



CANADIAN SOCIETY OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS

SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DES THÉRAPEUTES RESPIRATOIRES

CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Exam Manual

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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists (CSRT) is the national professional association that administers the national Certified Clinical Anesthesia Assistant (CCAA) certification. By possessing this credential, anesthesia assistants indicate that they meet a nationally accepted professional standard and adhere to nationally accepted quality assurance processes.

Successful completion of the national CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Examination (the exam) is one of the requirements for the CCAA certification. This handbook presents all of the information candidates need to prepare to challenge the exam. This includes exam policies and procedures, information on exam development, administration and scoring, appeals and accommodations.

Exam candidates should carefully read the entire handbook prior to registering for the CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Exam. It reflects the CSRT exam policies. Candidates will also receive information and regulations from the CSRT's contracted exam administrator. Ignorance of policy will not exempt candidates from compliance.

GOVERNANCE OF CSRT ANESTHESIA ASSISTANCE EXAM

The CSRT is the corporate entity under which anesthesia assistance examination services operate. The CSRT Board of Directors is responsible for setting policy governing the CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Examination and approving the pass mark for each exam paper. CSRT staff and exam development volunteers enact approved policies, however, do not influence or participate in policy or exam scoring decisions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- The CSRT is committed to following examination processes that are evidence-informed and that follow examination best practices.
- Examination processes will maintain the rigor and security expected for the examination of entry-to-practice requirements for anesthesia assistance.
- The exam is national in scope. It will adhere to the National Competency Framework for Anesthesia Assistance.
- The CSRT is committed to transparency and fairness throughout the examination processes. This includes confirming candidate eligibility, the creation of exam items, exam scoring, investigations, appeals and communication of exam results.
- The CSRT and its contracted exam provider will at all times respect the confidentiality of writers and adhere to all relevant privacy legislation. Any personal data collected or accessed for the purposes of the exam shall be limited to that which is reasonably necessary to perform such obligations or to fulfill any legal requirements.

EXAMINATION DATES AND FEES

The CSRT aims to provide two examination sessions per year. Dates, fees, registration periods and withdrawal deadlines for exams will be published on the CSRT website and communicated to CSRT-accredited AA programs.

EXAMINATION ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for the exam is determined in accordance with the CSRT policy on CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Exam Eligibility.

Individuals who have graduated from a CSRT-accredited anesthesia assistance program are eligible to challenge the exam provided they make their first attempt within 18 months of the graduation date displayed on their graduation diploma/certificate.

Graduates of CSRT-accredited programs who do not make their first attempt within 18 months of graduation must complete, at their expense, a Continuing Professional Development audit that demonstrates that they have completed CPD in AA equivalent to a minimum of 25 credits during the 12 months preceding registration for the exam and as per the audit standards outlined in CSRT policy *Audit of Continuing Professional Development Requirements for CSRT Professional Designation Maintenance*. This audit should be initiated well in advance of the anticipated exam registration period and can be initiated by contacting the CSRT.

Individuals who have not graduated from a CSRT-accredited anesthesia assistance program may contact the CSRT to enquire about exam eligibility (csrt@csrt.com).

Any attempts at writing the CSRT AA examination must be made within three years of graduation from a CSRT accredited anesthesia assistance program. Candidates are permitted up to three attempts to write the exam. A candidate who does not successfully complete the CSRT AA examination within three years, or who does not successfully pass the exam after three attempts, will no longer be eligible to write the examination.

CSRT EXAM PROVIDER AND DELIVERY

The CSRT has contracted an exam services provider, Prometric, to administer the National Anesthesia Assistance Examination. The exam is administered virtually and candidates have two options for challenging the exam: virtual proctoring using Prometric's ProProctor™ secure virtual exam delivery and proctoring software, or writing at an approved testing center with an onsite proctor. Writers using virtual proctoring are responsible for supplying their computer equipment (PC or laptop only; tablets may not be used) and ensuring all technical requirements are met. Those opting to write at a testing center are responsible for costs associated with travel to the testing center.

EXAMINATION FORMAT

The exam will be multiple-choice of approximately 115 questions test that follows the exam matrix produced in conjunction with the National Competency Framework for Anesthesia Assistance (see Appendix 1). Pilot questions will be included within this total. These will not contribute to the scoring process nor are they considered when confirming that the exam adheres to the exam matrix. These are newly developed questions, and they are included so that the CSRT can test and gather statistical information on them.

