

Area: Behavioral & Social Sciences
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Degree: A.A. - Legal Assisting
 Certificates: Legal Assisting
 Law Office Clerical Assistant

The Legal Assisting program at American River College is approved by the American Bar Association. ARC's Legal Assisting program has been preparing students for entry-level positions in this profession for over 30 years.

'Legal assistant' and 'paralegal' are synonymous terms according to California Business & Professions Code (B & P Code) sections 6450-6456. Section 6450 defines a legal assistant as "...a person qualified by education, training,...is employed by an attorney,...or other entity, and who performs substantial legal work under the direction and supervision of an active member of the State Bar of California...". Legal assistants do not provide legal advice. It is unlawful for anyone not currently licensed to practice law in California to give legal advice.

DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES

Legal Assisting Degree

This degree prepares students to work in the legal field as an entry-level legal assistant. It covers basic substantive and procedural areas including civil litigation, legal research and legal writing, contracts, and torts in addition to being approved by the American Bar Association. This degree is in full compliance with California Business and Professions Code section 6450 regarding preparation for work in this field.

The American Bar Association (ABA) has specific requirements for 18 units of additional non-legal-assisting coursework (ABA Breadth). Students are encouraged to consult a counselor or the department chair for courses that satisfy the ABA Breadth requirements.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this program, the student will be able to:

- incorporate basic legal theories in various substantive areas of law as required by supervising attorney.
- define and use legal terminology accurately and appropriately.
- differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information and evidence.
- research relevant legal authority.
- verify the currency of relevant legal authority.
- draft correspondence to be sent to clients or opposing counsel and others.
- prepare basic legal documents for signature and submission to court by the supervising attorney.
- organize professional assignments efficiently.
- support the supervising attorney in all phases of legal practice.
- demonstrate ethical behavior in the legal setting.
- recognize acts that may constitute the unlicensed practice of law.
- express their thoughts effectively, both orally and in writing, with attorneys and clients.

Career Opportunities

Career opportunities for Legal Assistants have an excellent outlook. According to the US Department of Labor's Job Outlook, employment of legal assistants is projected to grow 17 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations.

Legal assistants find employment in both the State and Federal government as well as private practice and corporate settings.

See losrios.edu/gainful-emp-info/gedt.php?major=011166C01 for Gainful Employment Disclosure.

Requirements for Degree	48 Units
LA 300 Introduction to Law and the American Legal System.....	3
LA 310 Civil Procedures and Litigation	3
LA 312 Torts and Personal Injury	3
LA 314 Contract Law for Legal Assistants	3
LA 320 Legal Research	3
LA 321 Legal Writing	3
LA 350 Law Office Management	3
And a minimum of 9 units from the following:	9
LA 322 Advanced Legal Research and Writing (3)	
LA 330 Family Law and Procedure (3)	
LA 332 Administrative Law and Procedure (3)	
LA 334 Criminal Law and Procedure (3)	
LA 342 Evidence (3)	
LA 360 Corporations Law (3)	
LA 362 Estate Planning and Probate Procedure (3)	
LA 364 Landlord Tenant Law (3)	
LA 366 Basic Bankruptcy Law (3)	
LA 368 Workers' Compensation Law (3)	
LA 495 Independent Studies in Legal Assisting (1 - 3)	
LA 498 Work Experience in Legal Assisting (1 - 4)	
And a minimum of 18 units from the following:	18

ABA Breadth: Courses from at least three different areas of Areas 1-5B of the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC), excluding performance courses, activity courses, administration of justice courses, and the lab component of science courses.

Associate Degree Requirements: The Legal Assisting Associate in Arts (A.A.) Degree may be obtained by completion of the required program, plus general education requirements, plus sufficient electives to meet a 60-unit total. See ARC graduation requirements.

Legal Assisting Certificate

Students must possess an A.A. degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution to be eligible for the certificate. The Legal Assisting Certificate is a one-year course of study consisting of 30 units of legal specialty courses. Legal courses cover basic substantive and procedural areas including civil litigation, legal research and legal writing, contracts, and torts in addition to electives within the program. This certificate is in full compliance with California Business and Professions Code section 6450 regarding preparation for work in this field.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this program, the student will be able to:

- incorporate basic legal theories in various substantive areas of law as required by supervising attorney.
- define and use legal terminology accurately and appropriately.
- differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information and evidence.
- research relevant legal authority.
- verify the currency of relevant legal authority.
- draft correspondence to be sent to clients or opposing counsel and others.
- prepare basic legal documents for signature and submission to court by the supervising attorney.
- organize professional assignments efficiently.
- support the supervising attorney in all phases of legal practice.
- demonstrate ethical behavior in the legal setting.
- recognize acts that may constitute the unlicensed practice of law.
- express their thoughts effectively, both orally and in writing, with attorneys and clients.

