

Promoting the Medical Laboratory Science Profession through Standardized Titles Frequently Asked Questions

I am a Medical Technologist/Clinical Laboratory Scientist MT/CLS. Why should I call myself a Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS)?

While we understand the value of our profession, its importance has not been fully recognized by hospital administrations, academic institutions, governing bodies, and the general public. The lack of a consistent title for naming the profession contributes to this lack of awareness and appreciation. Advocating for the profession using a single, acknowledged professional name is a step we can take to advance recognition by the healthcare community and public.

What's wrong with calling us Med Techs or Techs?

“Medical technology” does not mean what it once did. Now it refers to imaging technologies, health wearables, artificial organs, and robotic surgery. Furthermore, there are many fields both within and outside of health care that refer to their workers as “techs” or “lab techs.” Other occupations like radiologic technologists, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), computer technicians, and research technicians are also called “techs.” While the abbreviated names may be easy to say, they do not always indicate that we work in **medical** laboratories, nor do they convey the academic background required for our work. Medical Laboratory Scientist is not a designation given to any other type of profession, and it indicates that we work in medical laboratories and perform procedures using principles of basic science.

What will be gained by standardizing to the Medical Laboratory Scientist title?

There is a long history of changes in titles that has created confusion and led to the current situation where multiple titles refer to the same professional. Standardizing to one title will simplify how we refer to ourselves, provide clarity between institutions, and present one face of the profession to the general public and other health professionals. Standardization is a necessary step that will elevate the profession beyond its current status.

Can you give an example of how the current titles are confusing?

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a *New York Times* article was published on December 3, 2020 titled, “Nobody Sees Us: Testing-lab Workers Strain Under Demand.” The author, Katherine J. Wu, interviewed individuals from around the country who

perform, manage, or direct testing for SARS-CoV-2. Six different job titles were used to refer to testing personnel. This one article demonstrates the lack of consistency. If someone wanted to join the profession, they would not know what job to look for or what type of education program they should pursue.

Why do we have Medical Technologist, Clinical Laboratory Scientist and Medical Laboratory Scientist titles? What is the history?

The title **Medical Technologist (MT)** was first used in 1929 and the designation MT(ASCP) was instituted sometime after 1933. The National Certification Agency (NCA), founded in 1976 by the American Society of Medical Technologists (now ASCLS), developed a certification titled **Clinical Laboratory Scientist (CLS)**. In 2009, the NCA and the ASCP Board of Registry unified, creating the ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) and the current **Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS)** designation.

Would the MLS job title be used for someone who has a bachelor's degree but hasn't graduated from an accredited MLS program?

Yes, if they are performing the work equivalent to a certified individual. To firmly establish Medical Laboratory Scientist as the professional title and not dilute the nomenclature with inconsistent names, it seems necessary to take this step. However, we recommend that certification continue to be recognized by employers in job titles and hiring.

Would the MLS job title be used for someone who has become certified by the experience route rather than by an accredited MLS program?

Yes, if they are performing the work equivalent to a certified individual. To firmly establish Medical Laboratory Scientist as the professional title and not dilute the nomenclature with inconsistent names, it seems necessary to take this step. However, we recommend that certification continue to be recognized by employers in job titles and hiring.

Can job titles distinguish between a certified Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS) and someone who doesn't have certification?

We propose that the certified MLS be given the designation cMLS and the non-certified individual MLS, e.g. for name badges. Hospitals and other laboratories may design job title levels based upon experience, MLS education, and certification, but we recommend that all be designated MLS.

What resources are available to help in working with the human resources department at my institution to get job titles changed?

The original position paper supporting a standardized nomenclature, adopted by American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification (ASCP BOC) and the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) is available at:

https://www.ascp.org/content/docs/default-source/boc-pdfs/about_boc/standardizing-the-professional-title-of-medical-laboratory-professionals.pdf

I am certified by an agency that uses the Medical Technologist (MT) designation, not Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS). Should I call myself MLS?

