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2020

BOC

International Survey
Philippines Report



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PURPOSE

To learn as much as possible about the medical laboratory scientist certification market in the Philippines.

AUDIENCE

This report is representative of 265 Philippine-educated individuals who are ASCP/ASCPⁱ certified or are interested in attaining ASCP/ASCPⁱ certification.

METHODOLOGY

The ASCP BOC International Credentialing Committee (ICC) and BOC staff created an 87-question survey, which was deployed via broadcast email and through the BOC's social media channels.* The survey opened on March 9, 2020 and closed on May 31, 2020. 422 individuals from 44 countries of education participated. The report that follows is a summary of results from the 265 Filipino respondents.

* *The number of questions presented to a respondent varied based on their employment history, thus the average respondent answered approximately 40 questions from the database.*

GENERAL FINDINGS REGARDING PHILIPPINE-EDUCATED RESPONDENTS

- Thirty-five percent of respondents have worked outside of the Philippines.
- Seventy-four percent of those who found employment outside of the Philippines indicated that their BOC certification or qualification was the reason they were hired.
- Ninety-five percent of respondents indicated that BOC certification is popular in the Philippines.
- Eighty-one percent of respondents are aware of the types of continuing education (CE) activities that can be used towards ASCP BOC's Credential Maintenance Program (CMP).
- Seventy-six percent of respondents indicated that they prefer earning their CE credits in person.
- Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated that when they do attend a conference in-person it is primarily to earn additional CE.
- 261 out of 265 respondents use some form of social media—91% use Facebook, 68% use YouTube, 68% use Instagram, 31% use LinkedIn, 17% use WhatsApp, 31% use Twitter, and 6% use Snapchat.

WHY THE PHILIPPINES?

With a total of 14,636 MLS(ASCP)ⁱ first time examinees and 10,836 MLS(ASCP)ⁱ certificants since 2006, the Philippines represents the BOC's largest and most successful MLS(ASCP)ⁱ foreign market. It therefore makes sense to start the process of analyzing existing international markets by focusing on the Philippines.

There are many reasons why ASCP/ASCPⁱ certification is popular with individuals from the Philippines. One of the primary reasons is ASCP/ASCPⁱ certification is accepted for work eligibility and licensure in a number of different countries. Table 1 illustrates that out of all of the 422 surveyed, individuals educated in the Philippines represent the demographic most likely to utilize the flexibility of ASCP/ASCPⁱ certification for foreign work eligibility.

The appeal of ASCPⁱ certification for employment outside of the Philippines is further illustrated by responses to question 15 of the International Survey, where 35% of respondents indicated they have or are currently working outside of the Philippines. Of those 35% who indicated they are currently working outside of the Philippines, 59% said it is an ASCP BOC credential that qualified them for work eligibility.

Another factor that plays a role in Filipino interest in MLS(ASCP)ⁱ certification, is that most applicants from the Philippines find it easy to apply for MLS(ASCP)ⁱ because all MLS programs in the Philippines lead to a 4-year US equivalent bachelor's degree, and most applicants with education in the Philippines come through programs that are already approved by the BOC. This means that those applicants do not need to provide a transcript evaluation as part of their application. Applicants for which a transcript evaluation is required feel this adds an extra layer of complication as well as an additional expense.

TABLE 1: Migration from Country of Education to Another Country

COUNTRY OF EDUCATION	COUNTRY OF CURRENT EMPLOYMENT							
	Kuwait	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Singapore	Netherlands	UAE	USA	
India	1	1	0	0	0	4	1	7
Iraq	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Kenya	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Malaysia	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Nepal	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Nigeria	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Pakistan	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
Philippines	2	6	21	0	0	15	39	83
Sudan	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	5
							Total	106

RESPONDENT PROFILE

The 2020 International Survey did not seek to collect demographic information on respondents such as gender, marital status, etc. Instead, the survey concentrated on learning about respondents' employment, role in the laboratory, laboratory organization memberships, laboratory conference preferences, etc. This led to a number of insights into Filipino employment, certification, credential maintenance, and conference preferences.

ROLE IN THE LABORATORY

The majority of respondents, over 84%, self-identified as medical laboratory scientists or medical laboratory technologists.

EMPLOYMENT

The top five employers by type in the Philippines are: private laboratories, government laboratories, non-academic hospitals, academic hospitals, and pathologists'/clinical scientist laboratories (see Table 2). The BOC has historically focused on relationships with government institutions and academic hospitals in its Philippines outreach efforts. The above results, however, indicate it would be useful to expand outreach efforts to other types of institutions and organizations.

The BOC also asked respondents to name the top employers in the Philippines. The top five responses were St. Luke's Medical Center, Chon Hua Hospital, Advance Health Services Cooperative, Medi Linx Laboratory, Inc., and Metro Davao Medical & Research Center, Inc.

TABLE 2: Top Employers of Laboratory Professionals
– Philippine-educated

	RESPONSE PERCENT	RESPONSE TOTAL
Academic hospital	10%	27
Blood center or Blood bank	5%	13
Industry	1%	2
Government	19%	50
Military or Veteran's Hospital	1%	3
Non-academic hospital	18%	47
Outpatient clinic laboratory	5%	12
Pathologists'/clinical scientist laboratory	6%	16
Private laboratory	23%	61
Public Health Laboratory	3%	9
Reference laboratory/ independent laboratory	6%	15%
Other	16%	42

Statistics based on 262 respondents.

