

# PARALEGAL STUDIES

The Paralegal Studies Certificate program is designed to provide the student with an overall knowledge of legal issues and a variety of skills that go beyond what is necessary for a legal secretary. Those skills encompass the ability to interview clients and witnesses, to conduct research, and to aid attorneys and other professionals in the preparation of legal documents and to assist attorneys in preparation for trial.

The course of study provides opportunities for the student to gain advanced knowledge of law, including torts, criminal law, family law, business law, and estate planning as well as other areas of law applicable to the modern practice. The student will receive training in skills needed to work in various settings that utilize paralegals such as government agencies, private non-profit agencies, corporate legal departments, private law offices, and title, abstract, and real estate offices.

## Graduation Requirements

All PL S courses must be completed with a C- or higher. PL S courses taken more than 7 years prior to graduation must be repeated.

Certificate in Paralegal Studies: A cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher. A minimum of 9 credits earned toward the certificate must be completed at SENMC.

AAS in Paralegal Studies: ENGL 1110G Composition I with a C- or higher; placement into college-level math and reading courses or completion of developmental courses with a C- or higher; cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher. A minimum of 15 of the 60 credits for the associate's degree must be completed at SENMC.

- Paralegal Studies - Associate of Applied Science (<https://senmc-public.courseleaf.com/academic-programs/associate-degree-certificate-programs/paralegal-studies/paralegal-studies-aas/>)
- Paralegal Studies - Certificate (<https://senmc-public.courseleaf.com/academic-programs/associate-degree-certificate-programs/paralegal-studies/paralegal-studies-certificate/>)

### PL S 160 Legal System for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)

Introduction to the court system, administrative agencies, functions of law offices, and professional conduct and legal ethics.

**Prerequisite(s):** ACT standard score in English of 16 or higher or a Accuplacer score 250 or higher or ENGL 1110G and CCDS 113N

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### PL S 161 Legal Terminology 3 Credits (3)

Survey of the language of the law that will serve either as an introductory course or as a review course to prepare students for the certification test.

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### PL S 162 The Virtual Law Office 3 Credits (3)

The Virtual Law Office class is a 'hands-on', project oriented course designated to provide the student with the basic law office skills needed to function successfully in a law office setting. The student will gain a practical, working knowledge of the procedures necessary to work in a law office. The skills learned in the class will directly translate to real life situations.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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### PL S 180 Constitutional Law for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)

Case standing of the law of the Constitution and Bill of Rights with regard to day-to-day applications in the law practice. Documents dealing with constitutional problems in both civil and criminal areas of law will be drafted and discussed.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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### PL S 190 Criminal Law for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)

Introduction to federal and state criminal law; criminal proceedings, prosecution and defense, sentencing and appeal.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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### PL S 200 Legal Ethics for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)

Introduction to ethical dilemmas faced in the workforce and the rules of ethics developed by the American Bar Association, various national paralegal organizations, and the Supreme Court of New Mexico.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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### PL S 203 Immigration Law 3 Credits (3)

Survey of the basics of immigration law including the rights and obligations of citizenship and the naturalization process.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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### PL S 221 Internship I 2-4 Credits

Work experience that directly relates to a student's major field of study that provides the student an opportunity to explore career paths and apply knowledge and theory learned in the classroom. Internships can be paid or unpaid. Students are supervised/evaluated by both the employer and the instructor.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 274

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### PL S 222 Internship II 1-3 Credits

Continuation of PL S 221. Each credit requires specified number of hours of on-the-job work experience.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 221

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### PL S 231 The Law of Commerce for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)

Law of contracts, negotiable instruments, bank transfers, secured transactions, debtor-creditor relations, agency, and business types and their formation. Students will study the relevant statutes as well as draft documents associated with these types of legal practice.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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### PL S 272 Bankruptcy Law for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)

Individual and corporate bankruptcy; the basic principles and processes of bankruptcy law as a system of debtor relief and debt collection.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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### PL S 274 Legal Research and Writing for the Paralegal I 3 Credits (3)

Legal memoranda, briefs, and pleadings will be prepared and written based on the student's original research. Research materials and techniques will be identified and studied; introduction of computer usage in legal research.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160 and ENGL 1110G

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**PL S 275 Tort and Insurance for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)**

Primary legal principles of tort and insurance law and means of establishing insurance plans, types of torts and insurance, as well as use of specific forms and procedures relating to these areas.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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**PL S 276 Wills, Trusts, and Probate for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)**

Cases and statutes dealing with wills, trusts, and probate. Emphasis on preparation and drafting of documents and the application of the law and documents to the client's problems.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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**PL S 277 Family Law for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)**

Methods of conducting client interviews and drafting of pleadings and research relative to families. Laws relating to marriage, divorce, custody, support, adoption, name change, guardianship, and paternity.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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**PL S 278 Litigation for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)**

The law of procedure and evidence will be considered through rules and cases. Case situations will be used to identify and solve problems.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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**PL S 279 Legal Research and Writing for the Paralegal II 3 Credits (3)**

Continuation of PL S 274. Advanced training in legal research problems with a focus on analysis, writing, and preparation of sophisticated legal memoranda and documents.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 274

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**PL S 280 Interviewing and Investigation for the Paralegal 3 Credits (3)**

Techniques of legal interviewing and investigation with emphasis on development of human relations and communication skills.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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**PL S 298 Independent Study 1-3 Credits**

Individual studies directed by consenting faculty with prior approval by department head.

**Prerequisite(s):** PL S 160

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