

Navigation Guide for Medical Laboratory Science (MLS) Program Title Change





Many factors affect the recognition of the Medical Laboratory Science (MLS) profession. One of these is the varied names used by programs, laboratories, and individuals. Using a single name that is consistent from degree to certification to job title supports the goal of raising visibility of the laboratory profession. Names used by the educational programs are key to recognition.

BACKGROUND

- Medical laboratory testing is an essential component of patient care, providing information for medical diagnoses, treatment options and therapeutic monitoring.
- Despite some increase in visibility of individuals who perform laboratory testing during the COVID-19 pandemic, public awareness of medical laboratory careers and the best educational pathways to a career in the laboratory is poor.
- There is a significant shortage of medical laboratory professionals due to educational program closures, post-pandemic burnout, and an aging workforce.
- Poor visibility of laboratory professions is exacerbated by complex and non-standardized job and educational program titles. Medical Technology, Clinical Laboratory Science, Medical Laboratory Science, and other title are used to refer to the same educational and professional content.
- The American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP), the ASCP Board of Certification (BOC), the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS), the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Science (NAACLS) and numerous professional partner societies are advocating for a standardized nomenclature that aligns to the current ASCP BOC certification of Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS) and the profession of Medical Laboratory Science.



Your awareness and support are critical to this alignment. What follows are suggestions for how to adopt and support the MLS nomenclature for your educational program's title.

An Overview of the Process:

The following graphic shows a generalized overview of the 4 major areas of action in changing an educational program title. The process may be complex or take time to complete. Familiarity with institutional processes is important before starting. All steps outlined may not be necessary. The names of the committees or upper-level administrators may differ, but the concept is consistent across institutions.



Figure courtesy Linda A Smith, PhD, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}BB^{CM}, Kathy Doig, PhD, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}SH^{CM} and Rodney E. Rohde, PhD, MS, SM(ASCP)^{CM},SV^{CM},MB^{CM}, FACSc.



GATHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Determine the process your institution requires to make program, course, and degree title changes. Be sure to adhere to the timeline that is given and to all the forms and approvals that must be granted.
- Create a purpose statement based on ASCLS/ASCP position papers, [ASCP Vacancy Survey Data](#), workforce [Blueprint for Action](#) other appropriate literature (see references)
- Gather [NAACLS benchmarking data](#), including number of programs using MLS vs. other titles.

MEET WITH FACULTY/STAFF, STUDENTS, ALUMNI, ADMINISTRATORS

- Meet with program faculty and staff to discuss title change and present information. Prepare informational packets or presentations based on gathered information.
- Develop support for the change by meeting with relevant stakeholders such as students, alumni working in medical laboratory science, other faculty, clinical affiliates, and administrators.
- Outline the title change process with program faculty. Try to be as specific as possible so that faculty/staff understand their roles and responsibilities.

NOTIFY UPPER-LEVEL ADMINISTRATION (DEAN, ASSOCIATE DEAN OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS OR SOMEONE IN A SIMILAR POSITION ABOUT TITLE CHANGE)

- Provide a concise [1-2 pages] document with details and rationale from the gathered supporting documentation.
- Ask the Associate Dean or Dean to inform upper-level administration [Provost level] of your intent to initiate a name change for your program.

SUBMIT REQUEST FOR TITLE CHANGE

- Use institutional procedures to submit the required documents and justification.

MONITOR THE APPROVAL PROCESS

- Curriculum Committees (or other institutional groups who have control of course approval, course names/numbers) may request clarification or additional information. An FAQ or data charts and timelines may be helpful.
- The Curriculum Committee approves the title change. After that, it will most likely be forwarded to someone such as the Provost for approval.
- Once the Upper administration [Provost / Presidents Cabinet] grants approval, it will be forwarded to the final system-wide governing body [e.g., BOARD OF REGENTS] for approval, if needed.

IMPLEMENT APPROVED CURRENT TITLE CHANGE

- After receiving the final approval, begin the process of title change with all appropriate digital and paper-based documents, including: website, social media accounts, forms, signage, etc.
- Engage faculty, staff, IT, Marketing, etc for assistance with changes. Assign responsibilities and deadlines.

CHANGE COURSE NAMES/NUMBERS IN CATALOG

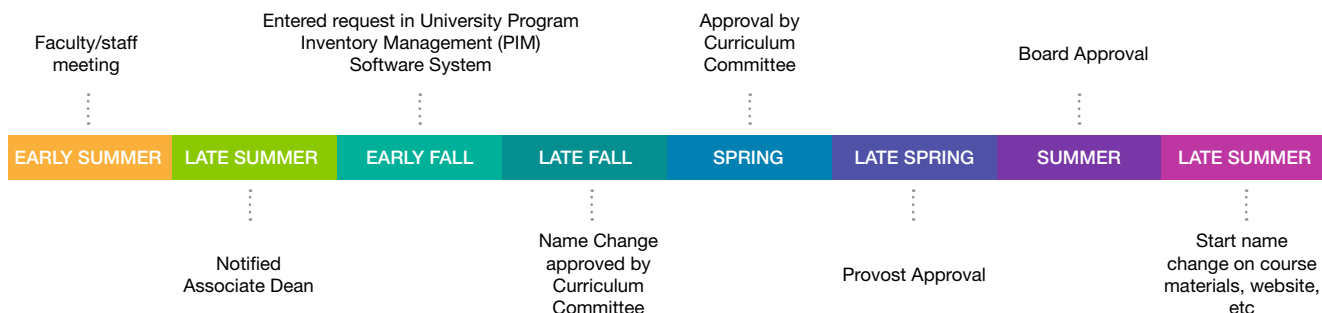
- Follow institutional procedures to change course names and numbers.
- Curriculum changes [including the course prefix from MT or CLS to MLS] will need changing by faculty or an administrative assistant. Consider assigning this task to each professor handling a course.
- Course title/number changes may require approval by the Curriculum Committee and other upper level administration.

NOTIFY STAKEHOLDERS, LABORATORIES AND NAACLS OF THE CHANGE

- Notify NAACLS of the name change.
- Update language in affiliation agreements. Be sure to get approval/acknowledgment of change by affiliate laboratories.
- Encourage affiliate laboratories to adopt MLS nomenclature in job titles and encourage clinical instructors and all laboratory staff to use MLS when referring to students.

TIMELINE

This graphic provides a simplified timeline based on one institution's process for program and course title change. Based on institutional organizational structure, there may be more or fewer steps and the timeline may differ. However, this can serve as a planning guide.



HOW EDUCATORS CAN PROMOTE MLS TITLE ADOPTION

1. Work through channels to correct program/major and degree titles
2. Use MLS terminology inside and outside the classroom
3. Always use your proper MLS credential
4. Update printed and web-based recruitment and course materials
5. Coordinate with your institutional HR to correct job titles for which you hire
6. Help clinical sites/instructors to model proper nomenclature with students and to utilize proper nomenclature for job titles and searches

REFERENCES

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4. Promoting the Medical Laboratory Science Profession through Standardized Titles. [promote_mls_standardized_titles.pdf \(ascp.org\)](#)
5. Medical Laboratory Job Titles and Descriptions for the 21st Century. [medical-laboratory-job-titles-and-descriptions.pdf \(ascp.org\)](#)
6. NAACLS website directory page <https://www.naacls.org/Find-a-Program.aspx>

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**Take The "Medical Laboratory
Scientist" (MLS) Pledge Today!**



