

PARALEGAL STUDIES

There are entities offering paralegal training that promise a certificate after about a year of training. However, students who complete those programs may not even be eligible to take the most commonly accepted exam to become a certified paralegal (NALA). Our associate degree program meets those requirements as well as the requirements for being a paralegal under the New Mexico Rules Governing Paralegal Services (NMRA 20-115)

Program Highlights

- Graduate with an associate degree in two years and be eligible to take the NALA Certified Paralegal exam
- Enroll in flexible online courses that meet Quality Matters review standards
- Learn to be a critical part of a client's legal team
- Join a well-paid workforce with incomes starting at \$49,110 in New Mexico to \$56,610 nationwide*
- The Paralegal field projected growth will be 12 percent from 2018 to 2028

What do paralegals and legal assistants do? They work directly with lawyers to service their clients.

The Paralegal Studies and Legal Assistant programs both prepare student for careers in the legal profession. Paralegals are skilled professionals who perform substantive legal tasks under the supervision of a licensed attorney. While paralegals typically do not provide legal services directly to the public, paralegal responsibilities can include interviewing and assisting clients and witnesses, conducting investigation and data analysis, drafting legal documents, researching legal issues as well as supporting litigation efforts.

The Paralegal Studies program offers a 60 credit program for an Associates of Applied Science degree in Paralegal Studies as well as a 25 credit program for a Legal Assistant Certificate. Both programs prepare students for careers in the legal profession. The Legal Assistant Certificate prepares students in basic legal office skills. Upon completion of the Legal Assistant Certificate program, students may enter the career field or apply their courses to an Associates of Applied Science degree in Paralegal Studies.

Upon completion of the Associate of Applied Science degree in Paralegal Studies, students may enter the career field as paralegals in New Mexico under Rule 20-115(A)(2) of the New Mexico Rules Governing Paralegal Service. Students are also eligible to take the Certified Paralegal Exam offered by the National Association of Legal Assistants. Successful completion of that exam and one year of substantive law-related experience under the supervision of a licensed attorney qualifies the graduate as a paralegal under Rule 20-115(E) of the New Mexico Rules Governing Paralegal Service. The NALA certification is also accepted in many other states.

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(2020 US Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Paralegal Studies - Associate of Applied Science (<https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/alamogordo/degrees-certificates/paralegal-studies/paralegal-studies-associate-applied-science/>)

Legal Assistant - Certificate of Completion (<https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/alamogordo/degrees-certificates/paralegal-studies/legal-assistant-certificate/>)

Graduates of this program will:

Paralegal Studies, Associate of Applied Science Degree

1. Explain basic legal terms and concepts related to key areas of substantive law.
2. Apply professional written communication skills to legal memorandums, documents and pleadings.
3. Use legal research skills and apply relevant statutes, regulations and case law to given fact patterns or real-world scenarios.
4. Create legal memorandum, documents and pleadings based on an application of the law to given fact patterns or real-world scenarios.
5. Evaluate and express the ethical rules that govern lawyers and paralegals to given fact patterns or real-world scenarios.

Legal Assistant, Certificate of Completion

1. Express an understanding of the court system, administrative agencies, and functions of law offices.
2. Practice legal research skills and application of relevant status, regulations and case law to given fact patterns or real-world scenarios.
3. Practice creating legal memorandum and documents based on an application of the law to given fact patterns or real-world scenarios.
4. Apply and express the ethical rules that govern law offices to given fact patterns or real-world scenarios.

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