Writers will have a maximum of two and a half hours to complete the exam.

Questions are developed by the CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Exam Committee, a committee of Certified Clinical Anesthesia Assistants from across Canada, with oversight provided by the CSRT. While the committee develops the exam questions, CSRT oversight ensures each question meets best practices around item development, and that the exam matrix is respected for each iteration of the exam.

Multiple choice questions may be stand-alone questions, or they may be part of a case study. They will be type “A” questions (i.e., they will have one correct answer option, not multiple combinations of correct answers) with four response options.

Exam questions are referenced to texts commonly used by CSRT-accredited anesthesia assistant education programs. Questions will not refer to specific brands, makes or models of equipment, but will focus on operating principles of the equipment. Specific brand names will not be employed for pharmaceuticals: only generic pharmaceutical names will be used.

The exam will contain questions relative to adult, pediatric and neonatal patients. Exam questions will assume the patient is an adult, at their ideal body weight unless they clearly specify otherwise.

REGISTRATION AND SCHEDULING

(Note: “Applicant” denotes an individual who has applied to challenge the exam but has not been approved. “Candidate” denotes an individual approved to challenge the exam.)

Applications to challenge the exam will occur through a secure CSRT portal during the published registration period. Applicants must submit their full exam fees in Canadian funds when registering for their exam. Exam fees paid online are submitted by credit card only. Other methods of payment are not accepted.

By registering for the exam, applicants agree to abide by the following statements:

- Only true and accurate information will be provided on the exam registration form.
- Final approval to write the CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Examination is dependent on successfully meeting all of the exam eligibility requirements.
- There is a non-refundable administration fee.
- If approved to challenge the exam, candidates will abide by all published exam policies.
- Passing the exam does not confer the CSRT’s Certified Clinical Anesthesia Assistant certification.

The CSRT will confirm eligibility of each exam applicant. If an exam applicant does not meet the eligibility requirements, their exam registration will be cancelled, and their registration fee refunded (minus an administrative fee).

Following confirmation of eligibility, each confirmed candidate will receive information from the CSRT instructing them on how to schedule their specific exam appointment time with the exam services provider. The CSRT will not schedule specific exam times for individual writers.

Once a candidate has made their exam appointment, the exam services provider, Prometric, will provide a confirmation e-mail. Candidates should confirm they have received this e-mail and read it carefully as it contains important information such as the candidate’s exam confirmation number, identification requirements, a link to download the ProProctor™ User Guide, remote proctoring test requirements and regulations, and cancellation/rescheduling information.

EXAM REQUIREMENTS: TECHNOLOGY AND TESTING

It is essential that candidates who using virtual administration and proctoring carefully follow the exam service provider's instructions and [ProProctor User Guide](#) to ensure their computer and internet connection meet the system requirements for the exam. Ensuring your computer, power source, internet connection, hardware, and operating system requirements meet the specific requirements in the ProProctor User Guide, in addition to passing the system check, is essential. This should not be left to the last minute.

Most day-of-exam technical issues can be avoided if candidates test their system using the exact computer, location, and time of day as those of the scheduled exam and follow instructions to confirm their technology meets the system requirements. Inadequate internet bandwidth can also create issues during the exam. The CSRT encourages candidates to communicate with anyone sharing their internet connection about preserving bandwidth during the exam period.

There are strict requirements for the testing environment and unauthorized personal items are not permitted during the exam. Candidates should carefully review the exam environment requirements and lists of permitted and prohibited items in the information provided to them upon scheduling their exam.

CANCELLATION PROCESSES

Candidates must make and confirm all cancellations/changes through the CSRT by emailing csrt@csrt.com. Cancellations and changes must also be made through the exam services provider as per published instructions. Changes made via voicemail messages will not be accepted. Cancellations and changes are subject to administrative fees. The deadline for cancellation is five business days before the exam date.

DAY-OF-EXAM INFORMATION

Exam candidates must be on time for their exam. They will be asked to verify their identification, consent to remote proctoring requirements (if applicable), and complete systems and/or security checks at the start of the exam appointment. Candidates writing with a virtual proctor who do not have their space prepared, or who do not pass the security checks will be removed and will reenter the exam when they have made any necessary adjustments. The online proctoring system will require candidates to "lock down" their browser prior to being entered into the exam itself.

During the exam, proctors monitor candidates in real time. As with in-person exams, proctors monitor body movements and actions and will flag any suspicious activity for review.

