

**MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY
PARALEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM
HANDBOOK**



Revised 05/2023
Justice Studies Department

PREFACE

This handbook has been prepared to provide policies and procedures, which have developed and evolved as part of the Paralegal Studies Program offerings over the past forty (41) years. All requirements contained in this Handbook have been approved and are currently in effect. Please review this Handbook fully and carefully, if you have questions or require additional information, contact Prof. Nicole A. Fackina, Program Director, at (973) 655-7759 or fackinan@montclair.edu.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT PARALEGALS ARE NOT LAWYERS AND MUST WORK UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF AN ATTORNEY. PARALEGALS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO PRACTICE LAW.

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PARALEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM

The primary goal of the Paralegal Studies Program is to provide students with the knowledge and education that will enable them to perform competent paralegal work under the supervision and direction of attorneys. The program develops intellectual and analytical skills, educates students for direct employment opportunities in the paralegal field, and provides additional career possibilities in combination with other majors.

Specific objectives of the program are to:

- communicate an understanding of the overall role of the paralegal, including ethical considerations, professional responsibility and limitations upon the practice of law by legal personnel in the delivery of legal services.
- provide focused paralegal education in areas such as legal interviewing, research, writing, administrative advocacy, investigation and litigation, which are applicable in a broad range of legally related situations.
- provide substantive legal knowledge and related practical training in a wide range of legal specialty subject areas, including but not limited to: Administrative Law; Corporations and Partnerships; Employment Law; Entertainment Law; Personal Injury Law; Wills, Trusts and Probate Law; Elder Law; Family Law; Immigration Law; Real Estate Law; Criminal Law and Procedure; Contract Law; Patent, Trademark and Copyright Law; Evidence; Bankruptcy Law; Consumer Law and Dispute Resolution.
- provide students with an understanding of legal technology, including knowledge of subject-specific computer software and computer-assisted legal research via the Internet, Westlaw and LexisNexis.
- provide an internship experience whereby each student in the Paralegal Studies Program applies his or her paralegal education and skills to a direct fieldwork experience in the public or private sector.
- provide students with the opportunity and the flexibility to enroll in courses in the Paralegal Studies Program during the day or evening.
- provide well-rounded education emphasizing a proper balance between general education, law-related courses and legal specialty education.

ADMISSIONS AND ADVISEMENT

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS:

Undergraduate students can be accepted into the Paralegal Studies Program by declaring a Justice Studies major with a concentration in Paralegal Studies upon admission to MSU. Freshmen and transfer students are admitted through the Office of Admissions.

PARALEGAL STUDIES CONCENTRATION OF THE JUSTICE STUDIES MAJOR:

Undergraduates who are changing majors must complete the Justice Studies Application, which can be downloaded from the Justice Studies webpages or located in hard copy outside of the Justice Studies Department main office in Dickson Hall Room 348. There is a required minimum overall Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.75. Student must maintain a 2.75 GPA overall, in the major and in the concentration.

PARALEGAL MINOR:

Students will be admitted if they have an overall GPA of 2.75 or better and have not completed the Application to Graduate through NEST. Student must maintain a 2.75 GPA overall and in the minor.

POST-BACCALAUREATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM ADMISSIONS:

Post-baccalaureate Certificate students in the Paralegal Studies Program are initially processed through The Graduate School. Students are accepted for matriculation into the certificate program through the Justice Studies Department. An interview with the Paralegal Studies Program Director, Nicole A. Fackina, is not required as part of the admissions process but may be requested.

Students must have an overall undergraduate GPA of 2.75 or better to gain full matriculation. Students can be conditionally admitted to the Paralegal Studies Program if their undergraduate GPA was below 2.75. They will be eligible for full matriculation if they obtain a 2.75 GPA in the first three (3) courses in the program. Student must then maintain a 2.75 GPA.

ADVISEMENT:

All students must see Professor Nicole A. Fackina, Program Director at least once each semester regarding their course of study and plans for program completion.

TRANSFER POLICIES & PROCEDURES:

Students transferring from other ABA accredited institutions may transfer up to a maximum of nine (9) credits toward the Program, if courses are determined by the Program Director to be applicable and grades meet Montclair State University's standards. Applicable courses are considered to be equivalent legal specialty courses if taken at American Bar Association (ABA) approved programs or a law-related course taken at any accredited institution. Accredited institutions are those whose credits are recognized and accepted by Montclair State University (MSU).

Legal Research and Writing must be taken at MSU. No legal specialty course transfer credits will be accepted from non-ABA approved institutions except for Criminal Law & Procedure and Business Law. Legal specialty courses from ABA approved institutions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis; equivalence is determined by the Program Director. Students may receive approval to apply transfer credits from accredited institutions to the Montclair State University Paralegal Studies Program in the following ways:

- a. Transfer credits for equivalent courses in which a student has received a grade of "C" or better from an approved degree-granting institution. Course content must be equivalent to the MSU course and the number of credits transferred into the Paralegal Studies Program can be no greater than would be allowed for the equivalent course at MSU.
- b. Credits which qualify through the National Guide to Education Credit for Training Programs of the American Council on Education;
- c. Credits for life experience received through the evaluation of a student's portfolio by Thomas Edison College may be transferable to MSU, subject to the limitations.

