

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CERRITOS COLLEGE'S PARALEGAL PROGRAM

Q: How do I enroll in your Paralegal Program?

A: You don't. You enroll with Cerritos College. All enrolled students are eligible to then take the necessary classes to achieve an A.A. degree in Paralegal or obtain a Paralegal Certificate, depending on your qualifications. Check Cerritos College's website [www.Cerritos.edu] for information regarding how to enroll.

Q: What do you mean by "depending on your qualifications?" Do I seek a Paralegal Certificate or an A.A. degree in Paralegal?

A: Our Program offers two tracks. If prior to commencing our Program a student already possesses an A.A. or higher degree (e.g., B.S., M.S., etc.) in any subject, that person is eligible to seek and graduate with a Paralegal Certificate. If the student does not possess an A.A. or higher degree, that student needs to seek and graduate with an A.A. degree in Paralegal.

Q: Does either "track," make a difference?

A. No. California Business & Professions Code section 6450 subsection (c) defines a paralegal as having either received a certificate of completion from an ABA approved program (i.e., a Paralegal Certificate) or an A.A. degree from a qualified college, such as Cerritos College (i.e., A.A. degree in Paralegal).

Q: You mention "ABA approved program" and that your Program is "ABA approved." What does that mean?

A: As it does for law schools, the American Bar Association [ABA] also approves paralegal programs that meet their rigid standards. Our Program was initially approved in 1986 and we have been approved at all times since. We are required to submit to the ABA detailed Interim Reports about our Program every three and one-half years. Every seven years, we must submit an extensive Re-approval Report, which is subsequently followed by an onsite inspection by ABA representatives. Currently, we are one of only about 30 paralegal programs in California which are ABA approved. Of note, many employers specifically require that paralegal applicants have graduated an ABA approved program.

Q: What are the requirements for the two "tracks?"

A: These can be found on our Paralegal Program web pages, but in essence, like any A.A. degree, an A.A. degree in Paralegal requires passing 60 units, of which 33 are from our Paralegal Program, and the other 27 units, general education classes. For a Paralegal Certificate, passing 28 Paralegal units is required.

Q: Do you offer online classes?

A: We, along with the ABA, believe Paralegal skills must be learned “hands on,” and online classes are not the best avenue of instruction for our Program. Currently, only two Paralegal classes are offered online, one of which is an elective.

Q: Is it possible to take only night classes and graduate with an A.A. degree in Paralegal or a Paralegal Certificate?

A. Yes. Many of our students work full-time yet graduate our Program.

Q: How long does it take to graduate?

A. That depends on you. If you are seeking an A.A. degree in Paralegal, you need 60 units. If you take 15 units a semester, then you can graduate in two years (four semesters). If you are seeking a Paralegal Certificate, which requires 28 units, that can be done in one year (two semesters).

Q: Are all classes offered every semester?

A. Certain classes are required, whether seeking an A.A. degree in Paralegal or the Paralegal Certificate. These classes are offered Fall and Spring semesters. Some elective classes are not offered every semester. We also have a limited offering of Summer semester classes.

Q: If I graduate with an A.A. degree in Paralegal or receive a Paralegal Certificate, can I come back and take more classes?

A. Yes. You are encouraged to avail yourself of the many electives we offer. While you cannot take all our classes in a year or two, you certainly can come back and take additional classes of interest to you. Many of our graduates do this to expand their knowledge for potential job opportunities.

Q: Must I take work experience or perform an internship?

A: No. However, Work Experience [LAW171-174], which is an elective class, is an excellent way to “get your foot in the door.” Many of our graduates intern and then obtain jobs where they interned. Currently, our Internship List contains over 120 sponsor locations.

Q: I already have a job; can I use that as credit toward the work experience class?

A: Yes, in our LAW171-174 class provided an attorney or paralegal supervises you.

Q: Can I transfer units from another college?

A: This answer is a little complex and depends on the track. If you are seeking an A.A. degree in Paralegal, as for general education classes, our Program has no involvement with transferability; you need to discuss with counseling. However, as for Paralegal classes, so long as you: (i) take a minimum of 12 Paralegal units at Cerritos; (ii) the units you want to transfer into Cerritos were obtained from another ABA approved program with a grade of pass or “C” or higher; and (iii) the transferring class is comparable to the Cerritos College Paralegal class, transfer is permitted. Transfer of Paralegal classes is approved by our Paralegal Director and not by counseling. It is best to schedule an appointment with the Director ASAP to review your situation. However, if you are seeking a Paralegal Certificate, all units must be earned at Cerritos College; transferring units is not permitted.

Q: What does your Program cost?

A: There is no specific fee to take our Paralegal classes. The price per unit and all related costs are set by Cerritos College and/or the State of California, which is the same for our paralegal classes as compared to any other class at Cerritos College or California community college.

Q: Can I get Financial Aid?

A: This is a Cerritos College issue. The Paralegal Program has no involvement in financial aid. Check Cerritos College’s website [www.Cerritos.edu] for information regarding financial aid.

Q: Where can I get more information about your Paralegal Program?

A: Several places. Check Cerritos College’s Paralegal website [www.Cerritos.edu/business-legal]. You are also welcome to email the Program Director [bgreenberg@cerritos.edu] or the Director’s Assistant [acano@cerritos.edu] with your questions. You can also call at either 562-860-2451, extension 2741 for the Director or extension 2703 for the Director’s Assistant. You are also welcome to stop by our offices located in the basement of the Social Science Building --- room S-30 for the Director and room S-28 for the Assistant. We suggest you email or call and schedule an appointment, although if we’re in our offices should you stop by, it is rare we don’t have a moment for you.