Proctor support is for questions about the exam or in case of emergency. Proctors do not have access to exam content and will not comment on any exam questions. Writers can comment on questions using the tools provided in the exam. These comments will be reviewed and considered during the exam scoring and validation process.

If a writer falls ill during the exam, they will notify the proctor immediately. Please refer to the Appeals section of this handbook for further direction.

If a catastrophic technical issue occurs (i.e., one that is beyond the writer's control), the writer will be provided with an alternate attempt at the exam as close as possible to the originally scheduled exam appointment. This will not count as an additional attempt. Such issues must be

external to the writer's ability to meet the technical requirements of the exam, as these should have been confirmed prior to the exam.

Any writer who experiences an issue beyond their control that impacted their exam writing experience must notify the CSRT immediately after leaving the exam so that it is on record. These notifications should be directed to csrt@csrt.com.

POST-EXAM INFORMATION

The CSRT will make every effort to promptly provide writers with their results. Following the examination period, the exam is scored, questions are reviewed by a unique committee of CCAAs (i.e., different than those on the exam committee) for performance and queries. Periodically a standard setting study must also be performed, (e.g., after a new competency profile). These post-exam validation measures follow psychometric best practices and determine the pass mark which is then approved by the CSRT Board of Directors.

Candidates will normally receive their results via e-mail within 90 days of the examination date. If an unforeseen delay occurs, the CSRT will communicate with writers to inform them of the delay and a new expected deadline for results.

The candidate e-mail address used at the time of registration for the exam will be used to communicate exam results. (If contact details change, please contact the CSRT to update them.) Under no circumstances will exam results be provided over the phone.

Exam results will be communicated as scaled scores. The reporting of scaled scores is a best practice for credentialing exams. They allow for truer comparisons between different versions of the same exam. Although test developers adhere to strict guidelines when developing exam questions to ensure versions of the exam are similar in difficulty, some variation in level of difficulty can be expected. With scaled scoring, the same passing standard is applied to forms of varying levels of difficulty: it will not vary with the difficulty of the exam. In other words, if two writers take different versions of an exam and receive the **same scale score**, they have achieved the same level of performance on the exam. Raw scores do not provide this comparability. A writer who scores 70% on an easier exam has not demonstrated the same level of performance as a writer who scores 70% on a more difficult version of that exam. Candidates who are unsuccessful on the exam will also receive a breakdown of their performance by competency subdomain.

Successful completion of the exam does not confer the Certified Clinical Anesthesia Assistant status. Individuals will still need to apply and qualify for the CSRT Certified Clinical Anesthesia Assistant designation. Please contact the CSRT for further information.

EXAMINATION SECURITY

The exam and its contents are the exclusive property of the CSRT. It is made available to candidates for the sole purpose of assessing minimal, entry-level competency for anesthesia assistants.

The CSRT will maintain strict safeguards for the security of the exam contents. Only CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Exam Committee members will be aware of content in the test bank. This information is not visible by other members of the CSRT staff or Board of Directors.

It is assumed that any individual writing the CSRT Anesthesia Assistance Examination does so in good faith and in an honest attempt to pass the exam. Any actions or behaviours violating this assumption will be considered “cheating”. This includes anything that could affect any current or future candidate results.

Candidates are required to comply with CSRT and Prometric exam policies. If a candidate violates these regulations, they may be refused access to the exam, or their exam record may be flagged for review and investigation. If a candidate is found to have broken these regulations, their results will be recorded as “failed”, and no refunds will be provided. This will comprise one of the permitted attempts at the exam.

Candidates are required to keep the contents of the exam secure and confidential. They are prohibited from recording, copying, reproducing, discussing, publishing, transmitting, or otherwise disclosing any exam question or answer, in whole or in part, by any means or for any purpose. By registering for the exam, candidates commit to maintaining the confidentiality of the exam and will not share specific questions or general exam information beyond that provided in this manual.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists offers reasonable and appropriate accommodations to exam candidates with a documented disability or special needs while maintaining the integrity of the exam. It is important to note that a diagnosis of a disability does not guarantee an accommodation. Nor does the administration of an accommodation guarantee that a writer will pass the exam. Accommodations offer writers equitable writing conditions, removing barriers to candidate performance. The provision of testing accommodations is done in accordance with federal and provincial human rights legislation, CSRT policies and professional standards.

