

INTERNATIONAL FLS TEST CENTER STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

For applicants located outside the U.S. and Canada

The FLS exam is a high-stakes exam, given under strict parameters to preserve the integrity of the program and the validity of the exam results. International FLS Test Centers are required to provide access to the FLS exam to all eligible test-takers, including their own faculty and residents as well as eligible candidates from other facilities/institutions. Although international applicants that are American College of Surgeons (ACS) Accredited Education Institutes (AEI) are preferred, such accreditation is neither mandatory nor a guarantee that such centers will receive International FLS Test Center designation. Please note that the FLS exam is currently only available in English.

Test Center applicants must document how they meet each of the following standards and the corresponding criteria:

Standard 1: Staff (FLS proctors and support staff)

Standard 2: Equipment and Resources

Standard 3: Institutional Support

Standard 4: Guidelines for maintaining Test Center status

Standard 5: Test Center Volume/Capacity and Geographical Area Demographics

Standard 6: International Test Center applicant eligibility

Standard 1: Staff

Criterion 1.1: Each test center applicant must designate at least 2 FLS trained proctors

- Test Center applicants must identify proctor candidates at the time of application. Proctor candidates will be required to go through a formal training and evaluation process during the Test Center Site Visit. Successful completion of the proctor training and evaluation process is a required step in the application approval
- A two-day training session for proctor candidates will be conducted onsite as part of the FLS Test Center Site Visit for up to 3 qualified proctor candidates. If additional proctor training is needed (due to staff turnover, etc) existing FLS Test Centers can send new/additional proctor candidates to a SAGES FLS proctor training workshop (location and schedule of workshops to be determined, currently held in the US only). The registration fee and expenses associated with attending the workshop are the responsibility of the sponsoring test center. Only the successful completion of a SAGES FLS proctor training workshop/onsite session can certify a candidate as an FLS trained proctor.
- Proctors are required to administer all portions of the FLS exam in English.

Criterion 1.2 Eligibility for proctor-candidates

- Proctor candidates must be familiar with laparoscopic equipment
- No more than 1 proctor candidate can be an active full-time clinician (MD/DO, MBBS, or RN). Ideally, FLS proctor candidates are skills lab technicians, simulation center staff, and/or medical education coordinators.
- Proctor candidates must have basic knowledge and experience in using the current version(s) of Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, Adobe reader, and any email program.

- Proctor candidates must hold full-time positions with the applicant institution or organization.
- Proctor candidates should have some background in training and education.
- Proctor candidates must be fluent in English, i.e. can converse easily and accurately in all types of situations, written and spoken. The SAGES-FLS staff will make the final determination of a candidate's fluency prior to a scheduled site visit during a mandatory pre-site visit conference call.
- Proctor candidates must be able to communicate effectively with the FLS Champion faculty member (see below) at the institution.
- Proctor candidates must have control/access to all the necessary laparoscopic equipment, technology, and space necessary for conducting FLS testing.
- Proctor candidates must have protected time to fulfill their responsibilities related to the FLS program. This should be in the range of at least 5% of total work time *

Criterion 1.3 FLS Champion

- Each test center applicant institution must designate 1 laparoscopic surgeon (attending/faculty) who is willing to be the institutional FLS Champion. The faculty member filling this role must be an active SAGES member and be personally certified in FLS (must be certified at the time of application).
- The 'FLS champion' must be able to provide support to the FLS proctors in terms of ensuring funding and adequate supplies of necessary equipment/supplies and access to technical (computer) support personnel.
- The FLS champion should be involved in the laparoscopic training of the residents, medical students, or other practicing surgeons at the applying institution.
- The FLS champion must be fluent in English, i.e. can converse easily and accurately in all types of situations, written and spoken. The SAGES-FLS staff will make the final determination of a candidate's fluency prior to a scheduled site visit during a mandatory pre-site visit conference call.

