



SAGES

Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons

FLS TEST CENTER STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

For applicants located in the U.S. and Canada.

The FLS exam is high-stakes, given under strict parameters to preserve the integrity of the program and the validity of the exam results. FLS Test Centers are responsible for providing access to the FLS exam to all qualified test-takers, both to their own faculty/residents and to any qualifying candidates from other facilities/institutions. Institutions wishing to become FLS Test Centers must first complete and submit an FLS Test Center application along with the application fee to the SAGES FLS Program office.

New Test Centers will NOT be established within 60 miles of active Test Centers, unless each active Test Center within 60 miles of the applicant is administering more than 20 FLS exams in a calendar year. Applications from programs within 60 miles of an active Test Center will not be considered.

Test Centers must meet strict test volume requirements to maintain their Test Center status. Programs that do not expect a high volume of FLS test candidates are NOT encouraged to apply. Please see Criterion 4.1 and 5.1 in this document for more details.

The FLS Test Center application is available on our website at www.flsprogram.org. Applications are reviewed by select members of the FLS committee and the FLS directors semi-annually (spring and fall). Approval notices will include information regarding scheduling an FLS Test Center Site Visit.

FLS Test Center status is contingent on successful completion of the site visit and the FLS Proctor Certification Exam by the proctor candidates. The SAGES staff will verify that the test center applicant meets all of the stated *Test Center Standards and Criteria* during the test center site visit. 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 several months to schedule and conduct the FLS Test Center Site Visit depending on FLS staff and applicant 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.

All SAGES FLS Test Centers and FLS proctors are bound by confidentiality and test administration restrictions set forth in the *SAGES FLS Test Center Rules and Regulations* and the *SAGES FLS Proctor Agreement*. These policies apply to all FLS exam administration procedures and test-related materials to ensure secure and standardized exam administration. SAGES reserves the right to revoke a Test Center's designation at any time without notice.

Applicants must be able to provide documentation as to how they meet each of the following standards and the corresponding criterion:

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 1: STAFF

Criterion 1.1: Each test center applicant must designate at least two FLS proctor candidates

- Test Center applicants must identify proctor candidates at the time of application. Proctor candidates are required to participate in the two-day New Proctor Workshop and take the FLS Proctor Certification Exam during the Test Center Site Visit.
- Only the successful completion of the FLS Proctor Certification Exam and participation in the proctor training workshop and can certify a candidate as an official FLS proctor.
- At least One (1) Proctor candidate must pass the FLS Proctor Certification Exam before the applicant can be considered an FLS Test Center
- Only official FLS proctors can administer the FLS exam

Criterion 1.2 Eligibility for proctor-candidates

- Proctor candidates must be familiar with laparoscopic equipment
- Ideal proctor candidates are skills lab technicians, simulation center staff, medical education coordinators/staff
- SAGES does NOT recommend active clinicians/surgeons as proctor candidates, therefore no more than one proctor candidate can be an active clinician
- Proctor candidates must have basic knowledge and experience in using the current version(s) of Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, Adobe reader, 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
- Proctor candidates must be able to communicate effectively with the FLS Champion(see below) faculty member at their 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 5% protected time for FLS exam administration and related duties

Criterion 1.3 FLS Champion

- Each test center applicant must designate a surgeon (attending/faculty) to serve as the FLS Test Center Champion. The FLS Test Center Champion must be FLS certified (at the time of application) and an active SAGES



member. FLS Test Center Champions are required to maintain FLS certification as long as the FLS Test Center is active.

