



Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science  
Société canadienne de science de laboratoire médical

# PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT Information Handbook Medical Laboratory Assistant

CPLA-041-H2  
March 2026

Policy changes may occur and will be posted our website: [www.csmls.org](http://www.csmls.org)

You are responsible for making sure you have the  
current version of this Handbook

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## Disclaimer

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Before applying and paying for a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), all the policies and regulations outlined in this handbook must be read and understood. Failure to do so may result in cancellation of your PLA application and a loss of your payment.

By signing the application form, a PLA client is agreeing to all of these policies and regulations.

**To maintain fairness, we do not allow visitors at the CSMLS nor do we accept documents at our door.**

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The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) is the national association and certifying body for medical laboratory professionals.

The CSMLS revised this document according to plain language principles with funding from the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program.



# Table of Contents

Disclaimer.....	i
<b>GENERAL INFORMATION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction.....	1
Our purpose .....	1
Assumptions about Medical Laboratory Assistants in Canada.....	1
The Medical Laboratory Assistant .....	2
The Patient/Client.....	2
CSMLS Membership .....	2
Associate Membership .....	2
Continuing Education & Professional Development.....	3
Eligibility to Write the CSMLS MLA Certification Examination .....	3
<b>CSMLS PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROCESS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Who is the MLA PLA Process For?.....	4
Reciprocity .....	4
Non-Discrimination.....	4
Three PLA Stages .....	4
Steps to Take .....	5
Stage 1: Pre-Assessment.....	5
PLA Application and Fee(s) .....	5
Table 1. PLA Fee Schedule.....	6
Supporting Documents .....	6
Table 2. Supporting Documents and Requirements.....	7
Submitting Official Supporting Documents.....	7
File Updates - Processing of Received Supporting Documents .....	7
Personal Competency Rating Booklet (PCRB), self-submitted .....	8
Employer Assessment of Competency Rating Booklet (ECRB), official submission.....	8
Proof of Canadian MLA Education, official submission.....	8
Official Educational Transcripts (Theoretical and Clinical Education).....	9
Official Course Outlines/Syllabus of Studies .....	9
Official Letter of Clinical Education.....	9
Canadian Work Experience Letters, official submission.....	9
Professional Certification, official submission .....	10
Professional Development and Continuing Education, official submission .....	10
Alternate Documents Policy .....	10
Document Receipt and Retention Policy.....	10
File Preparation for Stage 2 Assessment .....	10
Stage 2: Assessment.....	11
Stage 3: Post-Assessment .....	11
Technical Report.....	11
Policies to Challenge a PLA Outcome .....	11

Supplemental Documentation Review Policy ..... 11

Technical Report Appeal Policy ..... 12

PLA Stage 2 Reassessment Policy ..... 12

Eligibility Statement ..... 12

Appendix 1: Supporting Documentation Check List ..... 13

Appendix 2: Example of Official Envelope Requirements..... 14

    Figure 1. Sealed Official Envelope Requirements ..... 14

Appendix 3: Applying for the CSMLS PLA Using the Online Portal ..... 15

    Table 3. PLA Account and Application Form Details and Actions ..... 17



## Introduction

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) is the national certifying body for medical laboratory technologists and medical laboratory assistants, and the national professional society for Canada's medical laboratory professionals.

We are a not-for-profit organization that is funded entirely by membership dues and revenues from goods and services. We do not receive operational funding from governments or other organizations.

Our members practice in hospital laboratories, private medical laboratories, public health laboratories, government laboratories, research and educational institutions.

Medical Laboratory Assistants (MLA) CSMLS certification is quickly gaining recognition as the standard requirement in the profession. This voluntary national certification provides you with:

- A professional credential recognized across Canada (and internationally) as a measure of competence to practice within the set of Canadian MLA national standards
- The foundation for a national professional culture that promotes pride, excellence and recognition

### Our purpose

- To promote, maintain and protect the professional identity and interests of the medical laboratory professional and of the profession, and
- To promote and maintain a nationally accepted standard of medical laboratory technology by which other health professionals and the public are assured of effective and economical laboratory services.

CSMLS sets qualification standards in medical laboratory science (Competency Profiles), conducts the CSMLS National Certification MLA Examination (Exam), and provides Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) for Medical Laboratory Professionals.

The CSMLS provides professional development and continuing education to help Medical Laboratory Professionals update their skills and knowledge to achieve their professional goals. The CSMLS Learning Services department provides a variety of educational options in technical and scientific subjects, including laboratory management.

### Assumptions about Medical Laboratory Assistants in Canada

Medical Laboratory Assistants (MLA) work under the supervision of Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT), performing the practical components of sample analysis, as it relates to humans ONLY.

MLAs sort, prepare and sometimes process samples that will be tested and analyzed by an MLT. MLAs often collect samples, such as blood, and are often the laboratory professional that interacts directly with patients.

The medical laboratory assistant is prepared to work in a variety of settings including, but not limited to, hospitals, private medical laboratories, community health departments, educational institutions, long term care facilities, correctional facilities, the home and bedside of the patient, and in private industry.

The medical laboratory assistant works in an environment that is dynamic and evolving, and uses

technological equipment to provide information that must be processed accurately and in a timely manner.

