

STAFFING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Medical Technician, General Schedule (GS) 0645, appointed under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B).
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. This new standard establishes the Medical Technician occupation under VA's title 38 hybrid excepted service employment system in accordance with the authority established under Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, P.L. 111-163. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has authority under 38 U.S.C. § 7402, Qualifications of appointees, to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in or established under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration, and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B), Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments. The new standard is effective on the date of publication. This qualification standard will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer website](#) and [VA Publications website](#).
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Human Resources and Administration/ Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing, dated April 15, 2002.
5. **RESCISSIONS:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

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DISTRIBUTION: Electronic Only

NOTE: This transmittal page accompanied the former VA Handbook 5005, Staffing publication. It is provided for reference to the establishment of this qualification standard.

**MEDICAL TECHNICIAN
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0645
Veterans Health Administration**

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for appointment or placement as a Medical Technician in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The requirements will apply to all VHA medical technicians employed in the GS-0645 series performing a variety of clinical chemistry, urinalysis, phlebotomy, hematology, coagulation, microbiology and immunohematology (blood banking) tests to provide accurate results to physicians that aid in the diagnosis and treatment of their patients.
2. **AUTHORITIES.**
 - a. [P.L. 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010;](#)
 - b. [38 U.S.C. § 7401, Appointments in Veterans Health Administration;](#)
 - c. [38 U.S.C. § 7402, Qualifications of appointees;](#)
 - d. [38 U.S.C. § 7403, Period of appointments; promotions;](#)
 - e. [38 U.S.C. § 7405, Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments;](#)
 - f. [38 U.S.C. § 7407, Administrative provisions for section 7405 and 7406 appointments.](#)
3. **DEFINITIONS.**
 - a. **Appointing Official.** The Human Resources (HR) Officer is delegated appointing authority to process and authenticate notifications of personnel actions and authority to effect management-approved employment actions on behalf of officials, employees and facilities for which service is provided.
 - b. **Approving Official.** The Veterans Integrated Service Network Director or Facility Director is the approving official and will determine whether to approve or disapprove the appointment of employees in hybrid occupations.
 - c. **Creditable Experience.** To be creditable, a candidate must possess the required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) associated with the scope of Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) practice. The candidate's experience must be evidenced by active professional practice. (Active professional practice means paid/non-paid employment as a professional MLT).

- d. **Journey Level.** The full performance level for this qualification standard is the GS-06 grade level.
- e. **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience is creditable according to its relationship to the full-time work week. For example, one week of full-time credit equals two weeks of half-time work.
- f. **Quality of Experience.** Experience is creditable if it is directly related to MLT duties equal to or exceeding professional MLT experience at the next lower grade level. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, administrative independence, complexity and range of variety as described in this standard at the specified grade level and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time.

4. BASIC REQUIREMENTS.

- a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States. Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).
- b. **Education.** Candidates must meet the applicable educational requirements for certification.
- c. **Certification.**
 - (1) Candidates must currently possess one of the appropriate certifications as an MLT granted by the following organizations.
 - (a) American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP)
 - i ASCP, Board of Certification.
 - OR
 - ii ASCP, Board of Registry.
 - (b) American Medical Technologists.
 - OR
 - (c) American Association of Bioanalysts.
 - (2) **Exception.** Non-certified applicants who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for certification may receive a temporary appointment up to the full performance level not to exceed two years as a graduate MLT under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2) without the option to extend.

For grade levels above full performance level, the candidate must be certified in accordance with paragraph 4.c.(1) above.

