

POLICY DOCUMENT



VCU Medical Laboratory Sciences
College of Health Professions

Baccalaureate Degree Completion Guidelines for Medical Laboratory Technicians

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Program Summary

The Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences (MLS) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) offers this program for certified Medical Laboratory Technicians (MLTs) to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in Medical Laboratory Sciences. MLTs who are actively certified (ASCP, AMT) and hold an Associate's Degree in Medical/ Clinical Laboratory Technology from an accredited community college OR possess the equivalent military credential may be awarded credit for upper-level course requirements through challenge examinations or exemptions based on their documented competencies in required laboratory skills. This program requires a total of 125 semester credits, including prerequisite courses, which can be earned through course enrollment at VCU, transfer credit from other institutions of higher education, and proficiency credits based on documented competencies. Students who are eligible for exemption from the junior-level laboratory portions of the curriculum can complete the didactic courses fully online. The program welcomes both full-time and part-time students.

Admission Requirements

To be considered for admission to the Degree Completion program, applicants must submit a completed application package and meet the following criteria:

1. Have an associate degree in medical laboratory technology from a NAACLS-accredited MLT program *OR* have completed a military training program as a medical laboratory specialist (or an equivalent approved by  [Military Student Services \(MSS\)](#)).
2. Have a minimum cumulative G.P.A. of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale on all college/university courses completed prior to admission.
3. Submit documentation of active MLT national certification from the ASCP or AMT -*OR*- Military Medical Specialist Training (or the equivalent) prior to enrollment in the program.
4. Receive a satisfactory recommendation from at least two references.
 - a. MLT program director is preferred for one reference. In cases where the student completed their MLT credential years ago or the director has changed, and this reference is not feasible, the BS Degree Completion Program Director should be contacted to determine a suitable alternative.
 - b. Other references may come from math or science instructors or managers/supervisors.
5. Complete an interview with the BS Degree Completion Program Director. In most cases, this will occur as a video conference or phone call.
6. Have satisfactorily completed the minimum required prerequisite coursework:

7. A minimum of 44 non-MLT semester hours of transferable credit for admission as a full-time student, 38 non-MLT semester hours for admission as a part-time student. Please refer to the VCU Transfer Guide ( www.transfer.vcu.edu) to identify transfer equivalencies for courses you have completed at other institutions. The following general education and science prerequisite courses must be completed *prior to admission*. Examples of transferable courses from the Virginia Community College System are shown in parentheses.
- 6 semester credits English composition (e.g., ENG 111, 112).
 - 8 semester credits Biology (e.g., BIO 101, 102, 141, 142, 205; survey courses do not qualify).
 - 8 semester credits Chemistry (e.g., CHM 111, 112; survey courses do not qualify).
 - 3 semester credits Mathematics; College Algebra or higher level (e.g., MTH 158, 163, 166).

Degree Requirements

VCU requirements dictate that a **total of 125 credits** (60 credits of prerequisite work plus 65 MLS program credits) must be completed to receive a Bachelor's degree. At least 25% of the total credits must be completed at VCU including 30 of the last 45 credits of the degree. This means that degree completion program **students must complete a minimum of 31.25 credits at VCU** (Note: any classes challenged, exempted, or waived do not count toward this required total).

Prerequisite Coursework

A total of 60 credits in prerequisite coursework must be completed for the B.S. degree. Once admitted into the baccalaureate program, an MLT is required to complete the remainder of the prerequisite coursework, which may be transferred from another college or university during your studies at VCU **two semesters prior to graduation**. Please refer to the VCU Transfer Guide ( www.transfer.vcu.edu) to determine VCU course equivalencies. These requirements include:

- A total of **12 semester credits of Biology**
- A total of **12 semester credits of Chemistry**, including at least 4 semester credits of *either* organic chemistry (e.g., CHM 241 and 243) or quantitative analysis lecture and lab
- 6 credits of English Composition** (e.g., ENG 111, 112)
- 3 credits of Math** (College Algebra or higher) (e.g., MTH 158, 163, 166)
- 3 semester credits of humanities** (select from courses in history, philosophy, political science, religion, foreign languages, literature, or art history/arts).
- 3 semester hours of social sciences** (select from courses in anthropology, economics, geography, psychology, sociology or social sciences; may include selected courses in history and political science).
- A total of **21 credits of "other" (elective) coursework** (courses can be in any topic that transfers in to VCU *except* those courses designated under your MLT program (e.g. those with an MLT or MDL course code)

All prerequisite coursework must be completed two semesters prior to graduation.