- The 'FLS champion' must be able to provide support to the FLS proctors in terms of securing necessary space, equipment, and supplies as well as funding for equipment and supplies.
- The FLS champion should be involved in the laparoscopic training of the residents, medical students, or other attending surgeons at the applying institution

STANDARD 2: EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

*Criterion 2.1 Test centers must own at least 2 standard FLS trainer boxes with all included components and accessories**

- Trainer boxes must be in proper working condition and all components should have minimal wear and tear.
- The FLS Trainer box components include:
 - FLS trainer box top (with CCD camera) and simulated skin
 - FLS Trainer box bottom with roped alligator clips
 - 2 black side panels
 - A/C adapter
 - RCA video cable
- The FLS Trainer box accessories include:
 - Jumbo clip (with Velcro backing)
 - Peg board with 6 rubber objects
 - Red foam suture block
- Trainer boxes must be placed on height adjustable tables. If height adjustable tables are not available, the test center must provide sturdy stepping stools for use with fixed height tables.

Criterion 2.2 Test centers must provide a monitor for each trainer box

- Each FLS trainer box must be connected to an appropriate color video monitor. Monitors must be at least 15 inches in size. Monitors must be mounted approximately 48 inches off the ground or at the test taker's eye level. Monitors with adjustable height mounting brackets are preferred in order to accommodate test takers of various heights. **

Criterion 2.3 Test centers are required to provide the following instruments. All instruments must be in proper working order and replaced immediately if they are broken. The minimum required amount of each instrument is listed. It is highly encouraged for FLS Test Centers to provide required instrumentation from multiple manufacturers in order to better serve potential test takers.

- 2 laparoscopic needle drivers (CANNOT be self-righting, CANNOT be disposable)
- 2 Maryland dissectors (must be non-locking)



- 1 locking grasper
- Endoscopic scissors (if non-disposable, then replaceable tips must be provided)
- 2 low-profile trocars (minimum diameter 10mm)***
- 1 open ended knot pusher
- 1 closed ended knot pusher

Criterion 2.4 Test centers must provide the following consumable materials for each test taker. FLS Test Centers will need to purchase/acquire all consumable materials on a regular basis to ensure there is a constant supply.

- Penrose drains*
- Single-use pre-tied ligating loops
- Single circle gauze sheets*
- Red foam organs*
- 2-0 silk (or sofsilk) suture either 90cm or 120 cm in length on an SH or V-20 type needle

All of the aforementioned items must be provided free of charge for each test taker. If your institution is unable to acquire any these materials on a regular basis, SAGES does NOT recommend submitting a Test Center application. Items marked with an * must be obtained through the FLS authorized distributor.

Criterion 2.5 Test centers must provide at least 2 computers for FLS testing

- Must be PC laptop or desktop computers with mice
- Processor: 1 GHz or higher required
- RAM: 1 GB or greater required
- Operating System:
 - Windows 7
 - Windows 8 (desktop mode only)
- Video: A minimum of 256 colors with video display set to 1024 x 768 resolution
- Monitor: minimum of 15" CRT or Flat screen
- Laptops must be connected to an outlet power source and not powered by battery alone
- Internet Access: DSL, T1, cable or comparable reliable high speed internet connection
- Installed applications: Internet Explorer 9.0 or higher or Google Chrome
- Installation of Adobe Acrobat Reader: <http://get.adobe.com/reader>
- Installation of Java Runtime Environment (JRE): <http://java.sun.com/javase/downloads/index.jsp#jre>
- Installation of Adobe Flash Player: <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>
- Must be located within close proximity of the space where the FLS trainer boxes/equipment are set up
- 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.

Criterion 2.6 Each applicant must designate an appropriate FLS Testing space/area.

- The testing area must be large enough to space the skills testing stations, tables, computers, chairs and all required materials and supplies adequately, such that the test takers and proctors can easily move about.
- There must be enough table space to accommodate the computer monitor, keyboard, and mouse pad provided to the test taker for the written exam.
- If more than one test taker is present at the same time, each computer testing station must be separated by a partition or a space of five feet (1.5 meters) apart to prevent a test taker from viewing any other computer screen.
- Space must be made available *exclusively* for FLS testing whenever an exam is scheduled to take place
- The testing area must be separate from common areas so test takers are not disturbed by foot traffic, conversations, or outside noise. Noise Cancelling Headphones or disposable earplugs should be available to test takers upon request.
- There must be enough lighting in the testing area so that the test taker can easily view the monitor, test materials and instrumentation, and the computer screen without difficulty.
- The testing area must be comfortable and well ventilated. Ventilation should supply continuous air circulation.

