

**Calhoun Community College**  
**Medical Laboratory Assistant (MLA) Certificate**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

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### **What is a Medical Lab Assistant?**

A certified Medical Laboratory Assistant (MLA) is educated and skilled in specimen collection, transport and processing of patient blood, urine and other body fluids. MLAs are knowledgeable of the pre-analytical factors, which compromise the accuracy of patient results. MLAs perform rapid, waived laboratory testing and basic analyzer maintenance and decontamination procedures. MLAs are also capable of preparation, performance, interpretation and troubleshooting techniques necessary for quality control analysis.

### **Upon Completion of the MLA certificate, students will be able to:**

- Demonstrate knowledge of infection control and safety practices;
- Follow standard operating procedures to collect specimens;
- Prepare blood and body fluid specimens for analysis;
- Prepare/reconstitute reagents, standards and controls;
- Perform appropriate tests at the clinical assistant level;
- Perform and record vital sign measurements;
- Follow established quality control protocols;
- Communicate (verbally and non-verbally) effectively and appropriately in the workplace using common medical terminology;
- Use information systems necessary to accomplish job functions; and
- Identify and report potential pre-analytical errors that may occur during specimen collection, labeling, transporting and processing.

The first 16 weeks of the program are completed on-campus where students develop the required skills of an MLA through didactic learning and hands-on simulated laboratory experiences. Students are assessed on their knowledge of processes and abilities related to: Specimen collection, handling, transport and processing; rapid test methodology and performance; regulatory applications; and equipment maintenance, calibration, and quality control.

Once students demonstrate competence of the content and laboratory skills, clinical rotations are scheduled. Clinical rotations provide students with invaluable real-world experience ensuring entry level competence in the field. Upon completion of a detailed checklist, students are eligible to sit for MLA and Phlebotomy national registry exams.

### **What are the requirements for enrollment into MLA classes?**

This course is open enrollment. Any student of Calhoun Community College who is cleared for college courses may register for the classes.

### **Do I have to take the MLA classes in order to apply to the MLT program?**

No, taking MLA is not required to apply to the MLT program. It does provide you with advantages such as additional ranking points, completion of the MLT131 course, familiarity with laboratory curriculum and clinical experience.

### **When is the MLA certificate offered?**

Courses for MLA are held in the spring and summer semesters. MLT 131 and 132 are held in spring mini-mesters. MLT 286 is scheduled following in the summer semester. Pre-clinical requirements will be due before enrollment into MLT286.

### **How long is the MLA certificate?**

1 1/2 semesters or 20 weeks. The classes will begin January and conclude June of each year.

## Tentative Class Schedule

CLASS	TITLE	CR. HR.	Semester (Date)	Class Days
MLT 131	Laboratory Techniques I	4	Spring Mini I (Jan – Mar)	Tuesday /Thursday
MLT 132	Laboratory Techniques II	5	Spring Mini II (Mar – May)	Tuesday / Thursday
MLT 286	MLA Clinical	3	Summer Mini I (May – June)	Monday – Friday

### What physical capabilities are required of a MLA?

Students enrolled in the MLA certificate are required to successfully complete both academic and clinical requirements. The program has adopted a list of Essential Functions to delineate the physical, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills deemed the minimal necessary for admission, progression, program completion. The Essential Functions can be found on the MLA website ([www.calhoun.edu/MLA](http://www.calhoun.edu/MLA)).

The Alabama College System endorses the Americans' with Disabilities Act. In accordance, when requested, Calhoun Community College provides environmental and programmatic access for persons with documented disabilities as defined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Any student who desires information about or assistance in arranging needed services for a disabling condition such as accessibility/physical accommodations, assistance with acquiring special material or equipment, word processors, tape recorders, spell checkers, calculators, and so forth, should contact Dr. Ina Smith Wilson, Services for Special Student Populations, Decatur Campus, (256) 306-2635 (email [ina.smith@calhoun.edu](mailto:ina.smith@calhoun.edu)).

### How can I get more information regarding the MLA certificate?

MLA information sessions are offered during Spring/Fall Semesters. These sessions may be held concurrently with Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) information sessions. All sessions will be held on the Huntsville Campus, please visit [www.calhoun.edu/MLA](http://www.calhoun.edu/MLA) or [www.calhoun.edu/MLT](http://www.calhoun.edu/MLT) for dates, times and locations. Students can also contact the Allied Health Secretary or MLA instructors listed on the MLA webpage for more information.

### Are there scholarships or funding available for MLA?

This certificate does qualify for Calhoun Community College Scholarships. You can find more information here: <https://calhoun.edu/student-services/financial-aid/calhoun-scholarships/>

WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) provides students with funding for careers employers demand. Both MLA and MLT programs are covered by WIOA. Contact your local career center to apply and check eligibility:

- Madison/Limestone Counties 256-851-0537
- Morgan/Lawrence Counties 256-355-0142

### Are these class applicable to a higher degree? Will they help me become an MLT?

Advantages for completing the MLA certificate before applying to the Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) associate degree program include: additional ranking points on the application which improve a student's chances for acceptance into the MLT program and prior completion of the MLT 131 Laboratory Techniques course.

### How much can I expect to make as an MLA?

Average pay for an MLA is estimated between \$9.50-12.00/hour based on a small survey of local HR depts. Those who obtain national MLA certification are typically compensated at the higher end of the estimated pay scale.

### Will I be certified after I finish the MLA classes?

Students who complete the MLA certificate are eligible to take a certification exam for national certification as an MLA and/or a Phlebotomist. There are a variety of certification bodies who

offer exams, below are two common agencies who are widely accepted by employers locally and throughout the United States.

American Medical Technologists (AMT)

[www.americanmedtech.org](http://www.americanmedtech.org)

American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP)

[www.ascp.org](http://www.ascp.org)