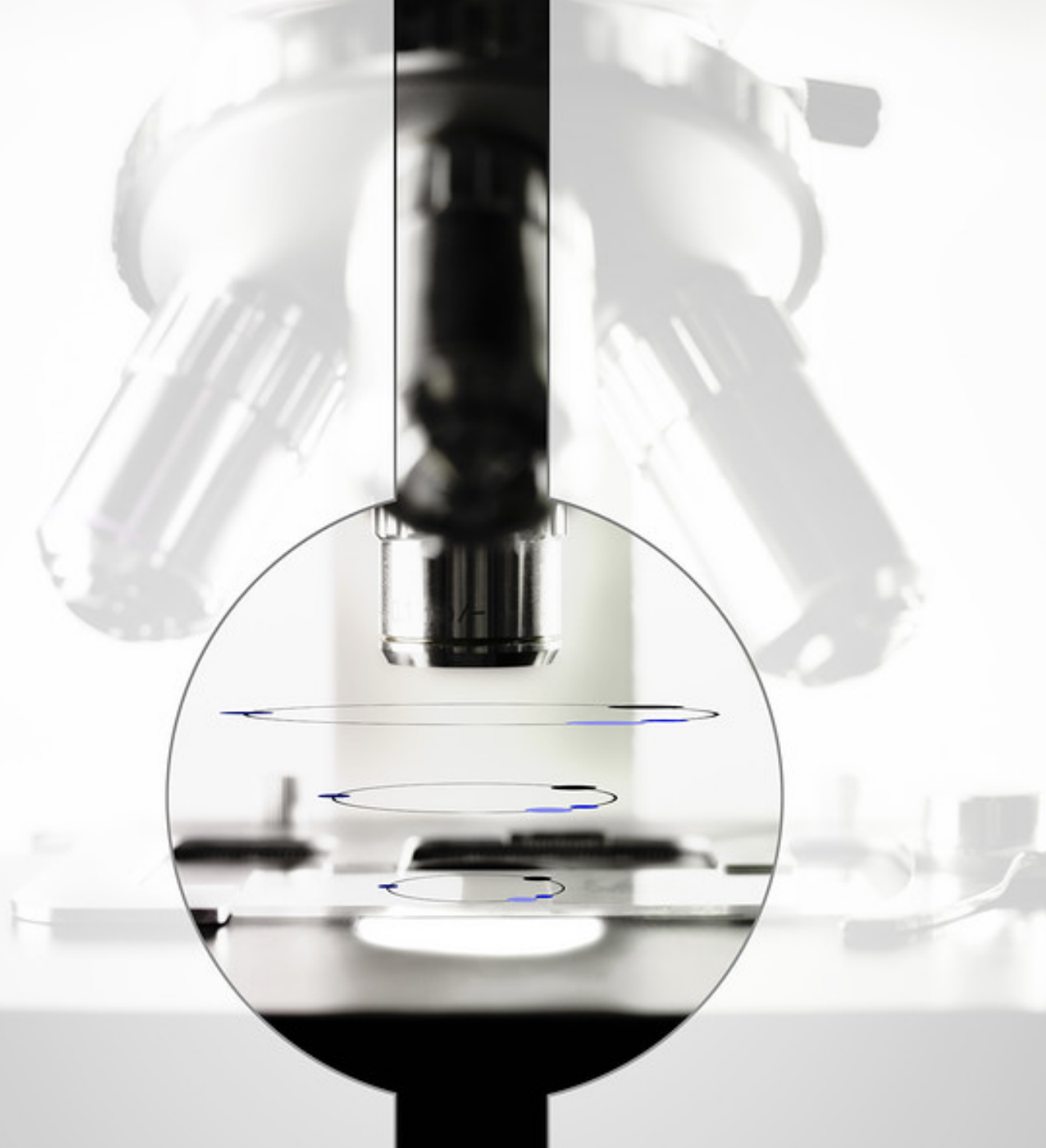


CSMLS PLA Process

*CAPLA Conference,
Fredericton, NB
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Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science

Who is CSMLS?