Curriculum: Junior Year (300-level courses)

Course Exemption Opportunities

The student is eligible to receive up to 11.0 semester hours of their 300-level coursework through exemptions based on training received in an accredited MLT program.

1. All MLT (or eligible) students are exempt from the following course in the Clinical Laboratory Sciences curriculum: **CLLS 337 Clinical Education (1.0 credit hour)**
1. Exemptions from the laboratory portions of the CLLS 300-level courses are based on grades earned in the MLT program. A student who received a grade of C or above in each course related to a specific discipline in the MLT program will be exempt from the **laboratory portion of the corresponding CLLS course***:

Course No.	Course Title	Lab Credit Hrs.
CLLS 301	Hematology	1.5
CLLS 304	Urine and Body Fluid Analysis	0.5
CLLS 306	Immunohematology	2.0
CLLS 308	Pathologic Microbiology	2.0
CLLS 310	Clinical Immunology	1.0
CLLS 311/312	Clinical Chemistry and Instrumentation I./II.	3.0

i Please note that this exemption does not apply to CLLS 302 Abnormal Hematology laboratory. Please see the "Abnormal Hematology Requirement" section below for more details.

1. Proficiency credit(s), but no grade, will be recorded on the student's transcript for the exempted course(s) at the completion of the semester in which the course is offered. They will appear as a grade of "Cr" on the student's transcript and will not affect the student's GPA.
2. **Exemptions apply only to courses taken within the last 5 years.** Courses completed before that time will be evaluated, and the faculty member responsible for the course will have the option of requiring a proficiency test. For proficiency test guidelines, see the following section on challenge examinations.

Challenge Examinations

Challenge examinations may be taken for the lecture and/or lab portions of all the junior-level courses from which the student is not exempt.

1. **Schedule:** Challenge examinations are given 1 - 2 weeks prior to the beginning of each semester. Applications are required to qualify for these exams. Study materials will be provided to students at least one month prior to the exams in the form of previous course Syllabi, Schedules, and Objectives.
2. **Grading:** A grade of $\geq 70\%$ must be achieved to successfully pass a challenge examination.
3. **Proficiency credit(s)** but no grade will be recorded on the student's transcript for successfully challenged courses at the completion of the semester in which the course is offered. They will appear as a grade of "Cr" on the student's transcript.

Abnormal Hematology Requirement

Due to variations in abnormal hematology coverage within MLT curriculum, students must either elect to challenge out of CLLS 302 Laboratory or take it with the lecture. Based on best educational practices and course structuring, students must either successfully challenge out of the laboratory requirement or take the laboratory portion of the course *concurrently* with the lecture. This means the student may meet the CLLS 302 program requirement in one of three ways:

1. They may elect to take both the lecture and laboratory portions of the course together, requiring registration for the full amount of credits for the course (2.5 Lecture + 1.5 Lab = 4.0 total).
2. They may challenge out of the laboratory only and take the lecture portion of the course on its own in the same format as courses for which the laboratory requirement was automatically waived.
3. They may challenge out of the Lecture and the Laboratory within the same challenge window to be exempted from the entire course.

⚠ Should the student fail or withdraw from the laboratory challenge but pass the Lecture challenge, the student must still take the lecture portion with the lab portion. Students may not take the laboratory portion of this course separate from the lecture.

Lab challenges are offered every December. In either case, the lab may be completed as a distance learner without any on-campus requirement.

