

# CERTIFICATE IN PARALEGAL STUDIES

## Program Scope and Objectives

Paralegal Studies is a 24 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. We also offer a series of paralegal continuing education courses to meet the continuing education standards established by the Business and Professions Code Section 6450 et. seq.

## Faculty

All courses in this program are taught by attorneys and/or paralegals with practical experience in their respective fields. We currently have four 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.

## 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.

## Program Learning Outcomes

- a. Apply ethical principles that guide paralegal conduct in real-world situations.
- b. Compile and evaluate research to support attorney needs.
- c. Apply legal knowledge to support the litigation process.
- d. Demonstrate clear, concise, and organized oral and written communication skills.
- e. Utilize fundamental legal concepts which govern the practice of law.

## Certificate in Paralegal Studies - 24 units

### Required Courses (15 units)

Code	Title	Units
PLS 300	Introduction to Civil Procedure	3
PLS 305	Investigation, Discovery & Trial Preparation	3
PLS 310	Communication Skills and Legal Ethics	3
PLS 320	Legal Research & Writing	3
PLS 395	Pleadings	3

### Electives (9 units)

Select three courses from the following:

Code	Title	Units
PLS 325	Employment Law	3
PLS 330	Family Law	3
PLS 345	Immigration Law	3
PLS 355	Wills Trust Estate Plan	3
PLS 370	Criminal Law	3
PLS 380	Field Experience Paralegal Studies	3

PLS 386	Contemporary Legal Issues: Constitutional Law in the 21st Century	3
PLS 390	Corporations Law	3
PLS 410	Real Estate Practice	3
PLS 414GW <sup>1</sup>	Introduction to Professional Legal Writing - GVAR	3
PLS 425	Torts	3
PLS 426	Contracts	3
PLS 430	Computer Application in Law Practice	3
PLS 435	Patents	3
PLS 436	Trademarks and Copyrights	3

<sup>1</sup> PLS 414GW is required of all students who do not have a bachelor's degree.