A student may not transfer more than nine (9) credits into the Montclair State University Paralegal Studies Concentration of the Justice Studies Major, Paralegal Studies Minor or Graduate Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program. None of the above statements, however, precludes a student from transferring a greater number of credits as free electives or general education credits at MSU. Any student desiring to apply credits to the Paralegal Studies Program in accordance with these guidelines must have his/her credits evaluated by the Program Director within six (6) months of entry into MSU. This time limitation is necessary for purposes of advisement and to avoid possible duplication of courses.

For all legal specialty and law-related course transfers, the student must provide the course description and syllabus to the program director for review and consideration. If the course is approved, the director will complete a Credit Adjustment Form for the student to sign. Accepted transfer coursework will be reflected on the student's degree audit.

The program offers courses in-person and online. It should be noted that students must take at least nine (9) semester credits of legal specialty courses through synchronous instruction.

CHALLENGE EXAM:

A student may only earn a maximum of three (3) credits by challenge examination. The only courses which can be challenged in the Montclair State University Paralegal Studies Program are:

PALG304 Real Estate Law	PALG305 Immigration Law
PALG322 Wills, Trust and Probate Law	PALG330 Family Law
PALG332 Personal Injury Law	PALG336 Corporations and Partnerships

PALG312 Research and Writing for Paralegals cannot be challenged.

In order to be able to take the challenge examination, a student must first present:

- (a) proof of substantial work experience in the field or
- (b) proof of completion of an equivalent course at an institution with a grade C+ or better

The student then pays a designated fee determined by the Bursar's Office. Once paid, the student will receive two (2) copies of a receipt for payment. One (1) receipt is provided to the Program Director who will provide the student with a copy of the course syllabus. The student will be given a cumulative examination based upon the course materials. Faculty members teach far more than what is in the text, and it is the responsibility of the student to have sufficient knowledge about the subject beyond what is in the text to have mastered that information on his/her own.

The student must earn a minimum grade of **3.0 (B)** on the examination to successfully challenge a course. Once a student has successfully challenged the course the Program Director will prepare an "Undergraduate Academic Program Adjustment Form" or "Substitution on Graduate Work Program Form" so that proper course credit is posted to the student's record. The student does not receive a grade for any course challenged in this manner. The student does not pay for the credits for the course, which is challenged.

A student may challenge a maximum of one (1) elective.

PROGRAM STANDARDS

Paralegal Studies students **cannot** enroll in any Paralegal Studies courses on a Pass/Fail or Audit basis. Students in the Justice Studies major with a Concentration in Paralegal Studies must obtain a minimum grade of C- in all four (4) core courses: JUST204, JUST205, JUST300 and JUST310 in order to be eligible for JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship. All Paralegal Studies Program students must obtain a minimum grade of C- in PALG312 Research & Writing for Paralegals in order to be eligible for either JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship (Concentration) or PALG497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship (Minor and Graduate Certificate).

A student may repeat a grade below a C-, according to University policy, as soon as possible. For undergraduate students, there is no special approval required to repeat a course in which a grade of "F" or "D" was received. **A course repeated at another institution does not substitute for a "D" or "F" grade in a course taken at Montclair State University.** For Graduate Certificate students, special approval from the Program Director is required to repeat a course.

When a course has been repeated, both the original and subsequent courses are included on the permanent record, but the credit is counted only once for purposes of graduation/program completion. The grade received in the repeated course becomes the official final grade for purposes of the GPA at Montclair State University.

A student may not receive credit within the Paralegal Studies Program for a legal specialty course taken more than six years prior to completion of the Program without the special permission of the Paralegal Studies Program Director. To receive such permission, the student must demonstrate proficiency in the area or special circumstances to waive this rule must be presented.

The program offers courses in-person and online. It should be noted that students must take at least nine (9) semester credits of legal specialty courses through synchronous instruction.

PARALEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM COURSE OF STUDY

COURSE OFFERINGS:

Students must begin their course of study with PALG210 Law and Litigation or JUST204 Justice, Courts and Legal Systems or JUST205 Perspectives on Justice Studies (JUST204 and JUST205 are for majors only) as these are pre-requisites for any 300 or 400 level legal specialty course (PALG). ***In order to take any course in the Paralegal Studies Program, a student must have successfully completed all prerequisites for the course and must be concurrently taking or have completed all co-requisites for the course.*** Students who do not meet prerequisites will be dropped from courses. Since all courses are not offered during all semesters, students must plan accordingly. Summer offerings in Paralegal Studies are limited and are subject to cancellation if the required enrollment numbers are not reached.