Curriculum: Senior Year (400-level courses)

Senior Clinical Rotation Exemption Requirements

1. Certified MLTs who completed clinical training through an accredited MLT program within the last 5 years and/or the equivalent of at least 2 years of full-time work experience in a clinical laboratory as an MLT within the last 5 years would be permitted to obtain advanced standing (15 credits) for the following courses by passing the Clinical Qualifying Examination (CQE):
 - a. CLLS 483 Biochemistry Practicum (3 credits)

- b. CLLS 485 Hematology Practicum (3 credits)
 - c. CLLS 493 Clinical Microbiology Practicum (3 credits)
 - d. CLLS 494 Miscellaneous Clinical Practicum (3 credits)
 - e. CLLS 496 Blood Bank Practicum (3 credits).
2. A comprehensive Clinical Qualifying Examination will be given each summer and winter. To be eligible, all junior (300) level CLLS coursework must be completed. The exam will be divided into the following sections:
- a. Chemistry (to include Toxicology and Instrumentation)
 - b. Hematology (to include Coagulation and Urinalysis)
 - c. Microbiology (to include Parasitology)
 - d. Immunohematology
 - e. Immunology
 - f. Urine and Body Fluid Analysis

 A minimum passing grade of 60% in all sections is required in order to progress in the program.

Upon successfully passing the Clinical Qualifying Examination, 15 proficiency credit(s) for the practicum courses, but no grade, will be recorded on the student's transcript during the final semester of the program. Cases in which a student does not pass the qualifying examination after three attempts will be reviewed by the faculty on an individual basis.

Senior Academic Classes

Senior (400-level) academic courses cannot be challenged. Students are permitted to take two senior courses prior to finishing the junior curriculum and passing the CQE if they achieve a grade of B or higher in all courses relevant to the discipline.

Online Course Delivery Requirements

MLTs may complete all didactic coursework using distance-based learning technology. The online courses eliminate the need for students to relocate and allow them to work as they complete the program. This option is restricted to MLTs who are awarded proficiency credits for the laboratory sections of all the junior (300) level MLS courses through exemptions or challenge examinations. Students who choose this route must own a contemporary personal computer equipped with WiFi or Cable internet. It is recommended that students have access to a microphone and webcam for meetings with faculty.

Microscope access is required in order to complete some of the MLS coursework. If the student does not have microscope access in a clinical laboratory, they may utilize the microscopes in the MLS department during normal business hours.

Test & Examination Policies and Procedures

Adherence to Program Regulations

All students and proctors are required to comply with the policies outlined in the Undergraduate Student Policies and Regulations manual pertaining to examination completion.

Test Completion Window

Tests or assignments must be completed within ± 1 day of the specified date mentioned in the course syllabus. Students must inform the course instructor of their chosen test date and time **at least one week before** each scheduled test/exam. No extensions will be granted without acceptable documentation.

Exam Agreements

An *Exam Agreement* form must be completed by a student prior to any exam taken as a distance learner in the VCU MLS program. The agreement will record the exam name, date, and proctor that the student intends to use and will serve as communication between the student and course instructor. Students must complete one agreement for each exam in each course.

The most current Exam Agreement Form is always available in the  [MLT Bachelor's Degree Completion Program](#) Canvas course and should also be shared in the Course Syllabus of the courses students are currently enrolled in.

Exam Proctoring

Online learners have the option to secure a suitable proctor for tests and exams, which may include laboratory supervisors, managers, testing centers, or public libraries.

1. External proctoring

Students may request proctoring services from individuals and services outside of VCU. To be a proctor, an individual must be in a position of formal authority in relation to the student (i.e. a supervisory role at the student's workplace). All external proctors must have a Proctor Agreement for the student on file with the MLS department. To establish a proctor agreement, students must provide the necessary details (proctor's name, title, business name and address, contact numbers, and email) to Ms Rhonda Chapman ( cranstonrm@vcu.edu) via the *Proctor Agreement Form*.

The most current Proctor Agreement Form is always available in the  [MLT Bachelor's Degree Completion Program](#) Canvas course.