Upon completion of an EQual™ accredited Canadian training program, has developed a broad knowledge base that is assessed prior to the certification examination.

#### **THE MEDICAL LABORATORY ASSISTANT**

- Practice to ensure the safety of patients, colleagues, self, and the environment;
- contribute to the health care of the public, promotes the welfare of the patient, respects the patient's dignity, and protects patient confidentiality;
- are an integral member of the health care team who shares knowledge, promotes learning, and collaborates with other professionals in providing effective patient care;
- are responsible and accountable for his/her professional actions and practices according to standards of practice as well as laws and regulations governing the profession.

#### **THE PATIENT/CLIENT**

- The client is any individual who interacts with the medical laboratory assistant, e.g. patient, patient representative, co-worker and other health care professionals.
- The patient is any individual requiring medical laboratory services.
- The medical laboratory assistant works with clients to procure and prepare specimens for testing.
- The medical laboratory assistant maintains effective verbal and written communication skills to facilitate interaction with clients in the provision of a high-quality professional service.

## **CSMLS Membership**

A CSMLS membership will provide you with many benefits that you can start taking advantage of immediately and CSMLS Certification and membership are portable across Canada.

Member benefits include discounted fees for:

- PLA services
- Exam registration
- Continuing Education/Professional Development (900+ hours free with membership)

Additionally, CSMLS connects members to a comprehensive network of peers through LABCON, CSMLS's annual national conference for the profession (lower registration fees for members), various publications (quarterly Canadian Journal of Medical Laboratory Science (CJMLS) and bi-weekly eNEWS), employment opportunities, and much more.

CSMLS believes that the medical laboratory profession deserves a voice across Canada that recognizes the valuable contribution the profession makes to Canadian health care. Membership with CSMLS will help make this voice stronger and demonstrates commitment to the profession.

Questions about membership can be made to the office by email ([memberv@csmls.org](mailto:memberv@csmls.org)).

Information about [Membership Categories & Fees](#) can be found on our website

#### **ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP**

PLA applicants and clients can apply for an Associate Membership to take advantage of the many benefits of CSMLS membership. This type of membership is for someone who is not CSMLS

certified, and is not eligible for membership under any other membership category.

This is an annual membership that will expire on December 31st of each year and membership fees are prorated.

### **CONTINUING EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

[CSMLS Learning Services](#) offers two (2) styles of courses to accelerate the MLP's career path – Express and Intensive courses.

Browse through the CSMLS Course Catalogue or a complete list of educational offerings, there is something for everyone, designed specifically to fit all learning needs.

## Eligibility to Write the CSMLS MLA Certification Examination

There are four (4) ways to become eligible to write the CSMLS National MLA Certification Examination (Exam) for the first time:

1. **Recent\* Graduate of an EQual™ accredited Canadian MLA education program.**
2. **Hold an unexpired CSMLS MLA Exam Eligibility Statement through the CSMLS MLA PLA process.**
3. **Recently\* Provincially Certified (through MLPAO or BCSLS).**
4. **Acceptable Eligibility Statement or learning plan through a recognized Canadian General MLT PLA process.**

\*recency = 5 years or less

Please review the [CSMLS MLA National Certification Examination Handbook \(Exam Handbook\)](#) on the CSMLS website for further information on MLA exam eligibility.



## Who is the MLA PLA Process For?

The PLA process evaluates an applicant's academic credentials, clinical education (training, placement, internship taken during through their MLA program), clinical work experience, continuing education, and professional development compared to the CSMLS (Pan-Canadian) MLA Competency Profile, to determine whether their level of competence is at the entry-level to gain eligibility to the MLA Exam.

**Acceptable education and clinical work experience must be at the Medical Laboratory level for diagnostic human testing only. Education and clinical experience in research, plant biology, or animal biology will not be accepted.**

The PLA for MLAs is available to people who:

- are recent\* graduates of non-EQual™ accredited Canadian MLA programs, or
- have recently\* been working in Canada as an MLA for at least 12 months.

\*recency = less than five (5) years from the first day of the month of the Exam session PLA Clients hope to register for.

Trained assessors contracted by the CSMLS are responsible for evaluating a PLA client's education, training, and work experience to determine if they are equivalent to the CSMLS National MLA Competency Profile.

The MLA Competency Profile outlines the entry-level MLA expectations in the Canadian context.

**Acceptable education and clinical work experience must be at the Medical Laboratory level for diagnostic human testing only. Education and clinical experience in research, plant biology, or animal biology will not be accepted.**

### Reciprocity

CSMLS does not offer reciprocity with any university or college, or with any other country. Your education and experience in another country do not automatically make you eligible to write the certification exam.

### Non-Discrimination

CSMLS does not discriminate for any reason, including age, gender, race, ethnic origin, colour, religion, sexual orientation or marital status.

## Three PLA Stages

There are **three (3) stages** in the PLA process:

### 1. Pre-assessment.

This begins when the PLA application and fee have been processed and ends after all required PLA documents have been received.

## 2. Assessment.

This begins after all documents have been received and the PLA file is sent to an assessor.

## 3. Post-assessment.

This begins when a client's documents have been assessed and their Technical Report is sent to them.

## Steps to Take

As an MLA trained or working in Canada, the opportunity to establish eligibility to the CSMLS National Certification Exam can be done through the PLA process.