INTERNSHIP:

The Department of Justice Studies Applied Learning Specialist is responsible for processing all internship placements. All Justice Studies majors with a concentration in Paralegal Studies must complete JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship. Students in the Paralegal Minor and/or Graduate Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program in Paralegal Studies must complete PALG497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship. The Applied Learning Specialist will work with each student to obtain an internship placement. Internship applications are found on the Justice Studies Department website or outside the office of the Applied Learning Specialist, DI351. Note deadlines for the filing of internship applications.

Justice Studies Majors with a Concentration in Paralegal Studies (JUST497)

March 1 for fall semester
February 15 for summer semester
October 1 for the spring semester

Paralegal Minor and Post-BA Certificate in Paralegal Studies (PALG 497)

March 1 for the fall semester
PALG497 is not offered during the summer
October 1 for the spring semester

***STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO FILE EARLY.
THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THE DEADLINE DATES.***

JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship

All Justice Studies majors who have a concentration in Paralegal Studies must take JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship. This course is a three (3) credit course. Students, who are working full-time in their field of concentration, may be eligible for variable credit. Students must complete a minimum of 90 hours over the course of the semester for the three (3) credit course.

PALG497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship

All Paralegal Studies minors and post-baccalaureate certificate students must take PALG497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship. PALG497 is a three (3) credit course.

Students must be at the placement site for a minimum of eight (8) weeks. Students must complete a minimum of ninety (90) hours over the course of the semester at the internship site.

PURPOSE OF INTERNSHIP:

The purpose of the internship is to provide the student with hands-on paralegal experience in the legal environment, such as in a law firm, corporate legal department, government agency or the judiciary.

The Applied Learning Specialist with the student's cooperation, will find an internship placement, taking into consideration both geographic preferences and areas of particular student interest. A student may find his or her own placement, subject to the expressed approval of the Applied Learning Specialist. As part of the internship, students must also attend a seminar class (JUST497 for Justice Studies majors with a concentration in Paralegal Studies and PALG497 for Paralegal Studies minors and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Paralegal Studies students), which is the academic component and compliments the internship experience.

CRITERIA FOR ENROLLMENT:

In order to be eligible for *JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship*, students with a Justice Studies major and Paralegal Studies concentration **MUST HAVE**:

- a minimum GPA of 2.75 overall and in the major/concentration
- obtained a grade of C- or better in all five (5) required courses, (JUST204, JUST205, JUST300, JUST310, PALG312)
- completed six (6) electives in the concentration

In order to be eligible for *PALG497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship*, students in the Paralegal Studies minor or Post-Baccalaureate Certificate program **MUST HAVE**:

- a minimum GPA of 2.75 overall and in the program
- obtained a grade of C- or better in PALG312 Research & Writing for Paralegals
- completed PALG210, PALG312 and (2) PALG electives

In this way, the student is best prepared for the internship and the experience. No legal specialty and/or law-related course(s) can be completed after the Internship.

REGISTRATION:

All students eligible for JUST497 or PALG497 must submit an application by the prescribed deadline, as mentioned on page 7. Permission of the Applied Learning Specialist is mandatory and required to be able to enroll in any internship course. *No student will be cleared to register for the internship course unless the student's application is received, reviewed and meets all of the aforementioned criteria.*

WAIVER OF PALG497 PARALEGAL SEMINAR AND INTERNSHIP:

A Paralegal Studies minor with a major in Justice Studies (concentration in Criminal Justice (fka Justice Systems) or International Justice) is only required to take the JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship. The student will receive a credit adjustment for PALG497, provided the internship is related to Paralegal Studies. The student should contact the Program Director for this credit adjustment once he/she has registered for the internship class.

PROGRAM COMPLETION:

The Office of the Registrar at Montclair State University issues a certificate of completion to *post-baccalaureate students* who successfully complete the Paralegal Studies Certificate Program. No post-baccalaureate student may receive a program certificate without being admitted to the Certificate Program as a matriculated student by the Justice Studies Department.

The Department of Justice Studies issues a certificate of completion to *undergraduate students* who successfully complete the Paralegal Studies minor or the Justice Studies Major with a Paralegal Studies Concentration. The Office of the Registrar furnishes the Justice Studies Department with a list of graduates for the issuance of certificates within two (2) months of graduation.

All students are required to Apply for Graduation through NEST according to the designated deadlines prescribed by the Office of the Registrar:

Information on how to Apply for Graduation is available at:

<https://www.montclair.edu/red-hawk-central/managing-your-academic-life/apply-for-graduation/>

All students are required to fill out a "Paralegal Studies Program Evaluation Form" at the completion of JUST497 or PALG497. This is an in-depth evaluation of the Paralegal Studies Program. Students will also have an exit interview in conjunction with the capstone course. The form is provided to students during their seminar class. For students who waive the Internship, the Program Evaluation Form is obtained from the Applied Learning Specialist or the Program Director. Certificates will not be issued unless a Program Evaluation Form has been provided to the Program Director. The Program Evaluation Form must be completed prior to completion of the Program.

