## Examination Format

The American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification (ASCP BOC) MLA certification examination is composed of 100 questions given in a 2-hour 30-minute time frame. All examination questions are multiple-choice with one best answer. More information is available on the ASCP BOC website.

The examination questions may be both theoretical and/or procedural. Theoretical questions measure skills necessary to apply knowledge. Procedural questions measure skills necessary to perform appropriate laboratory techniques and follow quality assurance protocols.

## Examination Content Areas

The examination questions encompass the following content areas within the medical laboratory assistant field. Each of these content areas comprises a specific percentage of the overall 100-question examination.

| Content Area | Description | Examination 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 detailed overview of the examination, refer to the content outline starting on page 2.

# Examination Content Outline

- Regulatory questions on the examination are based on U.S. sources (e.g., AABB, FDA, CLIA, etc.).
- The examples provided in this topic outline (as indicated by e.g.,) are not limited to those listed.
- The laboratory results and reference ranges on the examination will be provided in both conventional and SI units.

## I. Patient Registration and Specimen Collection

**20 – 25% of total examination**

- **A.** Review, Clarification, and Verification of Orders
- **B.** Patient Identification
- **C.** Patient Communication (pre- and post-collection instructions)
- **D.** Collection Procedures (e.g., phlebotomy, urine, respiratory)
- **E.** Complications and Considerations (e.g., edema, hematoma)
- **F.** Billing and Coding Procedures
- **G.** Specimen Labeling
- **H.** Special Procedures (e.g., chain-of-custody, alcohol, forensic, fetal-maternal medicine)

## II. Specimen Preparation and Processing

**30 – 35% of total examination**

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

## III. Support for Clinical Testing

**20 – 25% of total examination**

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

## IV. Waived and Point-of-Care Testing

**5 – 10% of total examination**

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

## V. Laboratory Operations

**10 – 15% of total examination**

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

## END OF CONTENT GUIDELINE