### 1. Read about the PLA Process and Certification Exam

Read this PLA Handbook completely and more than once. It is recommended that applicants read the PLA Handbook at least three (3) times as there is a large amount of information in it.

Review the [Exam Handbook](#).

### 2. Complete the Personal Competency Rating Booklet (PCRB)

- Use the [PCRB](#) on the PLA webpage (under the "PLA Process and Fees" tab) to rate and compare your experience to the [CSMLS MLA Competency Profile](#)
- Send the completed PCRB with the PLA application

## Stage 1: Pre-Assessment

Pre-Assessment has two (2) parts:

1. [PLA Application and Fee Payment](#)
2. [Supporting Documents](#)

### *PLA APPLICATION AND FEE(S)*

Read this handbook carefully before using the PLA Portal to open a PLA account and complete the online PLA Application. See [Appendix 3](#) for instructions on how to use the online PLA Portal.

When a PLA Application has been reviewed and processed by the office, the applicant will be told to pay the PLA fee ([see Table 1](#)).

Once the PLA fee is processed, the Client file is opened and the Client can have their PLA supporting documents submitted into their file. If documents have been submitted prior to applying and paying for the PLA, they will be saved at the office for no more than 12-months (see [Document Receipt and Retention Policy](#))

PLA Clients who have documents being mailed or emailed will receive an email alert when a document has been added to their PLA Platform by CSMLS. The email will have a link to log in and clients can go to the appropriate section to see what the CSMLS office has processed. (See [Submitting Official Supporting Documents](#) section.)

**NOTE: Receipt of PLA supporting documents is not acknowledged by the office when they are delivered (by any method mail, courier, uploading, or email) only when they are processed into a Client file.**

Receipt of PLA supporting documents is acknowledged by the office only when the office processes them into an **active\*** PLA Client file. This is due to the large volume of documents submitted to the office.

\*Active PLA Client files are those that have had their PLA application fees processed and have been notified by PLA that their file is open.

Applicants **must** read and understand all PLA policies and processes in this handbook because:

- a) PLA Application fees are non-refundable and non-transferable
- b) The PLA has a twelve (12) month expiry for receipt of required documents to the CSMLS office
  - A document extension may be requested, before a PLA expires, for up to an additional twelve (12) months, if there is difficulty in obtaining the required documents
  - A document extension application form and fee payments must be requested from the office and before the PLA expires
- c) Clients must **reapply and pay for PLA again**, if all required documents are not received by a Client's application expiry (12-months)

**Table 1. PLA Fee Schedule**

PLA Fee Schedule	Member	Non-Member
<b>PLA Application Fee*:</b> The PLA Application Fee must be paid at the time of application when indicated by the office.	\$250	\$350

\*Fees are subject to change without notice.

If Clients are outside of Canada, they can only make PLA payments by credit card (Visa, MasterCard or American Express). Foreign bank drafts or money orders will not be accepted if mailed to the office. They will be returned or destroyed, and the application will not be processed.

**Due to PayPal security restrictions we are unable to accept credit card payments from some countries.**

Canadian cheques or Canadian money orders, payable to the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science or CSMLS, are also accepted. If payment is refused for insufficient funds, applicants will be charged a \$25.00 NSF fee.

#### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

**Acceptable education and clinical work experience must be at the Medical Laboratory level for diagnostic human testing only. Education and clinical experience in research, plants, or animals will not be accepted.**

Clients must contact their educational institutions and employers to have them submit the required official documents **directly** to CSMLS on their behalf. All official documents received at the office become the property of the CSMLS, original documents will not be given back to Clients. They may apply and pay for a document copy, depending on the document, by contacting the office at [pla@csmls.org](mailto:pla@csmls.org).

If documents arrive without a Client's name or CSMLS ID number, they **will be discarded after twelve (12) months** (see [Document Receipt and Retention Policy](#)).

Clients are responsible for all costs associated with delivering supporting documentation to the CSMLS.

Personally-submitted or -faxed official supporting PLA documents will not be accepted.

[Table 2](#) gives a list of Supporting Documents and their requirements and a checklist to assist Client document submissions can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

**Table 2. Supporting Documents and Requirements**

DOCUMENT	REQUIREMENT
Personal Competency Rating Booklet (PCRB)	Document Required, self-submitted
Canadian MLA Education	Official Document Required – if applicable
Canadian Work Experience Letter	Official document Required – if applicable
Employer Assessment of Competency Rating Booklet (ECRB)	Official Document Required – if applicable
Professional Certification	Official Document Required – if applicable
Continuing Education	Official Document Required – if applicable

### Submitting Official Supporting Documents

Postal mail or Courier: Official supporting documents are accepted if they are sent directly in an untampered envelope, sealed and stamped envelope by the institution (this can simply consist of the signature or initials of the person responsible). Official supporting documents may not be placed loose inside a courier package/envelope.

If an official document is received without appropriate packaging, the document will not be accepted and the Client must have it resubmitted correctly, delaying the process.

See example in [Figure 1 of Appendix 2](#).

