

# MEDICAL LABORATORY ASSISTANT, MLA(ASCP)

## EXAMINATION CONTENT GUIDELINE

### EXAMINATION MODEL

The MLA(ASCP) certification examination is composed of 100 examination questions given in a 2 hour 30 minute time frame. All examination questions are multiple-choice with one best answer. The MLA(ASCP) certification examination is administered using the format of computer adaptive testing (CAT).

With CAT, when a person answers a question correctly, the next test question has a higher level of difficulty. The difficulty level of the questions presented to the examinee continues to increase until a question is answered incorrectly. Then an easier question is presented. In this way, the test is tailored to the individual's ability level.

Each question in the test bank is calibrated for level of difficulty and is classified by content area. The content area aligns with the examination specific content outline. The examinee must answer enough questions correctly to achieve a measure above the pass point in order to successfully pass the certification examination. There is no set number of questions one must answer to pass, nor is there a set percentage one must achieve to pass. If at the end of the exam the examinee's score is above the pass point, then he or she passes the exam.

### EXAMINATION SUBTESTS

The MLA(ASCP) certification examination questions encompass five different subtests: 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 subtests comprises a specific percentage of the overall 100-question certification examination. The subtests for the MLA(ASCP) examination are described in the following table:

SUBTESTS	DESCRIPTIONS	EXAM PERCENTAGES
<b>PATIENT REGISTRATION AND SPECIMEN COLLECTION</b>	Knowledge of the processes related to patient registration and specimen collection	<b>20 – 25%</b>
<b>SPECIMEN PREPARATION AND PROCESSING</b>	Processes related to the handling, transport, and processing of specimens	<b>30 – 35%</b>
<b>SUPPORT FOR CLINICAL TESTING</b>	Processes associated with the support of clinical laboratory testing	<b>20 – 25%</b>
<b>WAIVED AND POINT-OF-CARE TESTING</b>	Processes associated with rapid test methods	<b>5 – 10%</b>
<b>LABORATORY OPERATIONS</b>	Regulatory applications, equipment maintenance and calibration, and quality control	<b>10 – 15%</b>

For a more specific overview of the five subtest areas on the MLA(ASCP) certification examination, please refer to the **CONTENT OUTLINE** starting on page 2.

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## EXAMINATION CONTENT OUTLINE

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**IMPORTANT:** Examination questions, which are related to the subtest areas outlined below, will be 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.

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

1. Review and Clarification of Orders at Collection
2. Patient Identification
3. Patient Communication (pre- and post-collection instructions)
4. Complications and Considerations (e.g., edema, hematoma)
5. Collection Procedures (e.g., phlebotomy, urine, respiratory)
6. Patient/Sample/Order Verification
7. Billing and Coding Procedures
8. Specimen Labeling
9. 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 and 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 Value/STAT Results Recognition and Reporting
7. Result Retrieval and Reporting
8. Inventory Maintenance

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

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

## V. LABORATORY OPERATIONS

(10 – 15% of total exam)

1. Regulations (e.g., OSHA, The Joint Commission, 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)

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

***END OF CONTENT GUIDELINE***