

The accrediting agency for the Medical Laboratory Science Program (the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences or NAACLS) mandates that students be informed of essential functions necessary to perform activities related to the major and the practice of medical laboratory science. Students who seek entry into the MLS Program must affirm they have these abilities with or without accommodation, and in order to progress and complete the program, these abilities must be evident and applied successfully to activities in the curriculum. They are:

1. **Visual/Observational Skills** (with corrective lenses or assistive technology as needed) such that students can:
 - a. read laboratory procedures, clinician orders, regulatory information and other documents associated with medical lab practice.
 - b. view and interact with a computer keyboard and screen.
 - c. reliably use a microscope, often for a sustained amount of time, to distinguish elements in blood and body fluids (whether stained or unstained) as to size, structure, color, and intensity.
 - d. observe and participate in laboratory activities and clinical experiences which require the functional use of smell, vision and tactile sensation.
2. **Physical Mobility Skills/Eye-Hand Coordination** (with assisting device if needed) such that students can:
 - a. access all parts of the laboratory environment and relevant materials to include laboratory shelves, refrigerators, freezers, incubators, fire alarms, bedside, and telephones.
 - b. travel to various clinical sites.
 - c. perform moderately taxing physical work, often continuously, with prolonged sitting and/or standing on occasion.
 - d. maneuver culture and phlebotomy supplies to safely collect specimens from patients within a time limit consistent with entry-level clinical proficiency.
 - e. safely control and manipulate laboratory devices (pipettes, syringes, test tubes, culture swabs, keyboards and others) and instruments to perform analyses with materials which may be hazardous (blood, body fluids, chemicals and others).
 - f. provide reasonable care and emergency treatment to patients, as appropriate.
 - g. physically interact with patients, laboratory staff, laboratory instruments, laboratory devices, chemicals, specimens, etc. such that no one is harmed, or nearly harmed, and that nothing is damaged or significantly delayed.
3. **Manual dexterity skills** such that students can safely hold and manipulate laboratory devices as small as a sewing needle and thread without damage to the devices, themselves or others.

4. **Communication skills**, using oral and written standard English, such that students will be able to:
- a. both give and receive verbal and nonverbal communications from coworkers and patients in a confidential, effective, efficient, and sensitive manner. Verbal and nonverbal communications must be clear, easily understood and concise enough for the situation. Giving and receiving instructions must result in actions that are appropriate, especially in critical situations.
 - b. use the telephone and other devices effectively and appropriately, especially in an emergency.
 - c. read and comprehend technical and professional materials such that they are translated to appropriate actions.
 - d. follow both oral and written instructions in the correct order to independently perform laboratory analyses or other activities associated with medical lab practice such as phlebotomy.
 - e. independently write papers, laboratory reports and other forms of professional communication that are legible and grammatically correct. Punctuation and spelling errors must not interfere with adequate communication of information in the classroom or in the clinical environment.
 - f. complete lab practical and paper examinations, often using a computer, demonstrating entry level competency.
 - g. communicate effectively and efficiently when the situation warrants it. Failure to respond to communication of any sort in a timely and effective manner is also not acceptable.
 - h. perform documentation activities – such as labeling specimens, creating worksheets, recording test results, etc. – with legible handwriting and accuracy at all times when the documentation is required.

NOTE: A hearing impaired applicant should be aware that most medical laboratory environments require candidates for employment to demonstrate hearing ability with any type of auditory aid so that a normal level of speaking voice could be heard without viewing the lips of the speaker.

5. **Intellectual capacity** to comprehend, calculate, measure, synthesize, integrate, analyze, and apply all aspects of the body of knowledge necessary for a medical laboratory scientist. Students must also be able to compare and analyze, to accept criticism and to alter performance if necessary.
6. **Behavioral skills**, such that students can:
- a. complete tasks within a realistic time frame and with adequate quality and quantity.
 - b. be emotionally healthy, mentally stable and mature enough to apply intellect, sound reasoning and good judgment in all situations.
 - c. complete tasks, often simultaneous and multiple, even in a stressful, critical, unusual, dangerous and/or distracting environments.
 - d. maintain composure such that tasks may be performed, completed, and handed off (as needed) at appropriate speed and with sustained attention in difficult situations.
 - e. respond to professional situations – even difficult ones – in an ethical, compassionate, flexible and creative manner.

- f. recognize safety hazards and situations and respond accordingly to minimize risk to self and others.
 - g. cooperate with students, faculty and other professionals toward an accepted goal of sound academic learning and patient care.
 - h. conduct interactions with people from a diversity of backgrounds – including other students, faculty, clinical affiliate staff, patients and the public – that are professional, appropriate, considerate and tactful.
 - i. maintain standards of ethics, compassion, honesty, and responsibility without compromise. This applies to the student’s own as well as others’ responsibility to be forthright concerning possible errors, to evaluate behaviors, to maintain confidentiality and to improve or help others to improve. Criminal behavior is inadmissible in any academic setting, including classrooms, laboratories, and clinical settings. Entrance into clinical affiliates requires a criminal background check at the student’s expense to document lack of unacceptable behavior.
 - j. refrain from use of alcohol and other substances of abuse. Entrance into clinical affiliates requires that candidates pass a drug test. Alcohol, cannabis, or other substance abuse are not tolerated within the medical laboratory science field. Likewise, use of any alcohol/drugs is inadmissible in any academic setting, including classrooms, laboratories, and clinical settings. Use or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs or their aftereffects in any of these settings is grounds for dismissal from the MLS Program.
7. **Sufficient physical, emotional and mental health** such that participation in MLS Program activities does not interfere with the activities of others or endanger self or others. Entrance into clinical affiliates requires that candidates pass a “fitness for duty” assessment and a physical examination, which includes a drug test, from a health care provider at their own expense and receive the appropriate vaccines before being permitted into the clinical experiences.

Applicants should carefully review the Essential Functions for Program Completion above and ask questions if not familiar with the activities or functions listed. Applicants must decide if they have any limitations that could restrict or interfere with satisfactory performance of any of the requirements. It is the applicant’s responsibility to self-report any disability with Salisbury University and clinical placement sites to request reasonable accommodations. Failure to request reasonable accommodations means that the applicant will be obligated to accept the consequences of any sub-standard performance regardless of whether or not accommodations might have helped. It is the applicant’s responsibility to meet these Essential Functions if admitted to the MLS Program. It is also the student’s responsibility to inform the Program Director immediately if he/she/they can no longer perform these functions. Failure to do so may be cause for dismissal from the MLS Program.

Effective Date: October 2023