CAREER PLACEMENT:

The legal community recognizes the standards and quality of the Montclair State University's ABA Approved Paralegal Studies Program. This has led to excellent employment opportunities for program graduates, over 60% of our graduates are working as paralegals in the field or continuing onto law school. Graduates of the Montclair State University Paralegal Studies Program are employed by major law firms, agencies and organizations in the public and private sectors, financial institutions, and corporate legal departments throughout the state and region. Many have advanced to supervisory or administrative positions and provide an informal job network. Research materials are available through the College of Humanities and Social Service (CHSS) Career Services and the Justice Studies Department can assist Paralegal Studies students with their career exploration and job search. Assistance is available to students completing the program and to alumni.

In JUST497 and PALG497 paralegal students are provided with information on resume writing, interviewing techniques and how to carry out a paralegal job search. The preparation of a resume is a requirement for the course.

CHSS Career Services offers career counseling, online and employer-led workshops, career fairs, and on-campus recruitment for paralegal students. It also has online resources for paralegal students to assist in career placement, including: Hire A Red Hawk; FOCUS, an interactive, computerized guidance program; Optimal Resume is a tool which helps students through the process of creating a resume, offering suggestions on format and phrasing; College Central, an online job bank, posts full and part-time positions and internships; InterviewStream, a service which offers online video-based practice in interviewing skills. These services are free to all MSU students.

The Justice Studies Department, through the Program Director and the Applied Learning Specialist, provide job posting for both full-time and part-time positions outside the Justice Studies Department's main office in Dickson Hall Room 348 and on the Justice Studies and Paralegal Studies Listservs. Alumni are asked to provide their personal emails to be added to the Paralegal Graduate listserv. This listserv is used to distribute information including: job opportunities, events related to the program, information on the legal field, etc.

JUSTICE STUDIES MAJOR AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Montclair State University's undergraduate major in Justice Studies focuses on the policies, procedures, and institutions our society has and should put into practice to achieve justice for all. It approaches issues of justice for children and adults, in civil and criminal matters from an interdisciplinary vantage point that incorporates Psychology, Sociology, Law and other disciplines. Concentrations available to students in the Justice Studies major include Criminal Justice (fka Justice Systems), International Justice and Paralegal Studies. The Justice Studies major is designed to prepare students for rapidly evolving and emerging careers as paralegals, police officers, corrections and parole officials, youth workers, child advocates, and more. Professors present a multidisciplinary course of study to meet the new challenges. A major in Justice Studies provides:

1. a comprehensive grounding in the social, cultural, and political issues relevant to an understanding of the justice system in the United States;
2. the ability to apply theoretical perspectives to issues in Justice Studies;
3. an empirical approach to questions about Justice Studies;
4. an appreciation of ethical issues relating to Justice Studies;
5. competencies in knowledge, methods, and applications needed for careers and professional development in these areas;
6. field work experience in occupational settings such as child advocacy organizations, law offices, criminal justice agencies, private industry, and the public sector.

The thirty-nine (39) to forty (40) credit interdisciplinary major consists of a required fifteen (15) credit core emphasizing the theoretical and applied aspects which are essential background knowledge for all students in the major. The core is enhanced by a required twenty four (24) to twenty-five (25) credit applied concentration in three (3) specified areas:

Criminal Justice (fka Justice Systems), International Justice and Paralegal Studies.

The Core:

The interdisciplinary major consists of a 15-credit core requirement that emphasizes theory, research and practice; while examining the intersection of justice, law, policy and social change. The courses in the common core combine a liberal arts curriculum and field-specific concentration to offer a wider interdisciplinary course of study to meet new professional challenges in the justice system and legal field. Core courses are:

JUST204 Justice, Courts and Legal Systems
JUST205 Perspectives on Justice Studies
JUST300 Research Methods in Justice Studies
JUST310 Theoretical Issues in Justice Studies
JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship Experience

The Concentrations:

Each concentration, also interdisciplinary, allows students to study a particular field in depth. Students who declare the Justice Studies major may choose from the following concentrations:

Paralegal Studies Concentration, emphasizes both theory and practice in areas such as civil litigation, criminal law, real estate, family law, probate, corporate law and dispute resolution. It prepares students to work as paralegals in law firms, corporations and government agencies. This program is the only four-year undergraduate degree Paralegal Studies program in New Jersey approved by the American Bar Association. Paralegals are not lawyers and must work under the supervision of an attorney. Paralegals are not permitted to practice law. The minimum GPA requirement for this concentration is a 2.75 overall, in the major, and in the concentration.

Criminal Justice Concentration (fka Justice Systems), focuses on relationships among law, the justice system and society, with special attention to theories of crime, law enforcement, comparative justice systems and the administration of justice. It prepares students to work in criminal justice, security, agencies administering justice, social services and related settings. The minimum GPA requirement for this concentration is a 2.00 overall, in the major, and in the concentration.

