

VALID ONLY FOR MLA(ASCP) TESTING DATES UP TO AND INCLUDING MAY 31, 2026

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.

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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**

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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