Standard 2 Equipment and Resources

Criterion 2.1 Each test center applicant institution must have at least 2 standard FLS trainer boxes

- FLS trainer boxes must be in good working order and include all necessary parts and accessories. (cables, side pieces, PVC skin, peg board, suture block, etc)** No modifications are allowed to the FLS trainer boxes that will be used for FLS testing without approval of the FLS staff.
- FLS trainer boxes should be mounted on either height-adjustable tables or a standard-height table, provided footstools are available for test-takers of various heights.

Criterion 2.2 Each test center must provide a monitor for each FLS trainer box

- Monitor must have at least a 15" color display.
- Must be compatible with the FLS trainer. ***

- Monitor should be mounted at or near eye level at a comfortable viewing angle. (i.e. not sitting on the same surface as the trainer or on top of the trainer)

Criterion 2.3 Test centers must own (i.e. not borrow from the operating room) and provide ALL of the equipment listed below for FLS Testing (disposable or permanent equipment is acceptable except where noted, all equipment must be in good working order).

- 2 laparoscopic needle drivers (NO self-righting or disposable)
- 2 Maryland dissectors (non-locking)
- 1 locking grasper
- Endoscopic scissors (disposable or non-disposable; non-disposable must be sharp and in good working order or use replaceable tips only)
- 2 low-profile trocars (minimum diameter 10mm)****
- 1 open ended knot pusher
- 1 closed ended knot pusher

Criterion 2.4 Test center applicants must provide documentation of having the following supplies as well as having the ability to continue to acquire the following supplies:

- FLS approved penrose drains
- Single-use pre-tied ligating loops or endoloops
- FLS approved Single circle gauze sheets
- FLS approved red foam organs
- 2-0 silk (or sofsilk) suture at least 90cm in length on an SH or V-20 taper needle
- Disposable endoscopic scissors or scissor tips for non-disposable instruments (1 new unit/ 10 testers on average)

All of the aforementioned items need to be supplied at no charge for each test taker that schedules their exam at the applying institution. If you are unable to acquire any these materials on a regular basis, SAGES does NOT recommend submitting a Test Center application. The gauze sheets, penrose drains, and red foam model organs must be obtained from the FLS official distributor. Please note: Additional information on the necessary supplies and equipment can be found on the [Required FLS Program Materials](#) list.

Criterion 2.5 Each test center applicant must provide at least 2 computers for FLS testing

- Computers can be laptops or desktops.
- Must be located in (ideally) or near (within close proximity) the space where the FLS trainer boxes/equipment are used for testing
- Must be PC's running Windows XP or later
- Must have Internet Explorer 6 or higher installed
- Must have a reliable and secure high-speed internet connection (cable or faster) to avoid test disruptions
- Must run the latest version of Quicktime
- Must have sound capability (i.e. speakers or headphones)
- FLS proctors must either have administrator privileges for these computers, or provide a letter of support from the responsible IT department that they will support online testing sessions.

- Computers and network must be compatible with the designated FLS computer based testing software. *This compatibility will be confirmed by the SAGES office via webinar or conference call prior to the test center site visit.*

Criterion 2.6 Each test center applicant must have appropriate space for FLS testing

- Space must be no less than 46 square meters (500 square feet).
- The space must house all of the aforementioned equipment and supplies.
- Space must be made available exclusively for FLS testing whenever an exam is scheduled to take place (i.e. proctors/FLS champion must have access to reserve the space and no other events can be taking place in the space at the same time).
- Space must be quiet and separate from any common areas to minimize disruptions or distractions.

Standard 3: Institutional Support

Criterion 3.1 Applicant institutions will have support from hospital and/or academic administrators for becoming and maintaining FLS Test Center status

- Applicants must provide a letter of support from the medical school and/or departmental / hospital administration for the staff time, funds, and space required to become and maintain FLS Test Center status.