LICENSURE

Over 96% of respondents indicated that a national licensure examination is required in the Philippines to work. The licensure organization for medical laboratory professionals in the Philippines is a government regulatory body called the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Some respondents confused the PRC for a certification agency, demonstrating confusion between licensure and certification.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The PRC requires medical laboratory professionals participate in CE opportunities towards their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). In order to maintain their work eligibility (i.e., renewal of their professional license/ ID card), medical laboratory professionals in the Philippines need to fulfill the CE requirements of their CPD every 3 years (specifics on the exact number of credits to maintain CPD are not included in this report because the PRC has recently adjusted the minimum required credits due per cycle because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic). In general, CPD is similar to the BOC's Credential Maintenance Program (CMP), but the credit requirements are different.

PAMET

The largest and most popular association for medical laboratory professionals in the Philippines is the Philippines Association of Medical Technologists, Inc. (PAMET). The BOC has worked with PAMET over the past 15 years to promote ASCP BOC international certification in the Philippines. PAMET has been a collaborating society of the BOC since 2006. It was unsurprising then that the majority of Filipino respondents named PAMET as the primary association for medical laboratory professionals in the Philippines.

In addition to being the largest and oldest association for medical laboratory professionals in the Philippines, PAMET also holds the largest annual conference for medical laboratory professionals in the Philippines (once a year, typically in December). The majority of respondents indicated they attend this meeting in order to help meet their CE credits for the PRC's CPD requirements. They also, per Table 3, indicated a preference for in-person CE (this is despite the fact that the 2020 International Survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Recently, the BOC was informed by its Philippines Advisory Board that many Philippine educated MLS(ASCP[®]) credential holders do not understand that the credits they earn at the PAMET annual conference can also be used to fulfill their CMP requirements for the BOC. The BOC, as of 2019, has modified its outreach and marketing efforts in the Philippines to help Filipinos understand that CE earned at events like PAMET's annual meeting can be applied to their CMP.

TABLE 3: Preferred Continuing Education (CE) Setting
– Philippine-educated

	RESPONSE PERCENT	RESPONSE TOTAL
Conferences	76%	200
Industry Training	46%	121
Workplace	52%	136
Online	65%	170
Other	1%	2

Statistics based on 263 respondents.

The BOC has participated in PAMET, Inc.'s Annual Convention numerous times over the last 15 years, but, while it is the most popular event for Filipino medical laboratory professionals, it is not the only event in which Filipinos participate.

As part of the 2020 International Survey, the BOC asked which medical laboratory conferences, conventions, events, etc., they attended in the past 5 years. PAMET's Annual Convention is, according to Filipino respondents, the most attended event, but there are several other events that Filipinos also attend (see Table 4).

Many of the events listed in Table 4 are cost-restrictive for the BOC from an exhibition standpoint. However, in lieu of sending BOC staff to exhibit at these events, the BOC could leverage its international advisory board presence in those countries. This would utilize advisory board members to deliver outreach and marketing materials to Filipinos, and others, at those events on behalf of the BOC.

OTHER MEMBERSHIP SOCIETIES

PAMET is the largest Philippines medical laboratory professional association in terms of membership, but there are also a number of other medical laboratory associations in the Philippines (not necessarily membership associations, but associations that seek to promote and/or improve laboratory care, management, and safety).

According to respondents, the other major associations are the Philippine Society of Medical Laboratory Scientists (PSMLS), the Philippine Association of Schools of Medical Technology and Public Health (PASMETH), BioRisk Association of the Philippines (BRAP), Philippine Society of Medical Technology Students (PHISMETS), and the Philippine Council for Quality Assurance in Clinical Laboratories (PCQACL).

The BOC does not currently have a great deal of involvement with any of the aforementioned organizations. It is therefore recommended that background research be done on each of the aforementioned organizations to gauge the usefulness of initiating a relationship towards mutual promotion of the medical laboratory profession and of ASCP BOC credentials for Filipinos.

TABLE 4: Events Attended in the Past 5 Years
– Philippine-educated

	RESPONSE PERCENT	RESPONSE TOTAL
AACC: American Association for Clinical Chemistry Annual Meeting	5%	9
AAMLS: Asia Association of Medical Laboratory Sciences Congress	7%	13
APFCB: Asia-Pacific Federation for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine Congress	2%	3
ASCLS: American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science	0%	0
ASCP: American Society for Clinical Pathology Annual Meeting	2%	4
IFBLS: International Federation of Biomedical Laboratory Scientists Conference	2%	3
IFCC: International Federation of Clinical Chemistry Meetings and Conferences	1%	2
MedLab Middle East Congress – United Arab Emirates	9%	17
MedLab Asia Pacific Congress	2%	3
PAMET: Philippines Association of Medical Technologists, Inc.'s Annual Convention	68%	134
PAMET-USA: Philippines Association of Medical Technologists, Inc. USA's Biennial Convention	1%	2
WASPaLM: the World Association of societies of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Conference	0%	0
Other	27%	54

Statistics based on 198 respondents.