- (3) **Loss of Certification.** Management officials, in collaboration with HR Office staff, must immediately relieve employees of the duties and responsibilities associated with the MLT occupation who fail to maintain the required certification, which may also result in separation from employment.
- d. **Grandfathering Provision.** All individuals employed in VHA in this occupational series or in another occupational series performing the duties described in this qualification standard on the effective date of the qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade held, including positive education and licensure/trademark/registration/certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements in this standard but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:
- (1) Employees may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level, or changed to a lower grade within the occupation but may not be promoted beyond the journeyman level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.
 - (2) Employees in an occupation requiring a licensure/certification/registration only at higher grade levels must meet the licensure/certification/registration requirement before being promoted to those higher grade levels.
 - (3) Employees who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of this qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed on a temporary or permanent basis until they fully meet the basic requirements of this standard.
 - (4) Employees who are converted to title 38 hybrid status under this provision and subsequently leave the occupation lose protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.
 - (5) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification/registration that meets all the basic requirements of this qualification standard must maintain the required credential as a condition of employment.
- e. **Foreign Education.** Graduates of foreign MLT programs are considered to meet the basic education requirements if they have a current certification as described in subparagraph 4.c.

f. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.

g. **English Language Proficiency.** MLT candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English to be appointed as authorized by 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

5. **OFFICIAL POSITION TITLES.** All official documents relating to a position (e.g., functional statements and personnel actions) must use the approved official title and grade level described below. For recruitment purposes, HR Offices will use the Medical Laboratory Technician organizational title in the job opportunity announcement. See VA Handbook 5003, Part I for information on the use of official titles and organizational titles.

a. Medical Technician, GS-05.

b. Medical Technician, GS-06.

c. Medical Technician, GS-07.

d. Lead Medical Technician, GS-07.

e. Supervisory Medical Technician, GS-08.

6. GRADE DETERMINATIONS.

a. **Grade Determinations.** In addition to the basic requirements for appointment in paragraph 4, VA HR staff must use the following criteria to determine the appropriate grade assignment of candidates.

(1) **Medical Laboratory Technician, GS-05.**

(a) **Experience.** None beyond the basic requirements.

(b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** None.

(c) **Assignment.** This is an entry-level developmental MLT position. MLTs will typically receive guidance from experienced staff members and require frequent and direct supervision. MLTs at this level perform testing in one or more of the following areas: Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) waived testing, phlebotomy, hematology, immunohematology, clinical chemistry, immunology, toxicology, urinalysis, referral laboratory, microbiology and specimen processing. MLTs recognize data with life-threatening (critical) implications and understand the importance of immediately bringing the data to the attention of the patient's physician and/or nursing staff.

(2) **Medical Laboratory Technician, GS-06.**

- (a) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements, candidates must possess one year of experience equivalent to the GS-05 grade level.
- (b) **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- i Knowledge of MLT principles, practices, concepts and theories for sound independent work.
 - ii Knowledge of laboratory quality control and quality assurance procedures to manage reagents and supply inventories using document control systems.
 - iii Ability to maintain, troubleshoot and repair instrumentation.
 - iv Ability to work as a team member in a laboratory setting to effectively complete assignments.
 - v Ability to use technical judgment to interpret laboratory results.
 - vi Ability to apply complex written laboratory instructions.
 - vii Ability to consult with other members of the health care team, patients and external customers.
- (c) **Assignment.** At the full performance level, MLTs use independent judgment to perform the full range of duties in the laboratory, from sample collection to evaluating and communicating test results. MLTs perform day-to-day operations in the laboratory with minimal technical supervision while ensuring testing accuracy and quality of proper patient care. This includes providing pre-analytic instructions to patients, VA staff and other external entities related to collection and processing of laboratory specimens. MLTs use processing techniques such as centrifugation, aliquoting, storage and packaging (considering stability factors), and they accurately label and sort patient specimens. MLTs operate and maintain all instrumentation in assigned areas to deliver precise, timely and accurate laboratory results when analyzing body fluids such as blood, urine and tissue samples. MLTs at this level analyze laboratory findings and issue necessary reports. The results and findings of laboratory tests and procedures are discussed with supervisors, pathologists and other medical professionals as needed.

