

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

DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES

Legal Assisting Degree

'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.

The Legal Assisting degree is a two year A.A. degree. The program includes general education requirements in addition to legal specialty classes. The Legal Assisting Program requires a General Education pattern for completion of the associate degree that is DIFFERENT FROM some other programs at the college. 18 units of General Education course work must come from the approved General Education courses for the A.A. in Legal Assisting list and be distributed over at least three different areas. See an academic counselor for the appropriate courses.

Legal courses cover basic substantive and procedural areas including civil litigation, legal research and legal writing, contracts and torts in preparation for an entry level position as a legal assistant.

The associate degree program 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, legal assistant jobs are projected to grow faster than average through 2018. This translates to an increase of 20% or higher.

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

Requirements for Degree	30 Units
LA 300	Introduction to Law and the American Legal System.... 3 ¹
LA 310	Civil Procedures and Litigation3
LA 312	Torts and Personal Injury3
LA 314	Contract Law for Legal Assistants3
LA 320	Legal Research3
LA 321	Legal Writing3
LA 350	Law Office Management3
And a minimum of 9 units from the following:9	
LA 330	Family Law and Procedure (3)
LA 332	Administrative Law and Procedure (3)
LA 334	Criminal Law and Procedure (3)
LA 340	Techniques of Interview (1)
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 498	Work Experience in Legal Assisting (1 - 4)
LA 499	Experimental Offerings in Legal Assisting (.5 - 4)

¹The Legal Assisting Program requires a General Education pattern for completion of the associate degree that is DIFFERENT FROM some other programs at the college. 18 units of General Education course work must come from the approved General Education courses for the A.A. in Legal Assisting list and be distributed over at least three different areas. See an academic counselor for the appropriate 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

The student 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. The certificate program 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 legal assistant jobs are projected to grow faster than average through 2018. This translates to an increase of 20% or higher.

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

<u>Requirements for Certificate</u>	<u>30 Units</u>
LA 300	Introduction to Law and the American Legal System .. 3 ¹
LA 310	Civil Procedures and Litigation3
LA 312	Torts and Personal Injury3
LA 314	Contract Law for Legal Assistants3
LA 320	Legal Research3
LA 321	Legal Writing3
LA 350	Law Office Management3
And a minimum of 9 units from the following:9	
LA 330	Family Law and Procedure (3)
LA 332	Administrative Law and Procedure (3)
LA 334	Criminal Law and Procedure (3)
LA 340	Techniques of Interview (1)
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 498	Work Experience in Legal Assisting (1 - 4)
LA 499	Experimental Offering in Legal Assisting (0.5 - 4)

¹The student must possess an A.A. degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution to be eligible for the certificate.

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 clerical positions in a law office. In order to become a Legal Assistant/ Paralegal, see the program requirements for the A.A. or Certificate in Legal Assisting.

<u>Requirements for Certificate</u>	<u>16 Units</u>
LA 300	Introduction to Law and the American Legal System 3
LA 350	Law Office Management3
BUSTEC 100	Keyboarding Skills (1 -3) 1 - 3 ¹
or BUSTEC 300	Beginning Keyboarding/Applications (1 -3)
BUSTEC 122	Workplace Behavior and Communication Technologies3
BUSTEC 305	Introduction to Office Technology1
BUSTEC 310	Introduction to Word/Information Processing 1 - 3 ²

¹A total of 3 units from these courses must be taken.

²Must be taken for 3 units.

Legal Assisting

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

Corequisite: ENGWR 300
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 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 340 Techniques of Interview 1 Unit

Prerequisite: LA 300 with a grade of "C" or better
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 18 hours LEC

This course covers the skills used by a legal assistant in interviewing clients and witnesses. Topics include active and passive listening, and types of questions.

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 498 Work Experience in Legal Assisting 1-4 Units

Advisory: ENGWR 102 or 103, and ENGRD 116 with a grade of "C" or better; OR ESLR 320 and ESLW 320 with a grade of "C" or better.
Enrollment Limitation: Students must be in a paid or unpaid internship, volunteer position or job related to legal assisting. Students are advised to consult with the Legal Assisting department faculty to review specific certificate and degree work experience requirements.
General Education: AA/AS Area III(b)
Course Transferable to CSU
Hours: 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 required forms which document the student's progress and hours spent at the work site; and developing workplace skills and competencies. Appropriate level learning objectives are established by the student and the employer. 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. The weekly orientation is required for first time participants; returning participants are not required to attend the orientation but are required to meet with the instructor as needed to complete all program forms and assignments. Work Experience may be taken for a total of 16 units when there are new or expanded learning objectives.