

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

What is a Medical Lab Assistant?

A 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 may compromise the accuracy of patient results. MLAs perform rapid, waived laboratory testing and basic analyzer maintenance and decontamination procedures. MLAs are also skilled in the preparation, performance, interpretation and troubleshooting techniques necessary for quality control analysis.

Upon Completion of the MLA certificate, the student 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.

What coursework is required to be a Medical Laboratory Assistant?

Curriculum Plan

Course	Title	Credit Hours	Semester	(Tentative) Class Days
MLT 131	Laboratory Techniques I	4	Spring Mini I (Jan – Mar)	Tues. and Thurs.
MLT 132	Laboratory Techniques II	5	Spring Mini II (Mar – May)	Tues. and Thurs.
MLT 286	MLA Clinical	3	Summer Mini I (May – June)	Monday – Friday

The MLA certificate program is 20 total weeks in length and begins once a year in January (spring semester).

The first 16 weeks of study are completed on the Huntsville campus. Students develop the required skills of an MLA through classroom 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 the student demonstrates competence of the content and laboratory skills, the student is assigned to clinical learning in a laboratory. The clinical rotation provides invaluable real-

world experience ensuring entry-level competence in the field. Upon successful completion, students are eligible to sit for the MLA and Phlebotomy national registry exams.

What is required to enroll in MLA?

Students must have a high school diploma or GED and unconditional admission to CCC. Registration for MLA courses opens in November. Class size is limited and the seats are filled on a first come, first serve basis. Interested students should meet with an advisor on either campus. Unlike other health programs, there is not a separate application process for MLA.

What physical capabilities are required of a MLA?

Enrolled students are required to successfully complete both academic and clinical requirements. The program has adopted a list of [Eligibility Criteria](#) to delineate the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills deemed the minimal necessary for admission, progression, completion, and for the provision of safe and effective client care. The Eligibility Criteria can be found on the MLA website. If a student cannot meet the Eligibility Criteria it is their responsibility to request appropriate reasonable accommodations through the Student Disability Services Office.

What expenses are involved in the PTA Program?

In addition to tuition, health students have expenses related to the listed requirements below, plus textbooks and laboratory supplies. Costs are discussed in information sessions and program orientation.

HEALTH SCIENCES STUDENTS REQUIREMENTS:

- Retain reliable transportation to and from the campus and assigned clinical education facilities
- Comply with a dress code that includes an assigned uniform
- Undergo a health examination, TB screening, and validate immunity to infectious diseases
- Submit proof of current certification in basic life support (CPR) at the healthcare provider level
- Purchase low-cost malpractice insurance through the CCC Health Sciences division
- Submit to a background check by a designated vendor
- Undergo drug and alcohol testing by a designated vendor

An approximate cost for tuition, books, fees, uniforms, and health requirements is \$2700 - 3000.

Do I have to have a background check, a physical exam, drug testing, or have taken CPR to register for MLA?

No, none of the above are required to register. Faculty will instruct enrolled students when to proceed with these requirements. Policies for the background check and drug testing are provided upon enrollment. A background check with findings or positive drug screen may render a student ineligible to participate in clinical rotation which may result in dismissal.

Are there scholarships or funding available for MLA?

The certificate does qualify for Calhoun Community College Scholarships. More information:
<https://calhoun.edu/student-services/financial-aid/calhoun-scholarships/>

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides funding for careers in demand. Both the MLA and MLT programs are eligible. Contact your local career center.

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

Will I be certified as an MLA once I complete the classes?

No, but you will be prepared and eligible to take a national exam for certification as an MLA and/or a Phlebotomist. Two agencies offer the exam and the credential, which is accepted by local employers and throughout the United States.

American Medical Technologists (AMT)
www.americanmedtech.org

American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP)
www.ascp.org

What is the salary of a MLA?

Based on a survey of local employers, average local pay is generally \$9.50-12.00/hour. Individuals with MLA certification are typically compensated at the higher end of the estimated pay scale.

Will the MLA classes help in earning a higher degree?

At CCC, completion of the MLA certificate will improve your chances of being accepted into the Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) associate degree program. Though MLA is not required to apply to the MLT program, completing MLA provides students with familiarity of the laboratory professions.

Where can I find out more about MLA?

Attend an information session and/or contact program faculty and staff noted on the MLA website.