general surgery and peripheral vascular surgery and management of the following:

- Abdominal wall including hernia
- Esophagus
- Stomach and duodenum
- Small intestine and appendix
- Colon, rectum, and anus
- Biliary tract
- Pancreas
- Liver
- Breast

- Surgical Endocrinology
- Spleen
- Surgical oncology
- Peripheral vascular

HLTH 203- Advanced Principles of Obstetrics and Gynecological Surgery

Credit Hours: 3
Course Length: 15 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text: *Te Linde's Operative Gynecology*, Jones H., Rock, J., 11th Edition, 2015, Wolters Kluwer.
Course Description: This course of study will provide the student with a thorough understanding and knowledge of Obstetrics and Gynecological surgery and management of the following:

- Pelvic anatomy
- Gynecologic surgery
- Abdominal surgery
- Other related surgery
- Laparoscopy
- Cesarean Section

HLTH 204- Advanced Principles of Orthopedic Surgery

Credit Hours: 3
Course Length: 15 Weeks
Delivery Method: Full Distance Education
Prerequisite: Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text: *Essentials of Orthopedic Surgery*, Wiesel, Delahay, 4th Edition.
Course Description: This course will provide the student with a thorough understanding and knowledge of Orthopedic surgery techniques and management of the following surgical procedures:

- Spine
- Shoulder
- Hand and Wrist
- Hip and Femur
- Knee
- Foot and Ankle

HLTH 205- Advanced Principles of Cardiothoracic Surgery

Credit Hours:	3
Course Length:	15 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text:	<i>Textbook of Cardiothoracic Surgery</i> , Yuh, Vricella, Baumgartner, McGraw Hill Medical.
Course Description:	<p>This course will provide the student with a thorough understanding and knowledge of Cardiothoracic surgery techniques and management of the following surgical procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ General thoracic▪ Adult cardiac▪ Congenital cardiac

HLTH 206- Surgical Safety

Credit Hours:	2
Course Length:	15 Weeks
Delivery Method:	Full Distance Education
Prerequisite:	Completion of Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting's SFA Online Program.
Primary Text:	<i>Working Safely in Health Care</i> , Fell-Carlson, 1 st Edition, Cengage Learning.
Course Description:	This course presents the student with knowledge and understanding of the importance of workplace safety in the healthcare setting.