International Justice Concentration, examines issues of criminal justice, social justice, and the law that transcends national borders. The concentration covers transnational and global justice topics including human rights, terrorism, cybercrime, transnational crime, immigration, genocide, war and human trafficking. It prepares students for careers in law enforcement, international or transnational law, human rights advocacy, government, defense and security. The program is the only four-year undergraduate degree program of its kind in the State of New Jersey. The minimum GPA requirement for this concentration is a 3.00 overall, in the major, and in the concentration.

For students who are interested in a *double concentration* please note:

1. *Paralegal Studies (JUPS) and Criminal Justice (fka Justice Systems) (JUJS)*
In order to maximize course selection, it is recommended that students take the following: PALG301 Criminal Law and Procedure, PALG317 Evidence, PALG440 Criminal Trial Preparation, JUST101 Criminology and JUST102 Introduction to Criminal Justice, as they can count for both concentrations.
2. *Paralegal Studies (JUPS) and International Justice (JUIN)*
In order to maximize course selection, it is recommended that students take the following: PALG305 Immigration Law counts for both concentrations. JUST397 Selected Topics in International Justice can count if the topic is appropriate.

SERVICES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

Sprague Library's excellent collection of legal materials far surpasses American Bar Association requirements for Paralegal Programs. These materials are an essential part of PALG312 Research and Writing for Paralegals, and other specialty course offerings. Sprague Library also serves as an Official Federal Depository for Government Documents, which provides additional research opportunities not available at many other institutions.

Computer Technology forms an integral part of the Paralegal Studies Program. Instruction in computer-assisted legal research is provided to students through the Westlaw Next subscription. As a result, Montclair State Paralegal Studies Program graduates gain the competitive edge in the growing area of legal technology. Additionally, members of the Justice Studies faculty have designed materials to teach computer concepts and applications for the legal specialty and legal technology courses. Students are also prepared for the law office of the twenty-first century through hands-on experience in a fully equipped computer classroom.

Dr. Regina Judge is the Technology Coordinator in Justice Studies.

ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

Lambda Epsilon Chi (LEX) is the National Paralegal Honor Society. Montclair State University's Chapter inducts paralegal students each spring who satisfy the following criteria: minimum overall GPA of 3.25, minimum paralegal studies GPA of 3.5, completion of at least five (5) legal specialty courses and a written statement.

Professor Nicole A. Fackina is the advisor to Lambda Epsilon Chi (LEX).

Justice Studies Club (JSC) is an organization whose purpose is to educate the campus about issues and careers in the field of criminal justice, law and social justice. The focus is to share views, educate students on career options, and increase awareness on issues related to justice. The JSC also organizes community service events and creates and co-sponsors events with the Justice Studies Department and other departments on campus.

Professor Nicole A. Fackina is the advisor to the Justice Studies Club (JSC).

COURSE OF STUDY
PARALEGAL STUDIES MINOR and POST BA CERTIFICATE
(Effective Fall 2016)

Group I. Required Courses: (9 credits)

- PALG210 Law and Litigation
- PALG312 Research and Writing for Paralegals
- PALG 497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship

Group II. Choose four (4) courses from the following groups: (12 credits)

A. Students must include at least one (1) legal specialty course from the following:

- PALG304 Real Estate Law
- PALG306 Contract Law
- PALG310 Fundamentals of Patent, Trademark and Copyright Law
- PALG322 Wills, Trusts and Probate Law
- PALG330 Family Law
- PALG336 Corporations and Partnerships

B. Students may include up to three (3) legal specialty courses from the following:

- PALG301 Criminal Law and Procedure
- PALG305 Immigration Law
- PALG308 Negotiation, Mediation and Arbitration
- PALG317 Evidence
- PALG318 Computer-Assisted Research in the Legal Environment
- PALG320 Bankruptcy Law
- PALG331 Administrative Law and Procedure
- PALG332 Personal Injury Law
- PALG339 Computer Applications in the Legal Environment
- PALG378 Employment Law
- PALG390 Independent Study in Paralegal Studies
- PALG398 Selected Topics in Paralegal Studies
- PALG411 Advanced Patent, Trademark and Copyright Law
- PALG412 Consumer Law
- PALG413 Elder Law
- PALG420 Civil Trial Preparation
- PALG437 Entertainment Law
- PALG438 Trademark Law
- PALG440 Criminal Trial Preparation
- PALG450 Law Office Management and Technology

C. Students may include only one (1) law-related course from the following group:

- PALG316 Skills for Bilingual Legal Personnel (fluency in Spanish required)
- JUST351 Juries and Justice
- JUST360 Rights, Liberties, and American Justice
- POLS321 Law in Society: Criminal Law (instead of PALG 301)

TOTAL SEMESTER HOURS FOR THE PROGRAM: 21 CREDITS

**Paralegal Studies Minor and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program
Sample Recommended Sequences of Time Frames for Program Completion**

PROGRAM COMPLETION IN TWO (2) SEMESTERS (FOR POST-BA ONLY)

