

Academic Plan

Program Description:

The program teaches the research, investigation, writing, and documentation skills paralegals use daily. Students have the option of enrolling in the on-site program, which blends traditional class meetings with comprehensive online support, exceptional textbooks, and access to LexisNexis and Westlaw legal research databases, or completing their studies online with a course facilitator and the same great support system.

Acquire the tools to be successful in the field of law with this fast-paced, skill-based, comprehensive program. Core curriculum includes terminology, court structure, legal ethics, evidence and investigation, citations, trial preparation, litigation, motions, notices, briefs, and Nevada practices and procedures, plus a strong emphasis on research and writing. In addition, you will complete two substantive topics: Tort and Contract Law. Participants will be assigned a unique client case file and will complete documents for the client throughout the class. The program requires substantial Internet work as well as in-class time. The program tuition includes the Essential Skills textbooks and access to LexisNexis and Westlaw. Students should estimate \$400 for additional required textbooks that are not included in the registration fee.

Program Learning Outcomes:

- Develop foundational and essential skills to enter the paralegal profession, including terminology, court structure and legal ethics.
- Learn litigation practices and procedures including citation and legal research, legal writing, court structure, interview skills, law office investigation, citation form, e-discovery, pleadings, discovery document preparation while using Westlaw online legal research and Lexis online legal research, authority identification and utilization, and more.
- Develop working knowledge of Tort Law as it relates to paralegals.
- Develop working knowledge of Contract Law as it relates to paralegals.

How will the learning outcomes be assessed?

- Students must score 70% or better on quizzes, exams and written assignments. A total comprehensive score of 70% or better is required to pass each course.

Program Requirements:

Students are required to complete the Paralegal Studies program course to earn 25 CEUs.

The Paralegal Certificate program encompasses four total modules. Essential Skills is the core module students will take which will encompass 45 hours of classroom instruction and will focus on paralegal specific skills. These are the day-to-day skills that every attorney wants his or her paralegal to possess. Students will also take three substantives modules to learn specific areas of the law. These areas are Tort Law, Contract Law, and Nevada Practices and Procedures. Each module consists of 15 classroom hours. These modules will teach the theory, application, and practice techniques within each of the substantive topic areas.

At the completion of the program, students will have working knowledge and understand the following topic areas:

- The Paralegal Profession
- Legal Terminology and Court Structure
- Evidence
- Introduction to Authority, Legal Writing, & Legal Research
- Interviewing and Investigation
- Citation Form: The Uniform System
- Litigation: The Transferable Skills
- Advanced Authority, Legal Writing, & Legal Research
- Motions, Notices, & Briefs
- Formal and Informal Advocacy

Recommended Skills at Time of Registration:

- Students must have a minimum of a high school diploma or GED
- Students must have daily access to a computer and internet
- This course requires extensive reading and writing
- Students will be expected to perform research in the Law Library and online using legal research platforms
- Proficiency in a word processing software to draft legal documents
- Proficiency using the internet both for online research and working within an online learning environment
- Students must have strong communication skills (written, verbal, interpersonal) and have high attention to detail and accuracy
- Students must possess analytical and critical thinking skills
- Students must be self-starters and be able to work independently and with groups

Detailed Outline of Core Curriculum:

Introduction to the legal field

Learn what kind of job opportunities exist and what tasks a paralegal may perform.

Legal terminology

By presenting an actual legal matter and following it throughout the legal process, students are introduced to the most relevant legal terms. The case presented is tracked through both the civil and criminal court procedures.

Resume preparation

Receive instruction in preparing resumes and cover letters, as well as tips for interviewing.

Strategies for employment

Multiple strategies for seeking employment will be discussed, including traditional and non-traditional methods.

Stages of litigation

The three stages of the litigation process are presented, and the functions a paralegal may perform during each stage are discussed.