(3) **Advanced Medical Laboratory Technician, GS-07.**

- (a) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements, candidates must possess one year of experience equivalent to the GS-06 grade level and demonstrate the KSAs below. Assignment-specific KSAs are designated with an asterisk (*) and are only required if that task is required of the position, as indicated in part (c) below.
- (b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the KSAs i. - iv. and the advanced KSA as identified by the corresponding asterisk(s) if MLTs are assigned advanced MLT duties:
- i Knowledge of concepts, principles, methodology of medical laboratory technology, regulatory and accrediting agency requirements and medicolegal requirements sufficient to perform complex diagnostic tests.
 - ii Skill in applying new scientific/technical developments and theories to laboratory testing.
 - iii Ability to work independently on a broad range of complex laboratory processes.
 - iv Ability to troubleshoot and repair specific/advanced complex laboratory equipment.
 - v *Knowledge of laboratory information technology (IT) systems including troubleshooting systems issues, interface requirements between new instruments and existing IT infrastructure and laboratory IT test development.
 - vi *Ability to convey knowledge of safety regulations and guidelines such as College of American Pathologists (CAP), Joint Commission and Occupational Safety and Health Administration along with continuing education and employee orientation to ensure staff compliance with safety requirements.
 - vii *Ability to plan and administer an ongoing continuing education program for the laboratory to meet accreditation standards.
 - viii *Ability to assist with quality management activities in the laboratory, including monitoring and evaluating quality in accordance with CLIA and CAP, conducting quality improvement activities and communicating quality management results.

(c) **Assignments.** MLTs at this level have a higher level of responsibility for technical oversight and are expected to independently carry out assigned tasks of considerable difficulty. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. They are responsible for performing difficult specialized tasks including, but not limited to, advanced blood banking (antibody titers, elutions), advanced microbiology (Mycobacterium (Acid Fast Bacillus) Identification and Sensitivities, Mycology Identification, Virology, Anaerobic Culture, Polymerase Chain Reaction testing), molecular testing, high complexity testing, recording workload statistics, quality management projects and obtaining data for validation studies. Advanced MLTs may be expected to independently operate the full range of laboratory functions at remote sites. Their duties consist of advanced operation, training and comprehensive troubleshooting of laboratory instruments and resolving any problems. MLTs at this level may act as key operators for specific instrumentation. Advanced duties may also include one or more of the tasks identified below. When these duties are required, advanced MLTs must also demonstrate corresponding KSA(s) as identified by the asterisk(s) below.

i *Laboratory Information Management: Carry out day-to-day operations related to laboratory information systems/computer use and system maintenance. (KSA v)

ii *Safety Coordination: Oversee safe handling of specimens, chemicals and equipment by all staff and ensure compliance with safety regulations. (KSA vi)

iii *Laboratory Education: Plan and administer an ongoing continuing education program for laboratory staff to meet accreditation requirements. (KSA vii)

iv *Quality Management: Coordinate quality management activities within the laboratory and ensure compliance with required standards of quality. (KSA viii)

(4) **Lead Medical Laboratory Technician, GS-07.**

(a) **Experience.** In addition to meeting the basic requirements, one year of progressively complex experience equivalent to the GS-06 grade level.

- (b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- i Knowledge of techniques to instruct students and newly hired staff to properly perform tests and application of laboratory procedures.
 - ii Skill in conducting laboratory procurement procedures to maintain appropriate levels of reagent and supply inventories.
 - iii Ability to provide technical oversight to manage personnel and work assignments in a manner that assures completion of the laboratory workload.
 - iv Ability to plan staff training to address needs.