2. VCU Testing Center

The Division of Academic Success offers proctoring services in their Testing Center for students on the Health Sciences Campus. Distance Learners may contact the testing center to secure proctoring via a secure Zoom feed if they are unable to find another suitable proctoring option. *Note that students who plan to use the VCU testing center are still required to notify their instructors of their proctoring arrangement and test dates.*

Students are encouraged to submit their exam schedules as far in advance as possible. Any requests within 48 hours of an exam from students with or without accommodations will not be proctored. Walk-ins are not allowed.

For more information, visit the  [VCU DAS's testing center website](#) .

3. Policies for Proctors

1. **Test Environment:** Proctors must ensure that tests are conducted in a secure, proctored environment. During the test, students should have no access to books/notes or personal belongings, including cell phones.
2. **Submission and Handling of Electronic Tests:** The majority of tests will be given in an electronic format using Canvas LMS. The student will require a computer with access to the Canvas system and stable internet to complete their tests. Any scratch paper or notes the student makes during the course of the exam are considered exam materials and should not leave the testing area. The proctor is responsible for collecting and securely disposing of such materials following the submission of the exam by the student.
3. **Submission and Handling of Paper Tests:** Though rare, there are some occasions where a paper version of a test may be given. For paper tests, completed copies should be emailed to Rhonda Chapman ( cranstonrm@vcu.edu) or faxed to (804) 828-1911. The test materials must remain in the proctor's possession until the semester's conclusion, after which the originals can be mailed to the Medical Laboratory Sciences department or destroyed.

Examination Policy Compliance

Compliance with Scheduled Exams

Online learners are obligated to abide by departmental policy and the VCU Honor Code, completing exams at the agreed-upon time with both the course instructor and chosen proctor.

Notification of Date Changes

Should a change in the examination date be necessary, students must promptly notify both the instructor and proctor, adhering to the 2 business days' notice rule. Urgent/emergent changes require appropriate documentation.

Consequences Non-compliance

Failure to comply with these policies may result in penalties outlined in the course syllabus or exam agreement, which could include a grade reduction or receiving a zero for the assignment.

NOTE: The faculty reserves the right to add or delete policies as appropriate.

Appendix A: Proctor Request letter and consent form

Date _____

Dear Potential Proctor,

_____ (student's name) forwarded your contact information and stated that you were willing to serve as a proctor for tests/exams. I would like to describe what this responsibility entails. At the beginning of each semester, students are given a syllabus for the courses in which they are enrolled. Test dates are included. There is a window of time in which the student must take the test. It is the student's responsibility to work out a day/time within that time frame that is convenient for both of you. When a test is approaching, the instructor for the respective course will email you testing materials and instructions. If you allow internet access at your location, the student may have the option of taking the test through Blackboard (this is course dependent). If internet access is not allowed at your location, the student will take a paper copy.

We ask that the student take the test in a proctored environment, that is, under your supervision. It is expected that no book/notes will be used during this time. In addition, all personal belongings, including cell phones must be put away. The instructors will specify the time allowed to complete the test and if extras, such as calculators are permitted. If the student takes a paper version of the test, we ask that it be emailed to Rhonda Chapman or faxed upon completion to ( [804\) 828-1911](tel:8048281911). The test cannot leave the building and must remain in your possession until the end of the semester. At that time, the originals can be mailed to the Medical Laboratory Sciences department or destroyed.

Are you willing to provide this service for the student? If so, please complete and sign the attached form, include the student's name, then email to  cranstonrm@vcu.edu or fax to (804) 828-1911.

Please feel free to contact me directly with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Rhonda C. Chapman, MS, MLS(ASCP)CM

Clinical Coordinator and Instructor

**VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS**

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCES

PROCTOR AGREEMENT

Name of Proctor: _____

Title: _____

Business Name and Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Email Address: _____

My signature below indicates that I am willing to serve as a proctor for _____
(Student's Name)
and will abide by all rules and specifications described in the above memo.

Signature: _____

Date: _____