Email: When official documents are submitted by this method, they are only accepted if sent directly by the issuing institution with an institutional email address to [pla@csmls.org](mailto:pla@csmls.org). Documents will not be accepted if they are emailed from public domain email addresses, such as gmail, yahoo, outlook, etc., regardless if this is all the issuing institution uses. In this case, the documents must be mailed/couriered to the CSMLS office.

Clients must make sure the issuing institutions include their full name and/or CSMLS ID number on the official documents when they are sent to CSMLS. Also, all official documents must bear the official organizational letterhead and/or stamp and be signed by an official representative of the organization.

If a document arrives at the office that is NOT listed on the application, it will not be considered for the PLA.

### File Updates - Processing of Received Supporting Documents

File updates may include:

- Processing mailed and emailed Client applications
- Processing submitted supporting documents
- Scanning Client files in preparation for assessment

- Assigning a Client file to an assessor

The CSMLS office does not confirm receipt of documents due to the volume we receive, but every time we process a document into your file you will be notified via email.

We strive to process all documents into Client files within 4 weeks once received at CSMLS, regardless of the mode of delivery, i.e., postal mail, courier, or emailed documents, but depending on volume this may take longer than 4 weeks.

We ask that clients refrain from repeatedly requesting file updates as this delays the office's processing times due to the additional work required to respond to these requests.

If a Client has tracking information or an email address of the sender for an official document that was **delivered to the CSMLS office over** 4 weeks ago, please share it with us at [pla@csmls.org](mailto:pla@csmls.org).

If a document arrives at the office that is NOT listed on the application, it will not be considered for the PLA.

### **Personal Competency Rating Booklet (PCRB), self-submitted**

The PCRB serves two (2) purposes:

1. To help potential applicants identify their educational and/or work experience gaps allowing them decide if PLA is right for them to pursue.
2. PLA client ratings, by both the employer and the applicant, will be compared to the Canadian MLA Competency Profile (standard) by the CSMLS assessors.

The PCRB will show the assessors what knowledge and experience you have. PCRB ratings **must** be confirmed by official supporting documents. The PCRB documents are necessary for CSMLS assessors to adequately determine a PLA client's equivalence to the CSMLS Competency Profile when the PLA is based solely on work history and experience.

### **Employer Assessment of Competency Rating Booklet (ECRB), official submission**

If a client's PLA is based solely on Canadian clinical work experience (as it relates to humans) or they have graduated from a Canadian program more than five (5) years ago, proof of at least twelve (12) months of recent full-time employment **must** be submitted to the CSMLS.

Employers **must** complete and sign the [ECRB](#) on the PLA webpage (under the "PLA Process and Fees" tab) and submit it directly to the CSMLS.

A job description and letter of employment, detailing all processes performed by the PLA client (as it relates to humans) and their start and end date (if applicable) of employment, must also be submitted by the employer. See [Work Experience Letters section](#).

Official documents submitted by a PLA client will not be accepted.

### **Proof of Canadian MLA Education, official submission**

Clients must contact their educational institutions to ask that official transcripts and detailed course outlines be submitted directly to CSMLS by the issuing organization.

The issuing organization can do this by:

- uploading the documents to a Client's online PLA account,
  - only official company email accepted; or
- submitting the documents to the CSMLS office by:
  - official company email, or
  - postal mail/ courier in untampered company envelopes (see [Appendix 2: Example of Official Envelope Requirements](#))

The PLA client should contact their educational institutions and ask them to send official transcripts and course outlines directly to the CSMLS office.

***Official Educational Transcripts (Theoretical and Clinical Education)***

These documents list all the MLA courses taken at the MLA program. These must:

- be printed on official letterhead;
- include the dates attended/completed,
- show the final grade received for each course, and
- be submitted directly from the issuing institution to the CSMLS office.

***Official Course Outlines/Syllabus of Studies***

This is used to thoroughly evaluate MLA education; the PLA assessor needs to see course outlines for the MLA courses listed in the official transcripts.

Course outlines must include a detailed description of the content of each course relating to MLA education and must:

- be printed on official letterhead, and
- be submitted directly from the issuing institution to the CSMLS office.

***Official Letter of Clinical Education***

If this information is not included in the submitted transcripts and course outlines, an official representative from the educational institution or laboratory must send course outlines or a letter describing the structured clinical.

Official letters must include:

- a detailed outline of the topics covered and tests completed in training;
- the dates and amount of time spent in training;
- the methods used to monitor clinical progress; and
- an explanation of how clinical progress was evaluated (graded).

Additionally, they must:

- be on official letterhead, and
- must be signed by the official representative of the laboratory/or educational institution, and
- be submitted directly from the issuing institution to the CSMLS office.

**Canadian Work Experience Letters, official submission**

An official representative from the laboratories where the PLA client works/worked must send a letter directly to the CSMLS office describing the client's work experience as an MLA (as it relates to humans). The last five (5) years of work experience are the most important for the PLA process. A job description should also be included.

Official work experience letters **must**:

- be printed on official letterhead
- be signed by the official representative of the laboratory
- include your dates of employment
- include department rotation if you worked in more than one department
- include the list of tasks you performed
- include the equipment/methods you used to perform these tasks

- include the frequency (for example, daily or weekly)
- include a completed and signed Employer Assessment PCRB, and
- be submitted directly from the issuing institution to the CSMLS office.

