

MEDICAL LABORATORY ASSISTANT, MLA(ASCP)

EXAMINATION CONTENT GUIDELINE

EXAMINATION MODEL

The MLA(ASCP) certification examination is composed of 100 questions given in a 2 hour 30 minute time frame. All exam questions are multiple-choice with one best answer.

Examination questions, which are related to the content areas outlined below, are both theoretical and procedural. Theoretical questions measure skills necessary to apply knowledge. Procedural questions measure skills necessary to perform laboratory techniques and follow quality assurance protocols.

EXAMINATION CONTENT AREAS

The MLA certification exam questions encompass five different content areas within the medical laboratory assistant field: Patient Registration and Specimen Collection, Specimen Preparation and Processing, Support for Clinical Testing, Waived and Point-of-Care Testing, and Laboratory Operations. Each of these content areas comprises a specific percentage of the overall 100-question exam. The percentages and content areas are described below:

CONTENT AREA	DESCRIPTION	EXAM PERCENTAGE
PATIENT REGISTRATION AND SPECIMEN COLLECTION	Review, clarification, and verification of orders; patient identification; patient communication; specimen collection procedures; specimen collection complications and considerations; billing and coding procedures; and specimen labeling	20 – 25%
SPECIMEN PREPARATION AND PROCESSING	Specimen acceptability for testing; specimen prioritization and distribution; specimen processing (e.g., centrifugation, aliquoting); specimen storage; specimen transport; and special handling considerations (time, temperature, and light)	30 – 35%
SUPPORT FOR CLINICAL TESTING	Preparation, labeling, and staining of slides; microbiology setup and plating; processes related to reagents, standards, and controls; analytical instrumentation (loading, test initiation, error recognition and reporting, specimen dilution, and calibrations); quality control; critical values and STAT results; result retrieval and reporting; and inventory maintenance	20 – 25%
WAIVED AND POINT-OF-CARE TESTING	Performance, operation, and reporting of waived and point-of-care testing (e.g., glucose, pregnancy tests, urine dipsticks, coagulation tests)	5 – 10%
LABORATORY OPERATIONS	Regulations; safety and infection control; waste disposal; laboratory equipment; professionalism and ethics; and laboratory information system (LIS)	10 – 15%

For a more specific overview of the MLA exam, please refer to the [CONTENT OUTLINE](#) starting on page 2.

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EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

I. PATIENT REGISTRATION AND SPECIMEN COLLECTION (including blood and other specimen types) (20 – 25% of total exam)

1. Review, Clarification, and Verification of Orders
2. Patient Identification
3. Patient Communication (pre- and post-collection instructions)
4. Collection Procedures (e.g., phlebotomy, urine, respiratory)
5. Complications and Considerations (e.g., edema, hematoma)
6. Billing and Coding Procedures
7. Specimen Labeling
8. Special Procedures (e.g., chain-of-custody, alcohol, forensic, fetal-maternal medicine)

II. SPECIMEN PREPARATION AND PROCESSING (30 – 35% of total exam)

1. Acceptability for Testing
 - A. Initial testing
 - B. Add-on requests
2. Specimen Prioritization and Distribution
3. Processing (e.g., centrifugation, aliquoting)
4. Storage
 - A. Pre- and post-testing
5. Transport
 - A. Packaging and shipment to external facilities
 - B. Pneumatic tube system
6. Special Handling Considerations
 - A. Time
 - B. Temperature
 - C. Light

III. SUPPORT FOR CLINICAL TESTING (20 – 25% of total exam)

1. Slides
 - A. Preparation
 - B. Labeling
 - C. Staining (e.g., peripheral blood smears, Gram stains)
2. Microbiology Setup and Plating
3. Reagents, Standards, and Controls
 - A. Preparation
 - B. Storage
 - C. Integrity assessment
 - D. Documentation
4. Analytical Instrumentation
 - A. Loading (e.g., reagents, controls, specimens)
 - B. Test initiation
 - C. Technical and analytical error recognition and reporting
 - D. Specimen dilution
 - E. Calibration
5. Quality Control
 - A. Performance
 - B. Evaluation/troubleshooting
6. Critical Values/STAT Results Recognition and Reporting
7. Result Retrieval and Reporting
8. Inventory Management

IV. WAIVED AND POINT-OF-CARE TESTING (5 – 10% of total exam)

1. Performance/Operation
 - A. Waived testing (e.g., glucose, pregnancy, urine dipstick)
 - B. Point-of-care testing (e.g., glucose, coagulation)
2. Result Evaluation and Reporting

V. LABORATORY OPERATIONS (10 – 15% of total exam)

1. Regulations (e.g., OSHA, TJC, CLSI, CDC)
2. Safety and Infection Control
 - A. Patient
 - B. Personal
 - C. Equipment
 - D. Laboratory/hospital (e.g., fire, chemical/SDS, electrical, biological, radiation)
3. Waste Disposal
 - A. Biological
 - B. Hazardous
4. Laboratory Equipment
 - A. Basic (e.g., pipettes, centrifuges, microscopes, balances, glassware)
 - B. Environmental (e.g., refrigerators, incubators, thermometers)
5. Professionalism and Ethics
 - A. Patient confidentiality (e.g., HIPAA)
 - B. Customer support and service
6. Laboratory Information System (LIS)

Examples provided (as indicated by e.g.) are not limited to those listed.

All Board of Certification examinations use conventional and SI units for results and reference ranges.

END OF CONTENT GUIDELINE