Evidence

Students discuss various forms of evidence, including direct, circumstantial, oral, physical, and hearsay. The elements of admissibility are presented, as are the procedures for presentation of evidence to the court.

Interview clients

Specific techniques will be presented and discussed for conducting client interviews.

Law office investigation

Skip tracing, formal and informal witness statements, the obtaining of public documents, and other investigative matters are presented.

Index research

Students will learn the “hierarchical structure” of legal indexes and will learn to efficiently utilize these fundamental research tools.

Legal analysis

Students will develop skills to analyze case law & statutes, including IRAC method.

Legal memorandum form

After learning the analytical process, students will analyze cases and statutes. Students will then be taught how to create a legal memorandum.

Blue book citation form

Students will learn the system of legal citation.

Pleading preparation

Students will study pleadings and will prepare a complaint as well as a summons.

Discovery preparation

Students will be taught to create sets of Interrogatories, Requests for Admissions, and Request for Production and Inspection of Documents.

Discovery coordination

Students will learn the rules relevant to discovery and will learn how to track both sent and received discovery documents.

Preparing for depositions

Students will study various considerations for deposition setup.

Deposition digesting

Students will be provided with a deposition transcript and will be taught to summarize that document.

Utilization of legal forms

Students will learn to manipulate templates and utilize formbooks.

Authority identification

The class will learn to identify primary, secondary, mandatory, persuasive, and non-authority.

Legal research skills

By using hands-on, interactive training devices, students will learn proper law library utilization: how to locate primary authority, how to use secondary sources, how to update research sources, how to validate authority using Shepard's, and how to utilize specific legal materials. Students will be trained in The Key Number System and the Total Client Service.

Westlaw training and access

Students will receive training and individual access to Westlaw Online Legal Research.

Lexis training and access

Students will receive training and individual access to LexisNexis Online Legal Research.

Motions, notices, and briefs

Students will be introduced to various forms of motions and will be required to prepare a motion, notice, and brief.

File maintenance

Proper file maintenance is discussed. Students will be required to assemble all documents created in the class into a client file or evaluation.

Law office etiquette

Students will learn how to properly present themselves in a law office environment, including dress considerations, telephone tips, and a discussion of office politics.

Tickler and calendaring systems

The class will discuss various forms of reminder systems for important due dates, and both hard-copy and computer-based calendaring methods.

Billable hours

Student will learn the importance of keeping track of billable hours.

ABA rules of ethics

Students will become familiar with the ABA Rules that guide the ethical behavior of attorneys and will discuss how these rules affect paralegals in their day-to-day lives.

Law office ethics

Students will be taught to maintain a high ethical standard. To facilitate the learning process, students will be presented with ethical scenarios and potential pitfalls to avoid.

Legal advice

The class will be instructed in rules preventing a paralegal from providing legal advice and will discuss what does and does not constitute such advice.

Legal representation

Students will discuss the rules restricting paralegal representation.

Nevada court structure and Nevada procedure

Local and state trial and appellate courts will be discussed, including how to access filing procedures for specific courts.

Court rules

Students are taught the most frequently used court rules and are also taught the skills necessary for finding any rule for specific procedural questions.

Federal government structure

Students will learn the structure of government and the laws that apply to each branch.

Federal court structure

Students will be instructed in the basic differences between state and federal jurisdiction, as well as the federal trial and appellate jurisdictions. The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure will be introduced.

Electronic legal research skills

Students will learn how to create computer queries in order to use any online legal research system.

Electronic discovery

Students will learn the procedures and issues surrounding the disclosure of digitally stored information.

The arbitration process

The class will learn how the arbitration process works, will discuss the arbitration system in Nevada, and will learn the difference between mandatory and binding arbitration. The class will also learn new trends in extra-judicial proceedings, such as “Mini-Trials.”

Informal advocacy

Students will learn to obtain information, documents, and relevant material in an informal forum, and to act as the attorney’s “right-hand” in such situations.