Career Opportunities

Career opportunities for Legal Assistants have an excellent outlook. According to the US Department of Labor's Job Outlook, employment of legal assistants is projected to grow 17 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations.

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Requirements for Certificate 30 Units

LA 300	Introduction to Law and the American Legal System	3
LA 310	Civil Procedures and Litigation	3
LA 312	Torts and Personal Injury	3
LA 314	Contract Law for Legal Assistants	3
LA 320	Legal Research	3
LA 321	Legal Writing	3
LA 350	Law Office Management	3

And a minimum of 9 units from the following:9

LA 322	Advanced Legal Research and Writing (3)
LA 330	Family Law and Procedure (3)
LA 332	Administrative Law and Procedure (3)
LA 334	Criminal Law and Procedure (3)
LA 342	Evidence (3)
LA 360	Corporations Law (3)
LA 362	Estate Planning and Probate Procedure (3)
LA 364	Landlord Tenant Law (3)
LA 366	Basic Bankruptcy Law (3)
LA 368	Workers' Compensation Law (3)
LA 495	Independent Studies in Legal Assisting (1 - 3)
LA 498	Work Experience in Legal Assisting (1 - 4)

Law Office Clerical Assistant Certificate

This certificate provides the skills needed for entry-level clerical positions in law offices. The course work emphasizes workforce skills including an introduction to the use of terms particular to the legal field.

Completion of the Law Office Assistant Certificate does not qualify the holder under California state law as a Legal Assistant or paralegal.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this certificate program, the student will be able to:

- demonstrate keyboarding competence in the legal workplace.
- solve common office problems using current business technology and software applications.
- practice effective communication with law office personnel and clients.
- apply appropriate ethical standards to the special situations encountered in a law office.
- produce written documents in appropriate formats using typical legal office technology.

Career Opportunities

Typical career opportunities are entry-level non-attorney positions in a law office. In order to earn an A.A. or a Certificate to become a Legal Assistant/Paralegal, see the Legal Assisting Program requirements in the Behavior and Social Sciences Division.

Requirements for Certificate 15 Units

BUS 312	Workplace Behavior and Ethics	3
BUSTEC 100.1	Keyboarding Skills: Beginning (1)	1
or BUSTEC 300.1	Keyboarding/Applications: Beginning (1)	
BUSTEC 100.2	Keyboarding Skills: Intermediate (1)	1
or BUSTEC 300.2	Keyboarding/Applications: Document Formatting (1)	
BUSTEC 305	Business Technology Essentials.....	1
BUSTEC 310	Introduction to Word/Information Processing	3
LA 300	Introduction to Law and the American Legal System	3
LA 350	Law Office Management.....	3

Legal Assisting

LA 300 Introduction to Law and the American Legal System 3 Units

Prerequisite: ENGWR 300 or ESLW 340 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course introduces the American legal system, its history, and function. It provides an overview of several important areas of law such as torts and crimes and the legal assistant's role in the system.

LA 310 Civil Procedures and Litigation 3 Units

Corequisite: LA 300
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course is an introduction to the California court system with emphasis on understanding the practical aspects of litigation and the proper procedures required by statutes and rules of court. The phases of California court procedure, including State and Federal constitutional limitations, jurisdiction, venue, pleadings, and motions are covered. The course also includes the forms by which matters are submitted to the court system from pre-litigation through appeals.

LA 312 Torts and Personal Injury 3 Units

Corequisite: LA 300
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course is an overview of substantive tort law as it applies to personal injury (PI) cases. It introduces tort concepts, such as negligence, intent, and strict liability, including the elements required to prove liability and defenses available to litigants. This course covers pretrial procedures, such as discovery, settlement offers, and witness and trial preparation.

LA 314 Contract Law for Legal Assistants 3 Units

Corequisite: LA 300
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course covers basic contract principles. Topics include formation, validity, defenses, rights of third parties, performance, breach, remedies, and damages.

LA 320 Legal Research 3 Units

Corequisite: LA 300
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course covers the legal assistant with the basic tools of legal research in both federal and California law, with emphasis on California materials. Location and use of primary and secondary sources are studied. The elements of a court decision and how to brief a case are presented.

