UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**Utah System of Higher Education**
Sterile Processing Technician
FY2026 / 25 Credits (915 Clock-Hours)

## Foundational Courses

**TESP 1011 Intro to Sterile Processing and Decontamination** **4 Credits / 120 Clock-Hours**

Sterile processing technicians ensure patient safety by decontaminating, sterilizing, and maintaining surgical instruments. This course provides a comprehensive overview of the sterile processing cycle, from decontamination to sterilization, emphasizing the One-Way Flow process. Students will learn standard procedures for handling bloodborne pathogens, adhering to standard precautions, and decontaminating instruments. The course also covers the proper use of OSHA-approved personal protective equipment (PPE), with hands-on lab activities to practice decontamination techniques in line with current standards and guidelines.
Objectives:
• Explain the importance of the Sterile Processing Department, with an emphasis on the service provided and its role of quality patient care.
• Identify the various elements of medical terminology including prefixes, roots, and suffixes.
• Discuss how medical terminology can refer to the human anatomy, disease processes, surgical instruments, and surgical procedures to assist the OR when specific items are needed for surgeries.
• Review the structure, function, activities, and role of cells, tissues, and organs in the body and identify common surgical procedures that involve each system.
• Identify pathogenic microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites, and how to prevent the spread of each pathogenic microorganism.
• Recognize the differences between federal and state laws/regulations versus voluntary standards and guidelines.
• Identify the need and use for thermal disinfection for infection prevention, and the hazards of bloodborne pathogens.
• Describe Point-of-Use preparation and safety guidelines for transporting contaminated items from the operating room (OR) to the decontamination area.
• Discuss the purpose and set up of the decontamination sink areas including the importance of OSHA approved PPE.
• Identify the role of detergents/enzymatic cleaners, three levels of disinfection, and the steps in the pre-cleaning process.

## TESP 1111 Preparation and Packaging — 3 Credits / 90 Clock-Hours

Students will gain expertise in identifying surgical instruments, understanding their functions, and recognizing their uses across various specialties, such as orthopedics and neurology. The course covers testing methods for instruments, including laparoscopic sheath testing, scissor sharpness checks, and inspections for wear. Students will also learn wrapping techniques, sterilization methods, and the use of chemical indicators, tamper-evident seals, and rigid container systems. Additionally, they will master creating content lists and assembling instrument sets according to operating room standards.

Objectives:
• Explain the accurate, and neat methodology for assembling instrument sets by function.
• Recognize the areas of each surgical instrument in order to inspect for debris, damage, defects, and functionality.
• Explain sterilization and the two most commonly used methods.
• Identify the sterilization method and the use of chemical indicators, tamper-evident seals and packaging material for sterilization.
• Properly use count sheets or “recipes,” as a crucial tool to accurately assemble surgical instrument trays with counts of all necessary instruments.
• Practice simultaneous wrapping, the most commonly used in the OR.
• Demonstrate how to use “peel packs” to package single instruments when needed.
• Label instrument sets for each packaging method (rigid containers, wrapping, peel packs).
• Provide an overview of reusable and disposable packaging materials and packaging concepts including closure methods and selection factors.

## TESP 1211 Sterilization and Disinfection — 4 Credits / 120 Clock-Hours

This course focuses on high-temperature and low-temperature sterilization methods used in sterile processing, including daily testing procedures and performance monitoring with physical, biological, and chemical indicators. Students will learn to associate endospores with sterilization methods, track sterilization cycles, and properly load sterilizer carts. The course also covers disinfectants, highlighting the differences between high, intermediate, and low-level disinfection. Students will gain hands-on experience interpreting disinfectant labels, understanding contact times, and applying OSHA-approved PPE for high-level disinfectants.

Objectives:
• Define the term “Immediate Use Steam Sterilization” and review the industry standards and procedures for use.
• Describe point-of-use processing and heat-sensitive medical devices.
• Discuss the advantage of steam sterilization, types and anatomy of different steam sterilizers, the sterilization cycles, conditions necessary for an effective process, and the indicators.
• Recognize daily testing procedures for each sterilization method.
• Understand how to document and read performance monitors for each sterilization method.
• Explain the requirements and parameters of the low-temperature sterilization methods.
• Understand the three levels of disinfectants and what they’re used for.
• Practice reading various types of disinfectants to learn how to read the instructions for use correctly.
• Practice wearing PPE for lab activities which will require working with disinfectants.
• Discuss the Chain of Infection and how it relates to everyday life.

## TESP 1311 Storage and Distribution, QA, and Equipment — 3 Credits / 90 Clock-Hours

This course covers the processes of sterile storage, distribution, and quality assurance in sterile processing. Students will learn how items are stored after sterilization and prepared for use in the operating room (OR), following decontamination, assembly, packaging, and sterilization. The course also focuses on the distribution of sterile items, including replenishing inventory and managing par levels for the OR and other hospital departments. Quality assurance practices, including daily testing of sterilization, disinfection, and decontamination procedures, will be emphasized, with students practicing record-keeping and testing in the lab. Additionally, students will learn about disinfecting medical equipment used throughout the hospital, including pumps and pain management devices, with a focus on low-level disinfection methods.

Objectives:
• Discuss sterile storage and transport considerations, concerns, and guidelines.
• Explain the importance of monitoring work areas and processes and recordkeeping for quality control.
• Describe common quality assurance programs and procedures in the Sterile Processing department.
• Explain the basics of failure mode effects analysis and root cause analysis.
• Identify the importance of inventory management and the role of Sterile Processing technicians.
• Describe common inventory replenishment systems and the cycle of consumable items.
• Provide an overview of the use of information management systems in Sterile Processing departments including features of instrument and equipment tracking systems.
• Explain the importance of safety and risk management in the Central Service department including education and reporting procedures.
• Review three common workplace hazards: fire, hazardous substances, and bloodborne pathogens.

## TESP 1901 Externship — 11 Credits / 495 Clock-Hours

The externship, arranged by the program coordinator with participating hospitals and facilities, allows students to apply classroom and lab skills in a real-world setting. Students will track and submit their hours, along with specific areas of work (decontamination, assembly, sterilization, sterile storage, or QA), for instructor verification. After completing 400 externship hours, students are eligible to sit for the HSPA CRCST exam and will have successfully completed the program.

Objectives:
• Apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to real world situations.
• Demonstrate the hands-on skills mastered in the lab to the Sterile Processing departments in hospitals or facilities (Ambulatory Surgery Centers, Dental Clinics, Plastic Surgery Centers).