Standard 4: Guidelines for maintaining Test Center status

*Criterion 4.1 Each Test Center must administer **at least 30** standard FLS exams (does not include retake exams) every two years.*

- Each proctor must administer at least 5 standard FLS exams per year (12 month period) in order to maintain proctor status.
- Applicants are required to submit with their application a summary of their plan (2 pages or less) for meeting and sustaining the minimum volume requirements with their application. This plan should include a letter of support or agreement from any external sources (neighboring institutions or programs) that are included in the plan to sustain the volume requirements.

Criterion 4.2 Proctors can only administer the FLS exam at their designated FLS Test Center.

- FLS exams must be administered in the space designated for FLS Testing in the Test Center's application. Test Centers **cannot conduct any FLS testing activities outside their institution without the onsite participation of a SAGES designated "traveling" proctor.** All facility and equipment requirements must be met.
- FLS testing that occurs outside an FLS approved Test Center must be approved by the SAGES/FLS staff at least 4 weeks before the anticipated activity
- All marketing or advertising regarding FLS Test Center status and/or special events must be approved by the SAGES/FLS staff prior to use

Criterion 4.3 Each Test Center must submit yearly dues

- Dues begin after the first year of accreditation.

- Payment must be made (in USD) within 60 days of receiving the invoice.
- Please see the *Test Center fee schedule* for more details.

Criterion 4.4 Active Proctors must participate in required in-service or maintenance of certification training sessions.

- Additional required training sessions may be online webinars, online quizzes or exams, videos and/or presentations.
- Email announcements regarding mandatory live Webinars or conference calls will be sent to all active proctors in advance.
- Multiple dates/times will be offered for live webinars and/or conference calls. Active proctors only need to participate in one of the offered sessions when multiple dates are offered for the same MOC training event.
- If a proctor cannot attend any of the sessions, he/she must contact the FLS office immediately to make other arrangements.
- Any proctor who does not participate in the required MOC training will be subject to probation and/or termination of proctor status.

Criterion 4.5 Proctors will keep the SAGES office updated with the most current contact information

- SAGES must be notified within 2 weeks if any proctor's employment at that Test Center is terminated or suspended.
- If a Test Center loses all its FLS proctors, the Test Center will be temporarily suspended until at least 2 new staff members from the institution successfully complete a FLS proctor training workshop. The temporary suspension will last no longer than 18 months. If new staff members at the test center are not trained by then, the test center will be permanently closed.
- If a Test Center goes down to 1 FLS proctor or loses their FLS champion, a new FLS proctor/champion must be trained/hired within 12 months.

Criterion 4.6 Proctors/Test Centers cannot disclose proctoring or scoring information to anyone who has not received proctor training.

- The FLS Program contains proprietary information. Proctors and FLS Champions are entrusted with this information for the purpose of performing testing.
- Proctors/Test Centers cannot carry out FLS testing, or use test vouchers for non-FLS testing activities (such as research) without prior written approval from the SAGES FLS director.
- Proctors cannot disclose test-taker results to anyone without prior written approval from the SAGES FLS director

Criterion 4.7 Proctors/Test Centers cannot charge test-takers for administering the FLS exam

- FLS Test vouchers are sold and distributed by SAGES. Proctors cannot accept payments from test candidates on behalf of SAGES at any time.

Criterion 4.8 Test Centers must post a schedule documenting their availability for testing in Webassessor, the SAGES online test administration program

- Test Centers must post enough appointment times to accommodate 5 test-takers (at a minimum) per month.

- Schedules must be posted at least 3 months (90 days) in advance.

Criterion 4.9 SAGES will reimburse each International Test Center \$75 USD for each FLS exam administered (including retests)

- Payment will be made directly to the test center (as indicated on the application) via wire transfer no more often than twice a year.
- Test results that are submitted incompletely, incorrectly, or late will not be reimbursed.

Criterion 4.10 Test Centers must participate in a reaccreditation process every 3 - 5 years. The reaccreditation process will include a site visit and an audit of maintenance of certification for all current proctors and the FLS Champion.