Labour Market Shortage

The Prior Learning Assessment Process

Issues for Key Stakeholder Groups

Best Practices Project

Next Steps for CSMLS

The CSMLS

- ▶ *National certifying and membership organization for Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT) and Assistants (MLA)*
- ▶ ***Non-profit** – funded by member dues and revenue for certification examinations, continuing education courses, etc.*
- ▶ *The **entry to practice** for MLT across the country (except Quebec)*

CSMLS Mission

**Excellence in medical laboratory
science**

Who can become certified?

- ▶ *Graduates of CMA-accredited program*
OR
- ▶ *Candidates found equivalent through the Prior Learning Assessment (**PLA**) process*
 - *conducted by CSMLS*

Labour Market Shortage

- ▶ *MLT shortage imminent*
- ▶ *Estimated that **2,450** new positions will be needed by **2015** – 44% of the general MLTs will be eligible to retire*
- ▶ *CMA-accredited programs do not supply enough graduates to meet the market place*

Why the Shortage?

- ▶ *Laboratory services restructuring in the 1990s*
- ▶ *Lack of clinical placements*
- ▶ *Government policy changes (education programs)*
- ▶ *This is not unique to Canada – there is a global shortage*

The New Reality

- ▶ *Federal and provincial governments are encouraging **immigration** for a host of reasons – to allow Canada to compete in a global market, declining birth rate etc.*
- ▶ *Economic immigrants are highly desirable – they are selected for their **ability to integrate** rapidly into the Canadian workforce*

The Purpose of PLA

- ▶ *To establish **equivalency** with the Canadian standard*
- ▶ *If equivalent – client becomes eligible to challenge the national **certification** exam*
- ▶ *Certification is used for **licensure** in most provinces*
- ▶ *CSMLS does not grant certification without examination*

Credential Recognition @ CSMLS

In 1999, the Council on National Certification (CNC) embarked on a move to develop a “seamless”, more clearly articulated process for assessing credentials of internationally-trained MLTs.

Endorsed by all provinces except Quebec

PLA @ CSMLS

Document review of:

- ▶ *Academic credential assessment report (ICES)*
- ▶ *Language proficiency*
- ▶ *Course content*
- ▶ *Clinical training*
- ▶ *Detailed work history*
- ▶ *Professional development/continuing education*

*To ensure **equivalency** to the national standard for medical laboratory technology.*

PLA By the Numbers

- ▶ *Annually over 300 applicants*
- ▶ *Over 90% for General MLT*
- ▶ *Over 700 active files – pre and post assessment clients*

PLA By the Numbers

- ▶ Less than **15%** are found equivalent
- ▶ Over **60%** are equivalent on second assessment (learning plan completed, additional information)
- ▶ Not all PLA clients will qualify for certification (too many gaps) - referred to accredited programs

Shifts in Settlement Pattern

- ▶ *Historically – most applicants (>90%) are from **ON**, followed by BC*
- ▶ *Changes – increased in **BC** and **AB***
- ▶ *Growing numbers from overseas*

Credential Recognition @ CSMLS

- ▶ Must meet the **national standard** to be eligible to challenge the certification examination
- ▶ **Language proficiency** is essential – HOT TOPIC!
- ▶ Must have the ability to **practice safely** and competently – safe for public, self and colleagues

Credential Recognition

Primary Issue



Resource Intensive

Credential Recognition

Issues for CSMLS

- ▶ Cost – to establish a process in line with best practices (funded by members)
- ▶ Cost – direct (assessment, appeals, additional information for review)
- ▶ Cost - indirect (fee collection and processing, document tracking, human resources)

Credential Recognition - Issues for CSMLS

Resource intensive – **10%** of the clients consume
90% of the resources

Staffing Additions:

2005 – Customer Service Representative

2006 – Executive Assistant

Credential Recognition Issues for CSMLS

- ▶ Documentation authentication challenges
- ▶ Risk management
- ▶ Skeptics in the profession – is a paper-based review enough?

