

Legal Assistant

Associate in Applied Science in Legal Occupations

Program Description:

The Legal Assistant program was planned with assistance from the West Virginia State Bar and a program advisory committee consisting of attorneys and legal assistants. The program has been granted approval by the American Bar Association.

The program offers the Associate in Applied Science degree graduates the opportunity to pursue a baccalaureate degree in Legal Studies from Marshall University's College of Liberal Arts, Criminal Justice Department.

Upon completion of the Legal Assistant Associate in Applied Science Degree, the graduate will be able to:

- Exhibit knowledge of legal terminology to communicate with attorneys, peers, managers, and other professionals
- Develop specific skills in those areas of law practice in which legal assistants customarily function
- Assist attorneys with client interviews, legal research, preparation of documents and pleadings for trial and other professional activities normally undertaken by paraprofessionals to assist with the practice of law
- Exhibit knowledge of appropriate ethical behavior for legal assistants

A legal assistant is a highly skilled paraprofessional with specialized training who works under the direct supervision of an attorney. Job responsibilities require knowledge of law and legal procedures in rendering direct assistance to lawyers and clients. Tasks may include interviewing, case investigation, the preparation of pleadings, and legal research. The increasing complexities of the legal assistant's work environment have also created the need for individuals who possess skills including interpersonal, communication, analytical, decision-making, customer service, and computer skills. Legal Assistants cannot provide legal services directly to the public except as permitted by law.

Career Outlook:

Employment of paralegals and legal assistants is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2012. Some employment growth stems from law rooms and other employers with legal staff hiring paralegals/legal assistants to lower the cost and increase the availability and efficiency of legal services. The job openings for paralegals in the future will be new jobs created by employment growth, and additional job openings will arise as people leave the occupation. Despite projections of fast employment growth, competition for jobs should continue as many people seek to go into this profession; however, highly skilled, formally trained paralegals have excellent employment potential.

Salary Forecast:

Earnings of paralegals and legal assistants vary greatly. Salaries depend on education, training, experience, type and size of employer, and geographic location of the job. In general, paralegals who work for large law firms or in large metropolitan areas earn more than those who work for smaller firms or in less populated regions. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of paralegals in 2004 were as follows:

Federal government	\$59,370
Legal services	\$37,870
Local government	\$38,260
State government	\$34,910

Admission Requirements:

The college adheres to an open admissions policy meaning applicants with a high school diploma or a GED are eligible for admission. Applicants with neither a high school diploma nor a GED may be admitted on a conditional basis.

Major Code - CL10

FIRST YEAR^{1,13}	
First Semester AT 136 Introduction to Word Processing (EDGE) 3 ENL 111 Written Communication 3 LAS 101 General Law I 3 LAS 103 Legal Assisting 3 MAT 150 Applied Professional Mathematics 3 TOTAL CREDITS 15	Second Semester COM 112 Oral Communication 3 EC 102 Basic Economics 3 LAS 102 General Law II ² 3 LAS 213 Comp. Apps. to Law ³ 3 SCI 201 Integrated Science: Health, Law and Environment ⁴ 4 TOTAL CREDITS 16
SECOND YEAR	
Third Semester ENL 115 Written Communication II ⁵ 3 LAS 209 Adm. Agency Adv. 3 LAS 211 Legal Research and Writing I ⁶ 3 LAS 235 Civil Litigation ⁶ 3 LAS Elective ⁷ 3 Social Science Elective ⁸ 3 TOTAL CREDITS 18	Fourth Semester ENL 231 Technical Report Writing ⁹ 3 FN 248 Real Estate Law 3 LAS 212 Legal Research and Writing II ¹⁰ 3 LAS 290 Internship ¹¹ 3 LAS Elective ^{7 or 12} 3 TOTAL CREDITS 15
HOURS REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION: 64	

Employment Opportunities:

- Legal assistant/paralegal for law firms
- Legal assistant/paralegal for a business entity's legal department
- Legal assistant/paralegal for governmental agencies
- Administrator for a nonprofit legal services corporation
- Trust administrative assistant
- Editor of a legal publishing company
- Criminal justice occupations on corrections and law enforcement

Earn A Degree Graduate Early (EDGE):

This program provides students the opportunity to receive credit for their high school EDGE courses.

Contact Information:

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1. The College of Liberal Arts, Marshall University, Criminal Justice Program permits students possessing an Associate Degree in Legal Assistant from Mountwest Community and Technical College to apply designated credits toward a baccalaureate degree in Criminal Justice/Legal Studies. Students interested in pursuing the Legal Assistant/Legal Studies Degree Programs should contact the Chair of the Criminal Justice Department for information concerning the requirements of the College of Liberal Arts to assure timely completion.
2. LAS 102 has a prerequisite of LAS 101.
3. LAS 213 has a prerequisite of AAT 136.
4. SCI 201 has a prerequisite of MAT 150.
5. ENL 115 has a prerequisite of ENL 111 or COM 111.
6. LAS 211 and LAS 235 have a prerequisite of LAS 101.
7. Recommended Legal Assistant Electives: LAS 110, LAS 225, LAS 231, LAS 240, LAS 244, LAS 248, LAS 250 or LAS 290.
8. Recommended Social Science Electives: SS 201, SS 210, or SS 215.
9. ENL 231 has a prerequisite of ENL 111 or COM 111.
10. LAS 212 has a prerequisite of LAS 211.
11. LAS 290 has a prerequisite of permission by program coordinator.
12. Students pursuing the 4-year degree in Criminal Justice Legal Studies Track must take CJ 200.
13. Students are required to make a "C" or better in each LAS course before graduating from the program.