- (c) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Lead MLTs independently perform duties of significant scope and complexity and assist with technician oversight. Lead MLTs lead three or more lab support positions, provide direction to the daily operations and assume responsibility for integrating and monitoring standard laboratory protocols to maintain continuous workflow and quality within the unit. Lead MLTs must do a combination of at least three of the following duties: prepare work schedules and assign tasks to ensure timely completion of duties; ensure laboratory resources are in optimal working condition and address workflow needs; provide guidance and support of the work unit in supervisory absence; train personnel (including students) in methods, procedures and use of equipment and instruments specific to the assigned area; provide input to supervisor on performance and training needs of employees; adjust work assignments due to absences or changes in priorities; resolve simple, informal complaints of employees and patients, refer more difficult problems to the supervisor; and recommend approval and/or disapproval of leave requests.

(5) **Medical Laboratory Technician, Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) Laboratory Manager, GS-07.**

- (a) **Experience.** In addition to meeting the basic requirements, one year of progressively complex experience equivalent to the GS-06 grade level.

- (b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** In addition to the experience or education above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- i Knowledge of medical technology concepts, principles, practices and methodologies sufficient to perform the full range of maintenance and operation of technical, quality assurance and safety accreditation/testing programs.
 - ii Knowledge of the types of surveillance to collect data necessary to monitor variables that affect quality of services.
 - iii Skill in teaching others to use quality control procedures and implement corrective actions.
 - iv Skill in management/administration, which includes program planning, coordination, communication, consultation, negotiation, problem-solving and monitoring of laboratory programs.
 - v Ability to balance administrative and clinical functions in order to coordinate and manage programs and resources.
- (c) **Assignments.** MLTs in this assignment manage a CBOC laboratory and provide oversight for staff performing testing at the outpatient clinic location. They provide quality oversight of testing, advice, training, troubleshooting and quality assessment to ensure accurate testing. They assess ongoing day-to-day compliance with established protocols and guidelines to identify, define and resolve issues associated with complex aspects of the data and problems associated with unique aspects of CBOC testing. CBOC managers work closely with the affiliated ancillary testing coordinator, laboratory director and laboratory manager to ensure quality testing and compliance with laboratory regulations. They implement corrective action when deficiencies are identified and coordinate inventory management and supply acquisition. CBOC managers are considered subject matter experts and responsible for the overall day-to-day operation for the outpatient clinic laboratory.

(6) **Supervisory Medical Laboratory Technician, GS-08.**

- (a) **Experience.** In addition to meeting the basic requirements, one year of progressively complex experience equivalent to the GS-07 grade level.

- (b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- i Skill in interpersonal relations and conflict resolution to effectively communicate with employees and customers.
 - ii Ability to develop training plans and coordinate staff development.
 - iii Ability to perform the full range of supervisory duties, which include responsibility for assignment of work, performance evaluations, selection of staff, recommendation of awards, advancements and disciplinary actions.
 - iv Ability to develop procedures for new tests and modify existing procedures and methods to resolve problems relative to complex and difficult situations.
- (c) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Supervisory MLTs perform the full range of supervisory duties for the laboratory including assigning work; completing performance evaluations; recommending appointment, awards, advancement and disciplinary actions; and identifying continuing education and training needs. Supervisory MLTs supervise other technicians, laboratory assistants, phlebotomists and/or other appropriate personnel. Supervisory MLTs ensure compliance with accrediting agency and regulatory requirements; participate in the preparation necessary for regulatory inspections; and establish and monitor the quality of the pre-analytical processes as part of the overall laboratory quality management program. They also initiate corrective action. Supervisory MLTs develop policies and procedures; manage document control; and develop performance standards, position descriptions and functional statements. They provide professional and administrative management of an assigned area, which includes orientation and competency assessment of assigned staff. Supervisory MLTs maintain effective interdepartmental relations with other services to accomplish medical center goals.

7. DEVIATIONS.

- a. An approving official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for an employee whose composite record of accomplishments, performance and qualifications, as well

as current assignment, warrants such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade and/or assignment.

- b. The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health in VHA Central Office before placement.
- c. Under no circumstances will the educational or credential requirement be waived for those occupations with a positive education requirement or when specific credentials are identified as necessary to meet minimum requirements, unless an exception is annotated in the qualification standard.]

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059)