LA 321 Legal Writing 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 320 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course is a continuation of LA 320. It includes the application of research methods to gather information which may be used in a variety of written products. Information is synthesized into various documents typically used in the law office. Documents created may include interoffice memoranda, court briefs, and letters to clients.

LA 322 Advanced Legal Research and Writing 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 321 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course builds on the research and writing skills covered in LA 320 and LA 321. It focuses on refining legal research, analytical, and writing skills with an emphasis on researching and applying most current codes, rules, and practices pertaining to e-discovery, meta data mining, and other technical issues; it also covers drafting various discovery requests/responses and discovery motions/oppositions and/or other documents filed in Law and Motion departments relative to electronically stored information. Extensive use of computers and the internet is required.

LA 330 Family Law and Procedure 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Advisory: LA 320
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course covers California Family Law relating to dissolution procedures, property issues, and non-marital relationships. Legal procedures, preparation of necessary forms and their significance are emphasized.

LA 332 Administrative Law and Procedure 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course covers administrative law and procedure. Topics include comparison of administrative law to civil and criminal law, and administrative due process.

LA 334 Criminal Law and Procedure 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course provides background in both substantive crimes and criminal procedure. It includes a detailed study of the operation of the criminal justice system, from arrest and filing of charges through trial, conviction and appeal.

LA 342 Evidence 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Advisory: LA 310
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course covers the rules of evidence in federal and state courts. Topics include Hearsay Rule, Best Evidence Rule, and organizing deposition transcripts.

LA 350 Law Office Management 3 Units

Corequisite: LA 300
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course covers aspects of the legal assistant's role in a law office. Law office technology, accounting, time and records management, and communication skills are examined.

LA 360 Corporations Law 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course covers corporation terminology and legal requirements governing corporations. Topics include formation, dissolution and liquidation of a corporation.

LA 362 Estate Planning and Probate Procedure 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 and 320 with grades of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course covers estate planning, including the manner in which property may be held and ways it can be transferred. Testate and intestate probate procedures are included.

LA 364 Landlord Tenant Law 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course focuses on the most common types of landlord-tenant disputes. Litigation and non-litigation matters are covered. Topics include the different types of tenancy, what constitutes habitability, and tenant's rights and obligations.

LA 366 Basic Bankruptcy Law 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course is an introduction to the practical aspects of representing debtors or creditors within the bankruptcy system. Topics include voluntary and involuntary bankruptcy, preparation of statements, and schedules for filing.

LA 368 Workers' Compensation Law 3 Units

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54 hours LEC

This course provides an overview of the Workers' Compensation Law in California. The focus is on the procedural aspects of handling a Workers' Compensation claim from both the applicant perspective and the defense perspective.

LA 495 Independent Studies in Legal Assisting 1-3 Units

Prerequisite: None
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 54-162 hours LAB

Independent Study is an opportunity for the student to extend classroom experience in this subject, while working independently of a formal classroom situation. Independent study is an extension of work offered in a specific class in the college catalog. To be eligible for independent study, students must have completed the basic regular catalog course at American River College. They must also discuss the study with a professor in this subject and secure approval. Only one independent study for each catalog course will be allowed.

LA 498 Work Experience in Legal Assisting 1-4 Units

Advisory: Eligible for ENGRD 310 or ENGRD 312 AND ENGWR 300; OR ESLR 340 AND ESLW 340.

Enrollment Limitation: Students must be in a paid or unpaid internship, volunteer position, or job related to legal assisting with a cooperating site supervisor. Students are advised to consult with the Legal Assisting Department faculty to review specific certificate and degree work experience requirements.

General Education: AAIAS Area III(b)
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 60-300 hours LAB

This course provides students with opportunities to develop marketable skills in preparation for employment or advancement within the field of legal assisting. It is designed for students interested in work experience and/or internships in transfer-level degree occupational programs. Course content includes understanding the application of education to the workforce, completion of Title 5 required forms which document the student's progress and hours spent at the work site, and developing workplace skills and competencies. During the semester, the student is required to attend a weekly orientation and 75 hours of related paid work experience, or 60 hours of unpaid work experience for one unit. An additional 75 or 60 hours of related work experience is required for each additional unit. First-time participants are required to attend a weekly orientation and a final meeting. Returning participants are required to attend the first class meeting, a mid-semester meeting, and a final meeting and may meet individually with the instructor as needed to complete a work site observation and all program forms, receive updates, and assignments. Students may take up to 16 units total across all Work Experience course offerings. This course may be taken up to four times when there are new or expanded learning objectives. Only one Work Experience course may be taken per semester.