### **Professional Certification, official submission**

If you have received professional certification/licensure as a medical laboratory assistant, contact your professional certification association and ask them to send proof of your professional certification directly to the CSMLS.

### **Professional Development and Continuing Education, official submission**

For Professional Development completion, the applicant may self-submit copies of certificates for medical laboratory related seminars and workshops taken within the last five (5) years.

For Continuing Education completion, proof must be submitted directly from the educational institutions to [pla@csmls.org](mailto:pla@csmls.org) as official transcripts. Please only submit Medical Laboratory related courses taken within the past five (5) years.

If you are taking a course now, send us proof of enrolment and the expected date of completion.

### **ALTERNATE DOCUMENTS POLICY**

In the event you are unable to provide official documents as requested in the CSMLS PLA policy, the CSMLS may allow the submission of alternate documents. Your situation will be assessed on a case by case basis.

The following alternate documents may be considered in the eligibility assessment:

- Client submitted original documents (these will not be returned)
- Canadian notarized copies of original documents
- Sworn affidavit in cases where you have no, or insufficient, documents to proceed with an evaluation or verification

The CSMLS must balance the duty to provide a fair and transparent process with its obligation to ensure that the integrity of the Exam is protected.

### **DOCUMENT RECEIPT AND RETENTION POLICY**

Only those who have applied and paid for a PLA will be updated on their file.

PLA clients will be notified by email when:

- their application and payment have been processed
- their documents have been processed **NOT** when documents are received.

Documents sent to the CSMLS from individuals who have not applied for a PLA **will be destroyed after twelve (12) months.**

Documents received at the CSMLS without identifiers (applicant name or CSMLS identification number) are destroyed after **six (6) months.**

The CSMLS does not provide information about receipt or destruction of these documents and is not responsible for any costs associated with the receipt or destruction of documents.

### **FILE PREPARATION FOR STAGE 2 ASSESSMENT**

When CSMLS has received all required documentation, a Client's PLA file is prepared for assessment through scanning and sorting all documents, the Client will be updated that they are in queue for assessment. Client PLA files are assigned in chronological order as our assessors

complete already assigned files. This process may take up to three (3) months, depending of the volume of Clients files received.

## Stage 2: Assessment

When the CSMLS office has received all supporting documents, the PLA client's file will be sent for assessment. The client's documents are thoroughly reviewed to compare education, and work experience, as applicable, to the MLA Competency Profile.

If a document arrives at the office that is NOT listed on the application, it will not be considered for the PLA.

Eligibility to the MLA Exam will be determined on equivalence to the MLA Competency Profile.

Assessments usually take four (4) to six (6) weeks to complete.

## Stage 3: Post-Assessment

### TECHNICAL REPORT

**Technical Reports are not to be shared digitally, by any means, unencrypted email, online platforms, social media, etc., as these are sensitive documents and are subject to fraudulent activity.**

The technical report will show one (1) of two (2) results:

1. Equivalent to the Competency Profile and eligible to write the MLA Exam and an [Eligibility Statement](#) to the CSMLS Exam will be issued to the PLA Client.
2. Not equivalent to the Competency Profile and not eligible to write the Exam.  
These clients are required to successfully complete a full, EQual™ accredited Canadian MLA training program to be eligible to write the Exam.

## Policies to Challenge a PLA Outcome

If a Client disagrees with the outcome of their PLA Technical Report, they have the option to challenge their outcome by applying for a Supplemental Documentation Review (SDR), a Technical Report Appeal (TRA), or a Stage 2 Reassessment (S2R).

**These processes may or may not change the PLA outcome. If an outcome does change, it may not be favourable to the Client and the new outcome may be worse.**

### SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTATION REVIEW POLICY

If a Client believes additional documents from the employer or educational institution(s) listed on their **original PLA application** may change their PLA outcome, they must apply and pay (non-refundable fee) for a Supplemental Documentation Review (SDR) **within ninety (90) days** of the date on the PLA Technical Report.

Only documents from employers or institutions that were listed on their original PLA application will be accepted for SDR. Once all required documents are received, a revised assessment report will be sent to the requesting Client within forty-five (45) days of the last document receipt.

The application form for the SDR can be found on the CSMLS [PLA webpage](#) under the Stage 3 – Post Assessment tab.

**This process may or may not change the PLA outcome. If an outcome does change, it may not be favourable to the Client and may be worse.**

### TECHNICAL REPORT APPEAL POLICY

If a Client feels having their Document Submission File reviewed by another assessor may change their PLA outcome, they must apply and pay (non-refundable fee) for a Technical Report Appeal (TRA) **within forty-five (45) days** of the date on their PLA Technical Report.

Clients who are seeking a TRA cannot submit additional documentation.

Another PLA assessor will perform another assessment (blinded from the first one) and an updated PLA Technical Report will be sent to the Client within forty-five (45) days of payment processing.

The application form for the TRA can be found on the CSMLS [PLA webpage](#) under the Stage 3 – Post Assessment tab.

**This process may or may not change the PLA outcome. If an outcome does change, it may not be favourable to the Client and may be worse.**

### PLA STAGE 2 REASSESSMENT POLICY

If a Client believes additional documentation from employer(s) or educational institution(s) not listed on their original application may change their PLA outcome, they may apply and pay (non-refundable fee) for a PLA Stage 2 Reassessment (S2R) at any point after receiving their original PLA outcome. Contact [pla@csmls.org](mailto:pla@csmls.org) for more information.