Credential Recognition Issues for Clients

- ▶ Original documentation requirement often difficult to obtain
- ▶ Amount of detail required
- ▶ Very high language standard

Credential Recognition Issues for Clients

- ▶ Time (from application to employment)
- ▶ Cost (documentation, assessment fees, TOEFL iBT, courses, programs)
- ▶ Lack of accurate information prior to immigrating to Canada

Credential Recognition Issues for Clients

- ▶ Disagree with assessment team report
- ▶ Frustration with process for licensure and certification (feel they should be linked)

Credential Recognition Issues for Employers

- ▶ Time (from application to employment)
- ▶ Ignorance of PLA/licensing process – some jurisdictions actively recruit overseas without understanding the process

PLA - The Goal for CSMLS

- ▶ Maintain the standards of the profession
- ▶ Ensure a fair and equitable process
- ▶ Transparent process
- ▶ Meeting the needs of the profession, the employer and the public

Review of CSMLS Process

- ▶ Third party review, contracted to **CAPLA**,
(subcontracted to Susan Simosko and Associates)
- ▶ Partially funded by **Government of Canada**
- ▶ Includes **key stakeholder** participation

Purpose:

- ▶ To ensure best practices
- ▶ To validate assessor training

Comprehensive Report, CAPLA

- ▶ Goal - focus on PLA in other professions, to advise on best practices – *looking for recommendations on PLA policy ONLY*
- ▶ What we got – **huge report** touching on issues such as advocacy, examination policy, certification policy etc.
- ▶ No policy changes
- ▶ PLA process is in good health!
- ▶ Project ended early as a result!

CAPLA Recommendations

- ▶ Reviewed by CNC, Board
- ▶ Considered in the context of Vision, Mission and Values, resource constraints etc.

Prioritization

- ▶ Quick fix, low resource requirement
- ▶ Quick fix, moderate resource requirement
- ▶ Moderate to high investment (time, money)
- ▶ High investment
- ▶ Some items will not be pursued

CAPLA Recommendations

Presented in no particular order:

- ▶ Improve external sources of information
- ▶ Improve website information, add a FAQ page
- ▶ Review, clarify and simplify the language and layout of all CSMLS documents

CAPLA Recommendations

- ▶ Personal Competency Rating Booklet be used solely to help candidates self-select in or out of the PLA process
- ▶ Make all documents more welcoming
- ▶ Provide additional alternatives to applicants for proving English language fluency

CAPLA Recommendations

- ▶ Exchange of information/documents between ICES and the CSMLS
- ▶ Improve communication systems with applicants
- ▶ Create a practice test

CAPLA Recommendations

- ▶ Allow candidates from the same country and same school, in the same year to provide fewer educational documents
- ▶ Create and offer an OSCE examination
- ▶ Reconsider subject certification (one discipline)

CAPLA Recommendations

- ▶ Develop an on-line tracking system for PLA files
- ▶ CD/PowerPoint presentation about the PLA process
- ▶ Continue to work with the Government of Canada to implement and maintain the long-term sustainability of **bridging programs** across Canada, focusing on didactic and clinical education, as well as **profession-specific** language proficiency.

Funding Opportunities

- ▶ HRSDC
- ▶ Provincial ministries of citizenship and immigration (application to Ontario – language standard)

Partnerships to Pursue

- ▶ CFEE (Cdn Foundation for Economic Education)
- ▶ ICES (document sharing)
- ▶ Regulatory bodies (document sharing)

Validation of PLA Assessor Manual

- ▶ Systematic approach to PLA file review
- ▶ Comprehensive stakeholder input prior to development of manual
- ▶ Complex process: simplified into a flow chart approach to assessments
- ▶ To enhance inter-rater reliability

Questions?

