

Essential Functions of Medical Laboratory Sciences Students

Students enrolling in and graduating from an MLS program must meet the *essential function requirements* of the academic program and of the corresponding MLS profession. They must successfully complete programs consisting of academic study, simulated laboratory practice, and clinical laboratory experience. Students must be able to contribute to fellow students' progress, to fellow health professionals' accomplishment of appropriate tasks, and, above all, to render services that contribute to the well-being of patients. The successful applicant to an MLS program must possess the following essential functions:

Communication

The successful student must be able to..

- Read and comprehend technical and professional materials (i.e., textbooks, magazine and journal articles, handbooks, and instruction manuals).
- Follow oral and written instructions in order to correctly perform laboratory test procedures.
- Clearly instruct patients prior to specimen collection.
- Effectively, confidentially, and sensitively converse with patients regarding laboratory tests.
- Communicate with faculty members, fellow students, staff, and other health care professionals orally and in a recorded format (writing, typing, graphics, telecommunication, and electronic E-mail).

Movement

The successful student must be able to..

- Move freely and safely about a laboratory.
- Reach laboratory bench tops and shelves, patients lying in hospital beds or seated in specimen collection furniture.
- Travel to numerous clinical laboratory sites for practical experience.
- Perform moderately taxing continuous physical work, often requiring prolonged sitting, over several hours.
- Maneuver phlebotomy and culture acquisition equipment to collect laboratory specimens from patients.
- Control laboratory equipment (i.e., pipettes, inoculating loops, test tubes) and adjust instruments to perform laboratory procedures.
- Operate an electronic keyboard (i.e., 101-key computer keyboard) to operate laboratory instruments and to calculate, record, evaluate, and transmit laboratory information.

Observation

The successful student must be able to..

- Observe laboratory demonstrations in which biologicals (i.e., body fluids, culture materials, tissue sections, and cellular specimens) are tested for their biochemical, hematological, immunological, microbiological, and histochemical components.
- Characterize the color, consistency, and clarity of biologicals or reagents.
- Employ a clinical grade binocular microscope to discriminate among fine structural and color (hue, shading, and intensity) differences of microscopic specimens.
- Read and comprehend text, numbers, and graphs displayed in print and on a video monitor.

Intellect

The successful student must..

- Possess these intellectual skills: comprehension, measurement, mathematical calculation, reasoning, integration, analysis, comparison, self-expression, and criticism.
- Be able to exercise sufficient judgment to recognize and correct performance deviations.

Behavior

The successful student must..

- Be able to manage the use of time and be able to systematize actions in order to complete professional and technical tasks within realistic constraints.
- Possess the emotional health necessary to effectively use her or his intellect and to exercise appropriate judgment. The candidate must be able to provide professional and technical services while experiencing the stresses of task-related uncertainty (i.e., ambiguous test ordering, ambivalent test interpretation), emergent demands (i.e., "stat" test orders), and a distracting environment (i.e., moderate noise levels, complex visual stimuli).
- Be flexible and creative and must be able to adapt to professional and technical change.
- Recognize potentially hazardous materials, equipment, and situations and proceed safely in order to minimize risk of injury to self and nearby personnel.
- Adapt to working with unpleasant biologicals.
- Demonstrate appropriate control of behavior and emotions
- Complete all tasks with absolute honesty; perform tasks and record results without bias; be forthright about errors and uncertainty

Social Skills

The successful student must...

- Acknowledge and respect individual values and opinions in order to foster harmonious working relationships with colleagues, peers, and patients
- Be honest, compassionate, ethical, and responsible. The student must be forthright about errors or uncertainty. The student must be able to critically evaluate her or his own performance, accept constructive criticism, and look for ways to improve (i.e., participate in continuing education activities). The student must be able to evaluate the performance of fellow students and tactfully give and receive constructive comments.
- Be capable of supporting and promoting the activities of fellow students and health care professionals. Promotion of peers helps furnish a team approach to learning, task completion, problem solving, and patient care.