First semester

PALG210 Law and Litigation
PALG312 Research and Writing for Paralegals
Two (2) Legal Specialty courses**

Second semester

Two (2) Legal Specialty courses**
PALG497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship

PROGRAM COMPLETION IN THREE (3) SEMESTERS

First semester

PALG210 Law and Litigation
One (1) Legal Specialty Course**

Second semester

PALG312 Research and Writing for Paralegals
Two (2) Legal Specialty Courses**

Third semester

PALG497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship
One (1) Legal Specialty Course**

PROGRAM COMPLETION IN FOUR SEMESTERS

First semester

PALG210 Law and Litigation

Second semester

PALG312 Research and Writing for Paralegals
One (1) Legal Specialty Course**

Third semester

Two (2) Legal Specialty Courses**

Fourth semester

One (1) Legal Specialty Courses**
PALG497 Paralegal Seminar and Internship

**Note: Legal Specialty courses have different prerequisites. Students taking Legal Specialty courses early in their course of study should select courses that do not have prerequisites or plan accordingly.

JUSTICE STUDIES MAJOR
PARALEGAL STUDIES CONCENTRATION
(Effective Fall 2016)

REQUIRED COMMON CORE: 15 CREDITS

JUST204 Justice, Courts and Legal Systems	3
JUST205 Perspectives on Justice Studies	3
JUST300 Research Methods in Justice Studies	3
JUST310 Theoretical Issues in Justice Studies	3
JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship	3

CONCENTRATION: 24 CREDITS

Additional Required Courses: *(9 credits)*

PALG210 Law and Litigation	3
PALG312 Research and Writing for Paralegals	3
PALG339 Computer Applications in the Legal Environment	3

Choice of five (5) courses from the following groups: *(15 credits)*

A. Students must include at least one (1) course from this group:

PALG304 Real Estate Law	3
PALG306 Contract Law	3
PALG310 Funds, of Patent, Trademark and Copyright Law	3
PALG322 Wills, Trusts, and Probate Law	3
PALG330 Family Law	3
PALG336 Corporations and Partnerships	3

B. Students may include up to three (3) courses from this group:

PALG301 Criminal Law & Procedure	3
PALG305 Immigration Law	3
PALG308 Negotiation, Mediation and Arbitration	3
PALG317 Evidence	3
PALG318 Computer Assisted Research in the Legal Environment	3
PALG320 Bankruptcy Law	3
PALG331 Administrative Law and Procedure	3
PALG332 Personal Injury Law	3
PALG378 Employment Law	3
PALG398 Selected Topics in Paralegal Studies	3
PALG411 Advanced Patent, Trademark, & Copyright Law	3
PALG412 Consumer Law	3
PALG413 Elder Law	3
PALG420 Civil Trial Preparation	3

PALG437 Entertainment Law	3
PALG438 Trademark Law	3
PALG440 Criminal Trial Preparation	3
PALG450 Law Office Management and Technology	3

C. Students may include up to two (2) courses from this group:

JUST101 Criminology	3
JUST102 Introduction to Criminal Justice	3
JUST314 Environmental Justice	3
JUST315 Restorative Justice (precludes PALG308)	3
JUST317 Race & the US Legal System	3
JUST319 Hate Crimes	3
JUST321 White Collar Crime	3
JUST322 Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice	3
JUST326 Death Penalty Perspectives	3
JUST351 Juries and Justice	3
JUST360 Rights, Liberties, and American Justice	3
JUST398 Selected Topics in Justice Studies	3
JUST496 Peer Mentoring for Justice Studies	3
PALG316 Skills for Bilingual Legal Personnel	3
PSYC330 Forensic Psychology	3

**TOTAL CREDITS FOR JUSTICE STUDIES MAJOR WITH A CONCENTRATION IN
PARALEGAL STUDIES: 39 CREDITS**

JUSTICE STUDIES MAJOR – PARALEGAL STUDIES CONCENTRATION

Recommended Four-Year Plan (Fall 2020)

This guide is designed to provide a general outline for students to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree within a four-year period. Students must meet with their designated Academic Advisor every semester to develop an individualized plan for program completion. *This does not include any modifications that may be needed as a result of placement testing, ie: Language, Mathematics and Writing.*

FIRST YEAR

Fall Semester

- ___ (A) New Student Seminar (1.0)
- ___ (C1) Writing (3.0)
- ___ (D) Fine and Performing Arts (3.0)
- ___ (F2) Philosophical & Religious (3.0)
- ___ (K3) Social Science - JUST101 (3.0)
- ___ JUST102 (3.0)

TOTAL = 16.0 credits

Spring Semester

- ___ (G) Computer Science (3.0)
- ___ (C2) Literature (3.0)
- ___ (K1) American/European History (3.0)
- ___ (K2) Global Cultural - JUST103 (3.0)
- ___ JUST204 (3.0)