Applications for accommodations are made in writing to the CSRT (csrt@csrt.com) and must be accompanied by up-to-date supporting documentation confirming an officially diagnosed condition with functional limitations relating to the diagnosis that require modification to the standard administration of the exam. The diagnosis must be shown to affect the candidate’s ability to access or write the exam. Examples of accommodations that may be requested include additional testing time; access to assistive equipment, personnel or personal items; or breaks.

The documentation to support a request for an accommodation does not need to provide a specific diagnosis but must contain sufficient information for the CSRT to understand how the requested accommodations will help the candidate. Supporting documentation must be legible, complete, and provided by an appropriate licensed practitioner who has specific experience and expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of the condition(s) for which the accommodation is being requested. This documentation must not come from a relative or spouse of the candidate.

In accordance with the Government of Canada’s Guidelines for Assessing Persons with Disabilities¹, the time frame to determine if documentation is “up-to-date” will vary depending on the nature of the condition(s) serving as the basis for the application for accommodation.

¹ Government of Canada. [Guidelines for Assessing Persons with Disabilities](#)

- For stable disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities), documentation may be a number of years old, as long as the applicant was older than 18 years of age when the documentation was produced.
- For permanent disabilities that are susceptible to change (e.g., mental health disabilities), documentation should be recent enough to cover changes to the applicant's condition.
- For temporary conditions (e.g., recovery from a recent physical trauma), documentation should include the date on which the condition began and the attending professional's estimate of a recovery date

Applications for accommodations will be received by the CSRT up to the day before the registration period opens for a desired exam and will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature of the request, the ability to provide the accommodation and the integrity of the exam. Applications received after this deadline but during the registration period will be reviewed but may not be fully granted. Applications received after registration closes will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances such as a recent diagnosis.

Applications for accommodations will be reviewed only if all supporting documentation has been provided. The CSRT will communicate with the applicant via e-mail regarding the request. Accommodations are only granted for one exam session only and applicants must re-apply for accommodations for subsequent exam sessions.

Approved accommodations will be provided at no additional cost to the writer.

APPEALS

An appeal process provides for fair and equitable adjudication of exam outcomes that have been contested.

A writer may appeal their exam score under the following circumstances:

Exceptional circumstance grounds: Applicable to writers impacted when an unexpected exceptional circumstance arose that prevented the candidate from writing or finishing the exam.

- Only the CSRT may determine those situations deemed "exceptional" (e.g., unexpected critical illness)
- Appeals based on these grounds must be filed within 5 business days of the exam date.

Technical issues: Applicable to writers who fail the exam due to catastrophic technical issues.

- Appeals from writers who fail the exam as a result of technical issues that could not have been mitigated by following the published systems testing must be filed within 5 business days of the exam date. Writers must have exhausted the immediate re-write options for technical issues described in the "Day of Exam Information" section of this handbook. The appeal must demonstrate that persistent technical issues prevented them from fairly completing the exam.

Other grounds: Applicable to writers who fail the exam due to issues not described above and based on errors or omissions in carrying out the prescribed procedures on the part of the CSRT or its exam services provider.

- Appeals must be made within 5 days of the candidate's awareness of the issue forming the basis of the appeal.

Appeals will be subject to an appeals fee (\$500 + tax). If the adjudicators find in favor of the appellant, the fee will be refunded. The CSRT commits to having appeals reviewed and adjudicated within 3 months. A minimum of one month is required for this process to occur.

APPENDIX 1: CSRT ANESTHESIA ASSISTANCE EXAM MATRIX

The following table presents the approximate distribution of exam questions across competency areas. Candidates are encouraged to review the National Competency Framework for Anesthesia Assistance for more information on the competencies.

CLINICAL COMPETENCY AREAS Range 80 – 85% of Exam	Approx. Percentage of Items
Administering Prescribed Pharmacological Agents Under the Direction of the Attending Anesthesiologist	9
Operating Anesthesia Equipment	11
Monitoring the Patient's Physiological Status	11
Providing Preoperative Care	3
Managing the Patient's Airway	13
Assisting with the Administration of General Anesthesia	15
Delivering Regional Anesthesia	6
Delivering Procedural Sedation	3
Managing Post Anesthesia Care	2
Assisting with Pain Management	4
Performing Crisis Management	4
Administering Blood Products	2
Assisting with the Delivery of Anesthesia in Special Circumstances	2
PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCIES Range 15 - 20% of Exam	Approx. Percentage of Items
Professionalism	3
Communication	2
Analysis and Problem Solving	3
Health and Safety	3
Research	2
Administration/ Quality /Assurance	2
Education	0