STANDARD 3: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Criterion 3.1 Test Centers must have support from hospital and/or academic administrators for becoming and maintaining FLS Test Center status

- Applicants are required to provide a letter of support from the medical school and/or departmental / hospital administration describing their endorsement of the applicant becoming an FLS Test Center and outlining their support of the staff time, funds, and space necessary to become and maintain FLS Test Center status.
- Letter should be no more than 500 words

STANDARD 4: MAINTAINING TEST CENTER STATUS

Criterion 4.1 Each FLS Test Center must administer a minimum of 20 FLS exams (does not include retests) every two years they are an active FLS Test Center.

- Test Center applicants are required to submit a summary of their plan (2 pages or less) for meeting and sustaining the minimum volume requirements with their application. The plan must include a letter of



support of agreement from any external sources (neighboring institutions or non-general surgery specialties) that are included in the plan to sustain volume requirements.

- The two-year period begins on the Test Center's activation date
- If after two years, the test center has not administered at least 20 FLS exams, the test center will either be placed on probation or shut down.

Criterion 4.2 Each FLS Proctor is required to administer at least five (5) FLS exams (does not include retests) PER CALENDAR YEAR

- The first (1) year period begins on January 1 following the proctor's activation date.
- Proctors who fail to administer at least 5 exams per year will be deactivated.

Criterion 4.3 Each Test Center must submit yearly dues

- Dues begin after the first year of accreditation
- Payment must be made within 60 days of receiving the invoice
- Please see the *Test Center fee schedule* for more details

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

- Training sessions may be in the form of online webinars, quizzes, exams, videos, and/or presentations
- Proctors who do not participate in required in-service training sessions will be subject to termination.

Criterion 4.5 Proctors/Test Centers cannot charge test-takers for administering the FLS exam

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

Criterion 4.6 Test Centers are required to maintain a testing schedule online via Webassessor, the SAGES online test administration program

- Each Test Center is required to provide a minimum number of testing appointments per month.

Criterion 4.7 Test Centers that do not comply with the aforementioned criteria may lose their test center status and will be closed or placed on probation temporarily at the discretion of the FLS Test Center Review Committee.

Standard 5: GEOGRAPHICAL AREA DEMOGRAPHICS



Criterion 5.1 New FLS Test Centers will not be established in geographical areas (defined as within a 60 mile radius) with existing FLS Test Centers UNLESS the existing test centers are administering more than 20 FLS exams per year OR the existing Test Center is shut down.

- The application fee is nonrefundable regardless of application approval.
- A list of FLS Test Centers is available on our website, www.flsprogram.org
- To inquire about the volume of existing Test Centers prior to applying, please email fls@sages.org with your request.

FLS TEST CENTER APPLICATION APPROVAL PROCESS

Institutions wishing to become FLS Test Centers must first complete an FLS Test Center application and submit the application, along with the application fee to the SAGES FLS Program office. The FLS Test Center application is available on our website at www.flsprogram.org. Applications are reviewed by select members of the FLS committee and the FLS directors semi-annually (spring and fall). Submission of an application and/or meeting all Standards and Criteria does NOT guarantee Test Center Status. Test Center status is contingent on the successful completion of the site visit and proctor training. The SAGES staff will verify that the test center applicant meets all of the aforementioned criteria during the site visit. 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 several 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.

Applications submitted September 1-February 28 will be reviewed in the spring. Applications submitted March 1-August 31 will be reviewed in the fall. Notices regarding application approval, denial, or pending status will be sent out within four weeks of the application review date. Approval notices will include information regarding scheduling an FLS Test Center Site Visit

*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 an RCA video input or RCA compatible input (using an adapter). Most computer monitors do not have an RCA input and are not compatible with the trainer box.

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