Medical Laboratory Assistant

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Overview

This program will prepare you to work in various healthcare settings, including medical laboratories, hospitals, and patient service centres. You will be part of a healthcare team that recognizes your specialized role and commitment to patient care.

In this program, you will:

- learn to accurately collect, label, and prepare various types of samples, including blood and other body fluids, using medical laboratory procedures
- develop data entry skills to record patient demographics using laboratory information systems
- gain experience in handling front-desk operations, including patient interactions and administrative tasks
- learn procedures such as electrocardiograms (ECGs), holter monitoring, urinalyses, and point-of-care methods, as part of a team of laboratory professionals
- gain an understanding of professional responsibilities, including a medical laboratory assistant's scope of practice, ethics, how to collaborate with other healthcare teams, use appropriate communication, critical thinking, and role accountability.

You'll also participate in a SAIT-arranged practicum in a medical laboratory and patient service center to refine and apply your skills in a real-world setting. This real-world experience integrates your clinical knowledge with practical skills, helping prepare you for professional participation in the workforce.

As a graduate, you'll be prepared to pursue employment opportunities in community health centres, hospitals, medical laboratories, mobile clinics, insurance companies, private home care, and more.

Traits, skills and aptitudes

Those in the medical laboratory assistant field need:

- fine motor skills
- critical thinking and adaptability
- effective communication skills
- the ability to work independently
- the ability to work well under stress, maintain professional behaviour, and emotionally self-regulate
- the ability to use technology
- attention to detail
- the ability to meet physical demands of the job, which may include repetitive motions and positioning patients and/or equipment
- normal colour vision
- the ability to stand for extended periods of time
- the ability to type accurately at a speed of 35 words per minute
- to tolerate the sight of human blood and other bodily fluids.

Medical laboratory assistants need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) for extended periods, which includes exposure to latex and disinfection chemicals. You must also be comfortable performing patient care procedures that may be sensitive or conducted in very close proximity to the patient.

You may also be required to work extended hours and shift work, including during the daytime, evening, and overnight, on both weekdays and weekends.

You are strongly encouraged to refer to the ALIS website for career, learning, and employment information for medical laboratory assistants to ensure you can successfully meet the occupational requirements for the program and profession.

SAIT program pathways

Graduates of this program who elect to pursue SAIT's Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT) diploma program will be granted credit

for the following course equivalencies, which are recognized between the programs:

- MEDL 201 (MLA) = MEDL 330 (MLT)
- PRAC 271 (MLA) = PRAC 329 (MLT)

Practicum, Co-op and Work Integrated Learning

You will participate in a practicum at a medical laboratory and patient service centre as part of this program.

You will be assigned practicum placements with consideration given to your preference of location. However, due to limited availability in Calgary, it might be necessary for you to travel or relocate outside the city. In addition, practicum shifts may occur during the daytime, evening, and overnight, on both weekdays and weekends.

The healthcare field has a strong focus on health, wellness, and fitness to practice due to the demanding nature of the work and Occupational Health and Safety requirements. As such, special considerations will not be granted based on individual circumstances or preferences, except those stated as protected grounds when an accommodation has been approved.

If you are beginning this program as part of the Rural Health Zone (RHZ) intake, all practicum placements will occur in rural Alberta, which does not include sites in Calgary or Edmonton.

In compliance with the practica agreements with our clinical partners, you will be required to provide specific documentation before you can participate in your practicum. Find out what requirements you need for this program.

Accreditations, designations and certifications

This program is accredited by Accreditation Canada. It is designed to ensure graduates achieve clinical competence as defined by the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS).

As an accredited institute, SAIT Medical Laboratory Assistant graduates are eligible to challenge the CSMLS certification exam. Obtaining national certification as a medical laboratory assistant will allow you to work across Canada.

Visit CSMLS.org to learn more about their licensing requirements, mandatory registration, and declaration of conduct.

Specialized Intakes

This program offers a Rural Health Zone (RHZ) intake in the spring semester. Only applicants with a home address (living) in the region will be eligible for admission to the program through this intake.

Credentials

Upon successful completion of this program, you'll be awarded a SAIT Medical Laboratory Assistant certificate.

Admission requirements

Applicants educated in Canada

Applicants must demonstrate English language proficiency and meet the following requirements or equivalents:

- at least 60% in Math 20-2 or Math 10C, and
- at least 60% in English Language Arts 30-1 or 30-2, and
- at least 60% in Chemistry 20, and
- at least 60% in Biology 20.

You must also achieve a mark of at least 50% in the School of Health and Public Safety's entrance testing process.

SAIT accepts high school course equivalents for admission for applicants educated outside Alberta.

Applicants educated outside of Canada

All applicants who were educated outside of Canada must demonstrate English language proficiency and provide proof they meet the program admission requirements with an international document assessment. Find accepted educational documents and assessment options.

SAIT may also accept courses completed at certain international post-secondary institutions.

Costs

2026/27 tuition and fees

The following estimated costs are effective as of July 1, 2026.

The estimated total cost of tuition and fees is based on the suggested schedule of study. Following a modified schedule will impact the fees you pay per semester and may alter final costs.

Domestic Students

Year	Number of semesters	Tuition fees	Additional fees	Total per year
1	1.5*	$5,516.55	$1,333.75	$6,850.30
			Total cost:	**$6,850.30**

The estimated total cost of tuition and fees for domestic students is based on the recommended course load per year.

If you began this program prior to July 2026, the following rates apply:

Year	Number of semesters	Tuition fees	Additional fees	Total per year
1	1.5*	$4,797	$1,333.75	$6,130.75
			Total cost:	**$6,130.75**

The estimated total cost of tuition and fees for domestic students is based on the recommended course load per year.

*.5 indicates a combination of full-time semester(s) and part-time semester(s) in the same academic year. In many cases, students are completing a practicum during their part-time semester. Part-time students are those taking less than nine (9) course credits in a semester. You will not be eligible for the UPass in your part-time semester.

Why are there two tuition rates for domestic students? Learn more about ETI adjustments.

Books and Supplies

Books and supplies are approximately $1,400.

This is a bring-your-own-device program with a standard computer hardware and software requirement. See the specific requirements on our computers and laptops page. A laptop is preferred over other device types.

Find your booklist on the SAIT Bookstore's website. Booklists are created by semester and available approximately two weeks before classes begin.

Required personal protective equipment (PPE)

The industry-approved PPE you'll need will be discussed during your first few days of classes.

Your required uniform can be purchased before orientation from any place that sells medical uniforms. Your uniform should consist of:

- a scrub top and bottom
- comfortable, closed-toe and closed-heel, water-impervious, slip-resistant shoes

Additional fees

- A fee is associated with obtaining a police information check, including a vulnerable sector check, payable to the police or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

- The School of Health and Public Safety strongly recommends that students meet Alberta Health Services' Standard for Immunization of Post-Secondary Health Care Students. Fees for completing immunization requirements start at $85, however, may increase, depending on your vaccination history, and any new immunizations you choose to acquire.
- A fee of approximately $50 to $100 is associated with an electronic student permit checking submission required for clinical practicum placements, payable to Synergy Gateway through the Verified software platform.
- A fee of approximately $50 to $75 is associated with the CompTracker application used in this program.
- You are responsible for additional expenses related to your practicum, including pre-practicum requirements and relocation costs to practicum sites outside of Calgary.
- The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) national exam fee is approximately $250. CSMLS National Association dues for students are approximately $30. Refer to CSMLS.org for more details.