

# PARALEGAL STUDIES

## College of Extended Learning

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## Program Scope and Objectives

Paralegal Studies is a 30 unit certificate program, providing instruction in practical legal skills and substantive law. All coursework is taught at the upper-division level by attorneys and working paralegals.

The primary goal of the program is to educate students for positions as paralegals as a means of improving the quality, accessibility, and affordability of legal services. The program started in 1975 and has graduated well over a thousand paralegals. Further information on the program's key objectives and the mission statement submitted to the American Bar Association (ABA) can be found on the paralegal program's website (<http://www.cel.sfsu.edu/paralegal/>).

## ABA-Approved

For over 40 years, the Paralegal Studies Certificate Program, an American Bar Association-approved paralegal studies program, has been providing educational excellence to its students.

California legislation defines who may call himself or herself a paralegal and sets forth education criteria for paralegals. One of the criteria is graduation from a program approved by the American Bar Association. Please refer to the section on California Legislation on Paralegals cited below.

## California Legislation on Paralegals

The state of California has adopted legislation that defines the titles "paralegal" and "legal assistant" and sets educational criteria and continuing education requirements for paralegals. The San Francisco State University Paralegal Studies certificate program meets the educational requirements of the law by virtue of being offered by an accredited institution with an ABA-approved program, and consisting of more than 24 units of paralegal coursework.

## Faculty

All courses in this program are taught by attorneys and/or paralegals with practical experience in their respective fields. We currently have three program graduates on our faculty.

## Career Outlook

Paralegals are employed in private and public interest law firms, corporations, banks, securities firms, government agencies, and regulatory bodies. The Bureau of Labor Statistics ranks the paralegal occupation as one of the fastest growing in the country. Recent state legislation requires that persons working as paralegals meet specified educational and continuing education requirements.

## Certificate in Paralegal Studies

### Admission to Program

Applicants who hold a baccalaureate degree, either from the US or another country, are automatically eligible for admission to the program. Applicants who do not have a baccalaureate degree are required to have a minimum of 60 semester or 90 quarter units of prior academic college credit with at least 30 semester (45 quarter) units of academic general education courses in four basic skills courses:

- oral communication,
- written composition,
- critical thinking, and
- mathematics or quantitative reasoning.

Additionally, applicants must have an overall GPA of 2.5 or better and all coursework must have been completed within 10 years of applying to the program.

Applicants with at least three years of legal employment and 45 semester (68 quarter) units may petition for conditional admission. Transcripts verifying these units must be accompanied by an attorney declaration attesting to their legal work experience, which must have been within five years of their application to the program.

### Writing Skills

Paralegal courses require strong writing skills. Certificate students who do not have a bachelor's degree must pass a University approved Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement course (GWAR). PLS 414GW is an approved GWAR course and also counts as elective units that can be applied toward the certificate.

A certificate is awarded upon successful completion of 30 units. The 30 units required to earn the certificate consist of five required courses and five elective courses.

Each course carries three units of credit. For complete course descriptions contact the program coordinator.

### Required Courses

- Introduction to Law/Civil Procedure
- Legal Research and Writing
- Communications Skills and Legal Ethics
- Pleadings and Motions
- Investigation, Discovery, and Trial Preparation

### Elective Courses: Advanced and Specialized Practical Courses

- Administrative Law
- Advanced Legal Research and Writing
- Bankruptcy
- Computer Applications
- Computer Applications II
- Contemporary Legal Issues
- Contracts
- Corporations Law
- Criminal Law
- Elder Law
- Employment Law

- Environmental Litigation
- Evidence
- Family Law
- Law Office Management
- Paralegal Experience Internship
- Patents
- Immigration Law
- Introduction to Professional Legal Writing
- Probate Procedures
- Real Estate Practice
- Trademarks & Copyrights
- Torts
- Wills, Trusts, and Estate Planning

### **Intended Audience**

College graduates who are interested in a career in the legal field, international students who worked in the legal field as lawyers or paralegals in their home countries, career changers, students who are thinking about law school, and early retirees from other professions who have a general interest in the law.

### **Non-Certificate Students**

If students wish to explore the legal field and want to take selected individual courses in the program, they may register for those courses, with the consent of the faculty member and program lead.

Also, those who already have experience in the legal field and who wish to take selected courses without applying to the program may register for courses with the permission of the individual instructor and program lead.