If a Client has received an MLA Eligibility Statement, but has let it expire before attending an Exam session, they must apply and pay (non-refundable fee) for a PLA S2R, if they wish to become eligible to the Exam again. Additional and/or updated documentation may be required to be submitted. Please contact [pla@csmls.org](mailto:pla@csmls.org) for more information.

**This process may or may not change the PLA outcome. If an outcome does change, it may not be favourable to the Client and may be worse.**

## Eligibility Statement

**Eligibility Statements are not to be shared digitally, by any means, unencrypted email, online platforms, social media, etc., as these are sensitive documents and are subject to fraudulent activity.**

An Eligibility Statement for the CSMLS Certification Exam will be issued once a Client has been found “Equivalent” to the CSMLS Competency Profile in the technical report.

Eligibility Statements will indicate initial eligibility Exam status and are valid for twelve (12) months after the date of issue. This allows two (2) attempts at the Exam within twelve (12) months to pass the Exam, if required.

For more information on the Exam, see the [Exam Handbook](#) on the CSMLS website, or contact [exam@csmls.org](mailto:exam@csmls.org).

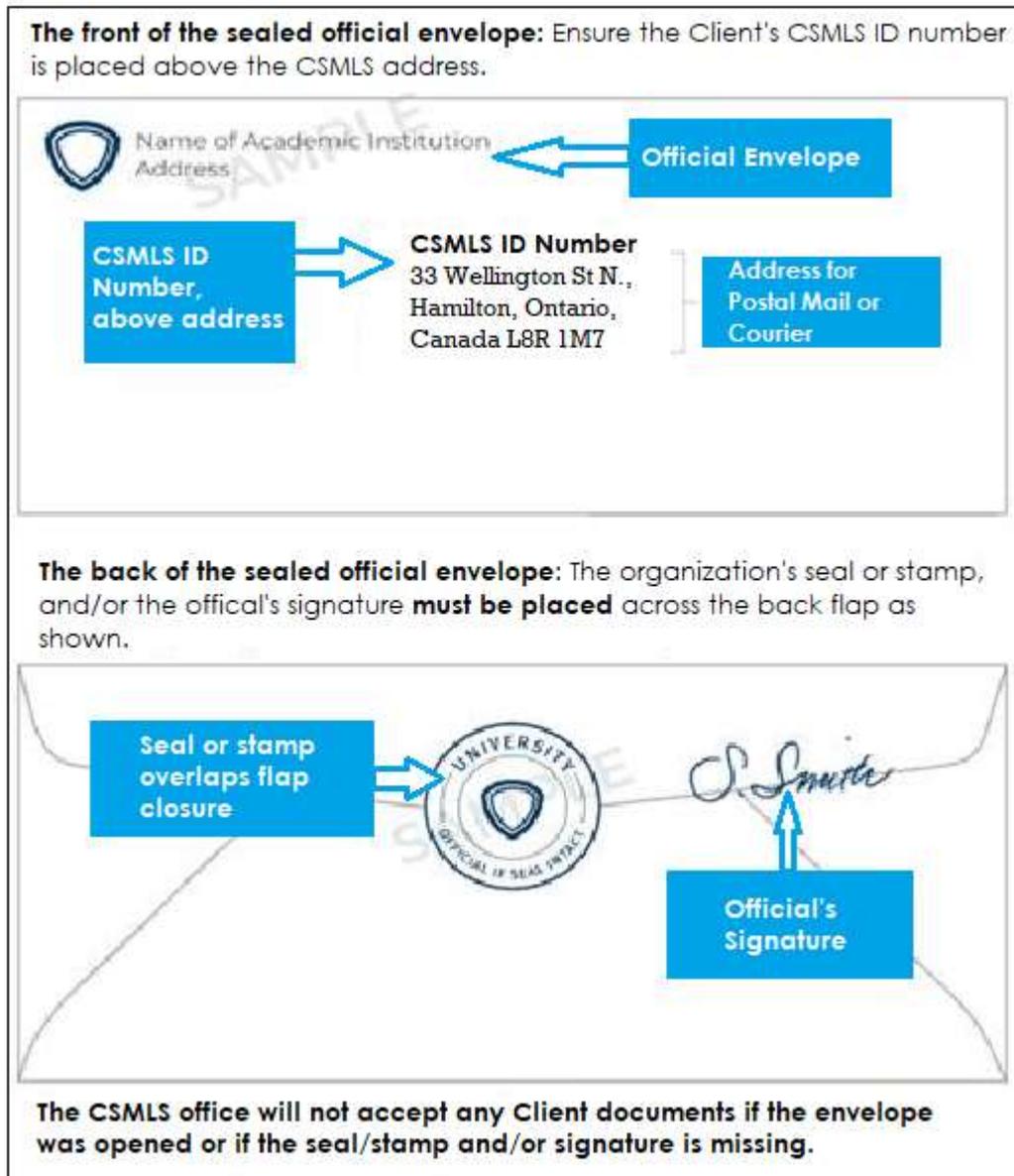
**Clients ARE NOT TO apply for an MLA Exam session until they have received an Eligibility Statement from the CSMLS office.**