CERTIFICATION

The Philippines is the BOC’s largest certification market outside of the U.S. Philippine respondents to the 2020 International Survey indicated, at a response rate of over 95%, that ASCP BOC certification is popular in the Philippines.

Part of this popularity may have to do with the portability of ASCP BOC certification. A number of countries in the Middle East, as well as a handful of U.S. states, accept MLS(ASCP[®]) certification for licensure or work eligibility (in place of national certification/licensure requirements).

This does not mean that Philippine-educated individuals only seek ASCP BOC credentials. A small number of Filipino respondents indicated that they have additional credentials from another certification agency (See Table 5).

TABLE 5: Medical Laboratory Credentials Held by the Respondent – Philippines Respondents

	RESPONSE PERCENT	RESPONSE TOTAL
ASCP [®] BOC (international) certification	96%	242
ASCP BOC certification	3%	8
ASCP BOC qualification	1%	2
AAB (ABOR) certification	0%	0
American Medical Technologists (AMT) certification	6%	15
Other	6%	16

Statistics based on 253 respondents.

Still, based on the sample of respondents for the BOC 2020 International Survey, international certification through the BOC remains the most popular choice in certification amongst Philippine-educated individuals when compared to other U.S.-based certification agencies. MLS(ASCP[®]) certification is the most widely held BOC credential by those educated in the Philippines. Individuals educated in the Philippines have also pursued other types of BOC credentials, such as BB(ASCP[®]), HTL(ASCP[®]), M(ASCP[®]), MB(ASCP[®]), MLT(ASCP[®]). However, with over 10,000 MLS(ASCP[®]) credentials awarded to Philippine-educated individuals since 2006, it is clear that Filipinos have a strong desire to attain MLS(ASCP[®]) certification over any other credential the BOC has to offer.

CREDENTIAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAM (CMP)

Respondents indicated a relatively high level of participation in CMP. Approximately 80% of respondents participate. Unfortunately, a significant portion of respondents also indicated they do not participate. The majority of respondents who said they do not participate in CMP opt to not participate because it is not mandatory in the country in which they work. However, just under half (41%) of those who opt out of CMP because it is not mandatory in the country they work in are unaware that CMP is mandatory for ASCP BOC certificants certified on or after January 1, 2004, and for ASCP[®] BOC (international) certificants certified on or after January 1, 2012.

Additionally, 21 out of 265 respondents said that they do not participate in CMP because they do not understand the process, and nearly 20% were unaware of the types of CE activities that can be used towards CMP.

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Only four out of the 265 Philippine-educated participants in the survey indicated they do not use social media. The top five social media platforms amongst respondents are Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The BOC currently utilizes Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn for promoting its portfolio of certification and CMP services. With such a high-rate of social media use amongst Philippine-educated individuals, the BOC could recalibrate some of its social media messaging to emphasize the portability of MLS(ASCP[®]), as well as help Filipinos better navigate the credential application and CMP process.

TABLE 6: Social Media Preferences
– Philippine-educated

	RESPONSE PERCENT	RESPONSE TOTAL
Facebook	91%	242
Twitter	31%	82
Instagram	68%	180
LinkedIn	31%	83
Snapchat	6%	17
YouTube	68%	179
WhatsApp	16%	44
I do not use social media	2%	4
Other	3%	8

Statistics based on 265 respondents.

SUMMARY

The 2020 International Survey confirmed a number of assertions the BOC had about the Philippines' credential market. The most important of these assertions is that MLS(ASCP[®]) certification is appealing to Philippine-educated individuals due to its portability (i.e. its perceived usefulness for work eligibility, emigration, visa purposes, etc.). Other confirmed assertions include the usefulness of investing in exhibiting at PAMET Inc.'s annual convention and that CMP participation by Filipinos is relatively high.

The survey also revealed a number of things the BOC was not fully aware of concerning Philippine educated individuals, such as employment, CE preferences, membership societies, laboratory conference preferences, and social media habits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The BOC should continue leaning into the portability of MLS(ASCP[®]) certification, but also needs to do a better job of promoting other international certifications, including advanced certifications and qualifications, to Philippine-educated individuals. CMP participation by Filipinos is a relatively high. However, the process of completing CMP is still confusing to a large number of individuals from the Philippines and likely accounts, in part, for the 20% of Philippine-educated individuals who do not participate in CMP. The BOC needs to work on educating Filipinos on the importance of CMP and on what can be used for CE towards CMP (e.g., making sure they understand that CE earned for their PRC/CPD requirements can also be used for their CMP).

There are additional Philippines based laboratory organizations that the BOC could develop relationships with towards a more robust outreach network in the Philippines. Similarly, increasing the number of employer-based partnerships may also help aid the BOC in its Philippines outreach efforts.

Finally, considering the popularity of BOC certification in general amongst Philippine-educated individuals, the BOC should work on creating more content that focuses on promoting the usefulness of pursuing an advanced credential, the portability of certification, and the demystification of CMP.



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