Yes. But in any circumstance requiring use of your credential, like on your resumé, be sure to use the designation of the credential you earned.

Would someone who only works in one section of the laboratory or someone who has categorical certification be called a Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS)?

For at least the laboratory sections included in typical MLS training, e.g. chemistry, hematology, transfusion medicine, microbiology, or molecular diagnostics, individuals with a bachelor's degree qualified to perform high complexity testing would be designated as MLS or cMLS.

Will the ASCP Board of Certification (ASCP BOC) be changing the "Technologist" certifications to "Scientist"?

Currently, the ASCP BOC is transitioning all Medical Technologist (MT) certificants to Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS). The BOC Board of Governors may address other titles and certifications in the future.

I am Medical Technologist, MT(ASCP). When does my credential transition to Medical Laboratory Scientist MLS(ASCP)?

You may begin using the MLS(ASCP) credential immediately. Please note that a formal verification of your ASCP certification will continue to reflect MT(ASCP) in the ASCP BOC database until the transition process is completed.

I am Medical Technologist MT(ASCP). When will the transition process be completed?

The process is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

I am a Medical Technologist MT(ASCP). How will I be notified when my credential transitions?

Notifications will be sent by email and postal service to the addresses currently on file in your ASCP customer record.

I am a Medical Technologist MT(ASCP). Will I be sent a new wall certificate that says Medical Laboratory Scientist MLS(ASCP)?

No, new wall certificates will not be sent. If, after the transition, you wish to order a new certificate, additional information can be found on the ASCP website at [Verify Credentials/General Information/Replacement Wall Certificate](#).

I am MT(ASCP), but am not required to do the Credential Maintenance Program (CMP). Will I be required to do CMP after the transition?

No, CMP will continue to be voluntary for individuals who were ASCP BOC certified prior to 2004.

Will educational programs align behind the change to Medical Laboratory Science (MLS)?

We hope so. Currently, the majority of programs are MLS. At this time, more than a third remain Clinical Laboratory Science or Medical Technology; however, many are planning the transition to MLS.

Will licensing authorities make the change to Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS)?

Practitioners in licensed states will need to work through the legislature and regulatory agencies within their state's system to change the designation to MLS. This is likely to take some time. So, whenever referring to your license, as on your resumé, always use the proper license title.

How can I get involved and promote the use of the Medical Laboratory Scientist title?

Take the "I am MLS" pledge!

Can you summarize the recommendations of the American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification Nomenclature Task Force?

Brief Job Description	Existing Job Titles	Proposed Job Title	Designated Abbreviation, e.g. badges*	Comments
Baccalaureate-level clinical laboratory testing personnel who are certified and meet CLIA regulatory requirements for testing personnel	Medical Laboratory Scientist/Medical Technologist/Clinical Laboratory Scientist	certified Medical Laboratory Scientist	cMLS	The “c” denotes certification to distinguish from non-certified individuals. The certifying agency is not indicated. Includes qualified practitioners with specific expertise in one department.
Baccalaureate-level clinical laboratory testing personnel who are NOT certified and meet CLIA regulatory requirements for testing personnel	Medical Laboratory Scientist/Medical Technologist/Clinical laboratory scientist	Medical Laboratory Scientist	MLS	Non-certified baccalaureate-educated individuals performing the job tasks of certified MLS. Includes qualified practitioners with specific expertise in one department who are NOT certified.
Associate-level clinical laboratory testing personnel who are certified and meet CLIA regulatory requirements for testing personnel	Certified Medical Laboratory Technician	certified Medical Laboratory Technician	cMLT	The “c” denotes certification to distinguish from non-certified individuals.
Associate-level clinical laboratory testing personnel who are NOT certified and meet CLIA regulatory requirements for testing personnel	Medical Laboratory Technician	Medical Laboratory Technician	MLT	