TOTAL = 15.0 credits

SECOND YEAR

Fall Semester

- ___ World Language (3.0)
- ___ (H) Mathematics (3.0)
- ___ (F1) Great Works & Their Influences (3.0)
- ___ PALG210 (3.0)
- ___ JUST205 (3.0)

TOTAL = 15.0 credits

Spring Semester

- ___ World Language (3.0)
- ___ World Cultures (3.0)
- ___ (C3) Communication (3.0)
- ___ PALG312 (3.0)
- ___ PALG Elective (3.0)

TOTAL = 15.0 credits

THIRD YEAR

Fall Semester

- ___ JUST300 or JUST310 (3.0)
- ___ PALG339 or PALG Elective (3.0)
- ___ PALG Elective (3.0)
- ___ (I) Natural Science Lab (4.0)
- ___ (L) Interdisciplinary Studies (3.0.)

TOTAL = 16.0 credits

Spring Semester

- ___ JUST300 or JUST310 (3.0)
- ___ PALG339 or PALG Elective (3.0)
- ___ PALG Elective (3.0)
- ___ Free Elective / Minor Elective (3.0)
- ___ Free Elective / Minor Elective (3.0)

TOTAL = 15.0 credits

FOURTH YEAR

Fall Semester

- ___ PALG Elective (3.0)
- ___ Free Elective / Minor Elective (3.0)
- ___ Free Elective / Minor Elective (3.0)
- ___ Free Elective / Minor Elective (3.0)
- ___ Free Elective (3.0)

TOTAL = 15.0 credits

TOTAL REQUIRED = 120.0

Spring Semester

- ___ JUST497 (3.0)
- ___ (J) Physical Education (1.0)
- ___ Free Elective (3.0)
- ___ Free Elective (3.0)
- ___ Free Elective (3.0)

TOTAL = 13.0 credits

JUSTICE STUDIES MAJOR – PARALEGAL STUDIES CONCENTRATION
Recommended Two-year Plan (Fall 2020)

This recommended two-year plan is provided as an outline for students to follow in order to complete their degree requirements within two years. This plan is a *recommendation* and students should only use it in consultation with their Academic Advisor.

Students should be aware that this plan assumes that no developmental or pre-requisite courses are required. If developmental or pre-requisite courses are needed, students may have additional requirements to fulfill, which do not appear on the two-year plan.

- This plan assumes the student has earned their Associates degree prior to attending Montclair State University.
- JUST497 Senior Seminar and Internship requires that ALL students complete JUST204, JUST205, JUST300, JUST310 with a C- or better.
- PALG 312 Research and Writing for Paralegals must be completed with C- or better at MSU.
- JUST 497 Senior Seminar and Internship is by application ONLY the semester prior to registration. There are no exceptions to the deadlines which are posted on the Justice Studies webpages and sent out on the listserv.

FIRST YEAR AT MSU

Fall Semester

___ JUST204 (3.0)
___ JUST205 (3.0)
___ PALG210 (3.0)
___ PALG Elective (3.0)
___ World Language (3.0)
TOTAL = 15.0 credits

Spring Semester

___ JUST300 or JUST310 (3.0)
___ PALG312 (3.0)
___ PALG Elective (3.0)
___ World Cultures (3.0)
___ World Language (3.0.)
TOTAL = 15.0 credits

SECOND YEAR AT MSU

Fall Semester

___ JUST300 or JUST310 (3.0)
___ PALG339 (3.0)
___ PALG Elective (3.0)
___ PALG Elective (3.0)
___ Free Elective (3.0)
TOTAL = 15.0 credits

Spring Semester

___ JUST497 (3.0)
___ PALG Elective (3.0)
___ Free Elective (3.0)
___ Free Elective (3.0)
___ Free Elective (3.0)
TOTAL = 15.0 credits

TOTAL COMPLETED AT MSU = 60.0
TOTAL COMPLETED AT PREVIOUS INSTITUTION = 60.0
TOTAL REQUIRED TO GRADUATE = 120.0

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. Are career opportunities promising in the paralegal field?

The U.S. Department of Labor's survey lists the paralegal profession as one of the fastest growing in the country for the next decade. We believe that graduates of the American Bar Association approved Paralegal Studies Programs, such as the Montclair State University Program, are best prepared for the competitive job market. 60% of our graduates go on to gain employment or law school within the first 6 months of program completion.

2. Do I have to have a Bachelor's Degree to enter into the Paralegal Studies Program at Montclair State University?

No. A student can enter the Paralegal Studies Program at Montclair State University as an undergraduate taking either a Major in Justice Studies with Paralegal Studies Concentration or a Minor in Paralegal Studies. A student holding a Bachelor's Degree would enter the program as a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate student. A certificate is issued by the Justice Studies Department to undergraduate students who have successfully completed the Paralegal Studies Concentration or Minor upon their graduation from the University. Matriculated post-baccalaureate students will be issued a certificate by the Office of the Registrar upon satisfactory completion of the Paralegal Studies Program.