## Appendix 1: Supporting Documentation Check List

- Personal Competency Rating Booklet (Self-Assessment):** Send the completed original to the CSMLS.
- MLA Education (if applicable):** The academic institution(s) must send these documents directly to the CSMLS.
  - Official Transcripts
  - Detailed Course Outlines/Syllabus of Studies**
  - Clinical Education (practical internship):** An official representative from your educational institution or laboratory must send documentation directly to the CSMLS.
- Clinical Work Experience (if applicable):** Each employer must send these documents directly to the CSMLS.
  - Employer Assessment, Personal Competency Rating Booklet
  - Detailed letter describing your work experience.
- Continuing Education (if applicable):** The academic institutions must send official transcripts and course outlines directly to the CSMLS.
- Professional Development (if applicable):** For seminars and workshops, the PLA client may submit copies of their certificates to the CSMLS.

## Appendix 2: Example of Official Envelope Requirements

**Figure 1. Sealed Official Envelope Requirements**



## Appendix 3: Applying for the CSMLS PLA Using the Online Portal

CSMLS has a PLA Portal for where potential Clients can open a PLA account and submit their application online. Instructions for accessing the PLA Portal are below.

Please contact [pla@csmls.org](mailto:pla@csmls.org) if problems are encountered when following these instructions.

The PLA Portal allows Clients have their supporting documents submitted directly by uploading them to their PLA account. Official documents must be uploaded directly into a PLA Client's file by the submitting institution. Unofficial documents can be uploaded in their PLA account by the Client.

CSMLS will continue to accept PLA documents that are emailed/mailed to the office, but the processing time for these submission methods may be longer than the online method.

Go to the [Supporting Documents section](#) for more information on submitting supporting documents.

### Step 1 – Create a CSMLS Account

PLA Clients must have an active CSMLS account in order to apply for the PLA process.

Go to [www.csmls.org](http://www.csmls.org) and select “Login” at the top of the page.

The screenshot displays the CSMLS website interface. At the top, a dark navigation bar contains a search box, a 'Search' button, a 'Login' button (circled in red), and a 'Language' dropdown menu. Below this is the CSMLS logo and the text 'Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science / Société canadienne de science de laboratoire médical'. A blue navigation bar lists various sections: About Us, Medical Laboratory Professionals, Membership, Certification, Professional Development, Advocacy, Research, and Career Centre. The main content area is titled 'CSMLS Login' and features a form with 'Username' and 'Password' input fields, a 'Remember me on this computer.' checkbox, and a 'Log On' button. Below the form are links for 'Forgot my username or password' and 'Forgot my password'. A red text warning reads: 'If you are or have ever been a CSMLS member please do not create a new account. Use the "Forgot my username or password" link to reset your password instead.' The 'Create a new account' link is circled in red.

If you already have a CSMLS account, log in.

If you do not have a CSMLS account yet, select “Create a new account”

## Step 2 – Find your CSMLS ID number

Everyone who has a CSMLS account is assigned a CSMLS ID.

PLA Applicants must take note of their CSMLS ID as they will need it to apply for PLA, CSMLS membership, and for any other CSMLS inquiries.

Clients may decide if they wish to purchase membership to take advantage of PLA fee discounts, among other benefits of [CSMLS membership](#). See the CSMLS Membership section in the PLA Handbook for more information.

## Step 3 – Set up an Online PLA Account

Go to the [Online PLA Portal login page](#).

For an initial online application submission, click on Start Application, fill out the fields as prompted, and select Register.



The screenshot shows the CSMLS SCSLM website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Home' and 'My Account' links. Below this is a login section with fields for 'Email Address' and 'Password', and buttons for 'Login' and 'Login with CSMLS'. To the right of the login section is a table with the following data:

Program	Status	Deadline	Action
Prior Learning Assessment	Now Open	11/1/2025 11:59 PM	<a href="#">Start Application</a>

Below the table, it indicates 'Current Timezone: Eastern Time (US & Canada)'.

[See Table 3](#) for a description of all the fields found in the Online PLA Account and Application.

## Step 4 – Begin the Online PLA application

Verify the applicant information and select Save and Next.

Clients may now select the PLA designation they would like to apply for. If a Client wishes to apply for more than one (1) designation, they may submit an additional application once they have completed the first one. Fees are paid by PLA application type, that is, MLA or MLT General.

Complete the application based on the following details and actions.

Only sections that will have documentation being sent for PLA are required to be reported on this part of the application.

Select **Save** if the application is not yet completed and being finalized at a later time or **Save and Finalize** if the application is ready for submission to CSMLS.