- Test Centers will be contacted by the SAGES/FLS office when they are due for their reaccreditation site visit.
- Test Centers will be given a specific time interval during which the site visit must be held.
- Reaccreditation Site Visits will be conducted by a SAGES Test Center Site Reviewer as designated by the FLS staff, who will brief and prepare the designee prior to the review.
- All of the FLS Test Center Standards and Criteria in place at the time of the site visit must be met and will be verified by the designated site reviewer
- Proctors may be required to recertify by taking a written and/or performance examination.

Criterion 4.11 Test Centers which do not comply with the aforementioned criteria may lose their accreditation status and be closed or placed on probation temporarily

- Terms of the probationary period will be determined by the SAGES office dependent upon the offense.
- If a Test Center is shut down for any reason, the test center must wait at least 18 months before reapplying for test center status.
- Test Centers that are reapplying (i.e. shut down) will be treated just as if they were a new applicant and will be required to go through the entire process again. (after the 18 month waiting period)
- Proctors who do not comply with the aforementioned criteria, or who threaten the validity or security of the FLS exam in any way may lose their proctor status at the discretion of the SAGES/FLS staff without warning.

Standard 5: Test Center Volume/Capacity and Geographical Area Demographics

Criterion 5.1 New International FLS Test Centers will likely NOT be established in geographical areas with existing FLS Test Centers UNLESS the existing test centers are administering more than 75 FLS exams per year OR the existing Test Center is shut down. A Geographical area is defined as 1 test center per country or 1 test center per 325 kilometer radius (~200 miles).

- Please contact the SAGES office (fls@sages.org) to inquire about the volume of existing Test Centers in your area *PRIOR* to applying.

- Submitted applications that meet all the aforementioned criteria EXCEPT 5.1 will be placed on hold for a period not to exceed 18 months.
- If existing Test Center(s) in the applicant's area are shut down within 18 months of SAGES receiving the submitted application, the submitted application will be reconsidered for approval.
- Any applications on hold that are not approved within 18 months of submission should be considered denied. If the applicant still wishes to pursue Test Center status at that time, a new application must be submitted to SAGES along with a new application fee. The application fee is nonrefundable regardless of application approval.
- A list of FLS Test Centers is available on our website, www.flsprogram.org

Standard 6: International Test Center applicant eligibility

Criterion 6.1 International Test Center applicants should provide documentation of other high stakes medical examinations given in English within their country. This criterion is not mandatory, but highly desirable.

- Examples include, but are not limited to, medical licensing exams, in-training exams, certification exams, higher education entrance exams, Advanced Trauma Life Support, or Advanced Cardiac Life Support.
- Documentation should be in writing and can include, but is not limited to websites, test-taker instructions, or letters from testing organizations.

FLS Test Center Application Approval Process

Submission of an application and/or meeting all Standards and Criteria does NOT guarantee Test Center Status. The SAGES staff will verify that the test center applicant meets all of the aforementioned criteria during the site visit. Applications are reviewed by select members of the FLS committee and the FLS directors on a quarterly basis. Notices regarding application approval, denial, or pending status will be sent out within 4 weeks following review. Approval notices will include information regarding scheduling an FLS Test Center Site Visit. Test Center status is contingent on the successful completion of the site visit and proctor training. An invoice for the site visit will accompany all approval notices. Payment must be made within 60 days of invoice receipt. Please note, it may take up to 8-10 months to schedule and conduct the FLS Test Center Site Visit dependent on availability. Applicants will be notified of their status within 4 weeks of the completion of the site visit. No applicant will be considered an approved FLS Test Center until the final notice is received after the site visit has been conducted.

*Assuming a 40 hour work week, 5% is equal to administering approximately 30+ FLS exams per year.

**Please see *Components of an FLS Trainer box* document for a full list of included parts/accessories



***To be compatible with the trainer box, the monitor should have a composite video or RCA video input or RCA compatible input (using an adapter). Most computer monitors do NOT have an RCA or composite video input and are NOT compatible with the trainer box.

****Trocars must be low profile so that test-takers are able to use/manipulate the ligating loop properly during the exam. For examples of acceptable product and instrumentation please see the *Required FLS program materials* document.