3. Why is it necessary for me to have a Bachelor's Degree when I complete the Paralegal Studies Program?

Market surveys plus the experience of our own graduates, lead to the conclusion that a Bachelor's Degree plus a Certificate of Completion in Paralegal Studies from a program approved by the American Bar Association provide the best career preparation for someone who wants to become a working paralegal.

4. How long is the Paralegal Studies Program?

Paralegal Studies Minor and Certificate Students must complete twenty-one (21) credits or seven (7) courses within the Program. The Paralegal Studies Concentration in the Justice Studies Major is twenty-four (24) credits within the thirty-nine (39) credit Justice Studies Major. The length of time necessary to complete the Paralegal Studies Program will depend upon the amount of time that a student is able to commit to his or her studies. A minimum of ten (10) months is required to complete the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program. However, it is recommended that the course of study be taken over three (3) semesters.

5. *When are courses offered?*

Courses are offered in the Spring and Fall semesters. There are sometimes limited options in the Summer and Winter sessions. There are day and evening offerings and sometime Saturdays. However, not all courses are offered every semester. Students must check the NEST for course offerings each semester. Students should also meet with their Academic Advisor every semester.

6. *Can I take the course of study at my own pace?*

Yes, a student may even take one (1) course per semester. However, courses must be taken in the prescribed sequence as contained in this handbook.

7. *Is there a minimum grade point average requirement?*

Yes. There is a 2.75 GPA requirement. Students must maintain a 2.75 overall and in the paralegal studies program in order to graduate and obtain the certificate of completion.

8. *Can I just take one particular course at Montclair State, even though I do not have the correct pre-requisites?*

No. All students must follow the prescribed sequence in taking course work. A student who meets the pre-requisites for a course can take a course as (1) an undergraduate at Montclair State University; (2) a Post-Baccalaureate student at Montclair State University; or (3) a visiting student from another institution. However, a visiting student is not eligible to receive a program certificate.

9. *How long will it take me to receive a Certificate of Program Completion if I do not have a Bachelor's Degree?*

A certificate cannot be issued until you graduate with a Bachelor's Degree. However, you can enroll as an undergraduate and complete your Paralegal Studies courses prior to receiving your degree.

10. *Does prior experience in the legal field or course work at another institution count toward the program?*

No prior experience is required. With departmental permission, a student enrolled in the Justice Studies major may receive a maximum of nine (9) credits for courses from another American Bar Association Approved institution. Minors and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate students, may receive a total of three (3) credits toward the Montclair State Paralegal Studies Program by challenge examination and/or advanced standing in appropriate courses.

11. How do I apply?

If you want to enroll at Montclair State University as an undergraduate or graduate student you can visit the following websites for additional information and online applications:

Montclair State University Homepage:

www.montclair.edu

Undergraduate Admissions webpage:

<http://www.montclair.edu/admissions/>

Graduate School webpage:

<https://www.montclair.edu/graduate/>

12. What are the differences between Paralegal Studies and Pre-Law Studies?

The Pre-Law Studies Program is an interdisciplinary selection of courses designed to develop the reasoning, writing, analytical and critical thinking skills required for law school and for a career as an attorney. These kinds of skills are also applicable to any number of careers. There is no single major in particular that is especially recommended for Pre-Law students. You can minor in Pre-Law and major in Justice Studies with a Concentration in Paralegal Studies.

The Paralegal Studies Program is recommended for the following individuals: students who are interested in a career as a paralegal; students who may want to attend law school but would like to prepare themselves for an alternative career in the legal field in case they decide not to attend law school; students who would like to focus on applied and practical aspects of law; students who would like to support themselves in a law-related career while attending law school; and students who are unsure of their interest in the legal field and would like to test their interest through the Paralegal Studies Program.

13. Am I a certified paralegal once I obtain my certificate?

No. A person who has successfully completed a paralegal education and training program may receive a certificate of completion. Receiving this certificate designates the conclusion of the educational process. It does not mean that this person is “certified” as a paralegal.

A certified paralegal is a paralegal that has completed a certification exam and has met specific requirements. The requirements, in general, include:

- graduation from an accredited paralegal program
- acceptable performance on a qualifying examination or series of examinations
- completion of a given amount of work experience

There are several organizations that offer certification exams.

- The National Association of Paralegals (NALA) awards the designation Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) or Certified Paralegal (CP) to persons who have met its requirements, which include passing a competency exam. Advanced specialty certification (CLAS) exams are also administered by NALA, as are a few state-specific advanced competency examinations. www.nala.org

- The National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) awards the designation Registered Paralegal (RP) to persons who have met its requirements for education and work experience and who have passed the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam (PACE). www.paralegals.org
- NALS, the Association for Legal Professionals, offers three unique paralegal certifications of varying levels. www.nals.org

The American Bar Association (ABA) does not certify paralegals. Paralegals may not represent themselves as "ABA-certified paralegals," because the ABA's approval applies to the paralegal education program rather than to the individual paralegal. Montclair State University's Paralegal Studies Program is ABA approved.