**Table 3. PLA Account and Application form details and actions**

Details	Actions
Application Type	Select the designation being applying to PLA for
Digital Signature	Sign with a mouse or touchscreen
Date	Select the date the application is being submitted
MLA Fee Selection	Choose whether fees are being paid by credit card online (a link will be emailed within 4 weeks of application being submitted) or by mailing a cheque or money order.
PCRB Upload	Complete the PCRB and upload the completed file as a PDF
Medical Laboratory Assistant (MLA) Education	Select the Add MLA Education button to add experience to this section of the application. Clients may add up to 2 programs.
Clinical MLA Education (Practicum/Internship)	Select the Add MLA Internship button to add experience to this section of the application. Clients may add up to 3 internships.
Other Relevant Education, MLA related	Select the Add Other MLA Education button to add experience to this section of the application. Clients may add more than 1. Experiences listed under MLA Education do not need to be repeated here.
Continuing Education, MLA Related	Select the Add Continuing Education button to add experience to this section of the application. Clients may add more than 1.
Professional Development, MLA Related	Download, fill out and upload the continuing professional development list.
Clinical Work Experience, MLA ONLY	Select the Add MLA Work Experience button to add experience to this section of the application. Clients may add more than 1.

### Step 5 – Updating or Complete the PLA Application

If a PLA applicant already has an online PLA account with an application started, and they want to update something or continue with the application submission, they may log into their account using the credentials created in Step 3.



Follow the instructions in Step 4 for continuing and completing the application submission.

## Step 6 – CSMLS Office Review of a Completed PLA Application

The office will review all completed PLA application submissions and within 3 weeks will send an email asking applicants to either edit their details or submit their PLA fee.

## Step 7 – PLA Fee Payment

PLA applicants who have indicated they would like to pay online will be sent a link to this payment method for PLA Stage 1. DO NOT SHARE this link as it has been generated for your specific file.

PLA applicants/Clients paying fees online will need their application number from their online PLA account to complete payment.

PLA Application fees being paid by Canadian money order or Canadian cheque will receive an update by email once this payment has been manually processed by the office.

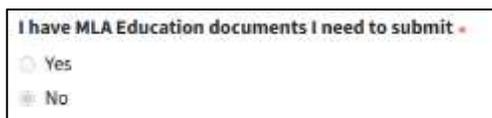
Once PLA payments have been completely processed, the PLA file will be moved to the document submission stage, and a confirmation email will be sent to the applicant/Client.

## Step 8 – Continuing the PLA Application – Document Submission

PLA applicants who have had their payment processed and confirmed will have a confirmation email sent with a link to log in and continue with their application for the document submission section.

In this section, PLA clients are required to indicate if they have documentation to submit for each section from the Application.

If the client has indicated experience in the application form previously submitted for a section, then “Yes” must be selected. If there was nothing added to a section in the application form, then “No” is to be selected.



I have MLA Education documents I need to submit \*

Yes

No

The PLA Platform will then need to know how these documents are being sent to CSMLS. There are three options for document submission.

**Upload:** If selected, this allows the PLA Client to input the name and email of the person who will upload the official supporting documents directly to the PLA Platform. Submissions must be from an institutional email address (public use addresses such as gmail and yahoo are not accepted for any official supporting document submission for PLA). The email entered will receive a direct request and link to upload the documents. This is the quickest form of submission.

**Email:** If selected, this indicates that an official representative from the institution will email the official supporting documents to [pla@csmls.org](mailto:pla@csmls.org) according to the policies outlined in this handbook.

**Mail:** If selected, this indicates the documents will be sent directly to CSMLS according to the policies outlined in this handbook.

I have MLA Education documents I need to submit ▾

- Yes
- No

MLA Education 1

- Mail in
- Email
- Upload (Clear Selection)

Document Upload

(Not Sent)

Use the submission request below to have the institution submitting your official documents emailed a link where they can upload your documents directly to CSMLS.

Ensure you include the correct name and email of the staff or department submitting your documents on your behalf.

If you select this option, do not have these documents emailed or mailed to our office, we will not process or expect them.

Please note we do not accept emailed documents from non-institutional email addresses (gmail, yahoo, outlook, etc.).

Full Name

Email

If a PLA client listed more than 1 experience for any section, they can repeat the steps from above up to 5 times per section.

## Step 9 – File and Document Status Updates

PLA Clients who have documents being mailed or emailed will receive an email alert when a document has been added to their PLA Platform by CSMLS. The email will have a link to log in and clients may scroll to the appropriate section to see what the CSMLS office has processed:

<b>CSMLS Office Use: Documents Received</b> <input type="checkbox"/> MLA Education 1 <input type="checkbox"/> MLA Education 2
---

Documents directly uploaded by the institution will have red front showing the document was uploaded by the institution.

<p>I have MLA Education documents I need to submit ▾</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes</li><li><input type="radio"/> No</li></ul> <p>MLA Education 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Mail in</li><li><input type="radio"/> Email</li><li><input checked="" type="radio"/> Upload (Clear Selection)</li></ul> <p>Document Upload</p> <p>(Received)</p>
--

## Step 10 – Assessment and Unofficial Report Decision

PLA Clients will be sent an email confirming their assessment has been completed and their unofficial report is ready to be reviewed. Clients are asked to log in, review their unofficial copy and choose one of 4 options:

### Assessment Decision Options

**Based on your results outlined in the document above, how would you like to proceed?**

- I accept my technical report outcome
- I would like to appeal the assessment decision
- I would like to request a supplemental document review
- I would like to request a full re-assessment

If a PLA client selects they accept the outcome, CSMLS will assume they are proceeding with the instructions provided in their report and will prepare the official copy for mailing.

Please refer to the sections in this handbook for information on appeal and supplemental reviews.