

# Paralegal

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Upon completion, graduates will have a broad understanding of legal concepts, values and principles of the Canadian legal system, combined with specific knowledge about several major areas of law. Paralegals prepare legal documents, maintain records and files and conduct research to assist lawyers or other professionals, so students will learn the proper procedures and terminology used in the legal system and develop their research, problem solving and communication skills. The program emphasizes the rules of proper professional practice including the rules of ethics.

## CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Paralegals enjoy one of the highest employment rates and one of the highest average earnings in Canada for those pursuing paraprofessional occupations. This program, in conjunction with strong interpersonal and communication skills and a professional and self-confident attitude, prepares the graduate for a career in either a large legal organization or a small legal practice.

## PREREQUISITES

1. Student has Grade 12 or equivalent or meets criteria for Mature Student Status.
2. Mature students must be 19 years of age, provide a Letter of Intent, provide most recent educational transcript, and pass a qualifying test.
3. The approved qualifying test for this program is the Wonderlic test. A passing score for this program is 15.
4. Student must provide a clear Criminal Record Check.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A student must obtain an overall grade, in each module of at least 70% in order to graduate and receive a diploma. A student must complete all requirements of the Student Success Strategies, Career Planning and Preparation

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modules, the Field Placement requirements, as well as meeting the attendance requirements.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Course	Hours
Student Success Strategies	20
Digital Literacy for Professionals	40
Software Lab - Word Processing	40
Software Lab - Spreadsheets	40
Software Lab - Presentations	40
Software Lab - Database Management	40
Writing for Comprehension	40
Business Math	40
Business Communications	80
Document Formatting	80
Office Skills	80
Bookkeeping Fundamentals	40
Business Law	80
Law Office Procedures, Management and Accounting	80
Legal Ethics	20
Interviewing, Researching and Writing	80
IT in the Law Office	20
Civil Litigation	100
Family Law	100
Corporate & Commercial Law	40
Image Development	20
Wills and Estates	80
Real Estate Law	100
Criminal Law and Summary Conviction Procedure	40
Career Planning & Preparation - Level I	20
Career Planning & Preparation - Level II	20
Field Placement - Paralegal	8 weeks
<b>TOTAL WEEKS</b>	<b>77</b>

## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

### **Student Success Strategies**

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In this orientation module, emphasis is placed on thinking about achieving success from day one. This module stresses the importance of developing non-technical skills to enhance personal, academic, and career success. This includes understanding learning styles and honing practical study skills, such as memory, reading, note-and test-taking techniques. Personal exercises will focus on teamwork, decision making and problem-solving skills, setting SMART goals and maintaining a positive attitude; techniques for managing change, stress and conflict will also be explored.

### **Digital Literacy for Professionals**

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This course introduces students to the fundamental concepts and principles of learning and working in a digital environment. This course will cover the following elements: using devices and handling information, creating and editing information, communicating and collaborating, and being safe and responsible online.

### **Software Lab: Word Processing**

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This software lab module consists of online training and assessment in Microsoft Word and builds on the skills introduced in Digital Literacy for Professionals. Students learn a comprehensive set of skills, with coverage including formatting text for layout and appearance, formatting document sections, using styles, working with header/footer content, inserting and formatting tables, graphics and pictures, working with templates and themes, using advanced editing features, and working with mailing tools.

### **Software Lab: Spreadsheets**

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This software lab module consists of online training and assessment in Microsoft Excel. Students learn a comprehensive set of skills, with coverage including creating, formatting and printing worksheets, creating simple and advanced formulas, using mathematical, logical, statistical and financial functions, creating and modifying charts and using data tools.

### **Software Lab: Presentations**

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This software lab module consists of online training and assessment in Microsoft PowerPoint. Students learn a comprehensive set of skills centered on the creation of attractive, professional-looking presentations. Students learn how to effectively use and format animations, transitions, pictures, audio, video, charts and tables, as well incorporate speaker notes and annotations into their presentations.

### **Software Lab: Database Management**

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This software lab module consists of online training and assessment in Microsoft Access. Students learn a comprehensive set of skills, including creating and modifying database tables, defining table relationships, sorting data, creating simple and advanced queries, and creating and formatting forms and reports.

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### **Writing for Comprehension**

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In this course, students will be learning how to professionally write business communication within a standard office setting. This will include writing letters, memos, emails, and social media posts. The goal of this course is to demonstrate how it is necessary to be clear, concise and complete in our writing to ensure to get our messages across. Gone are the days of long-winded verbiage and excessively professional, legal-like tones. It is important that we focus on the details needed and the words we use to be simple but still remaining business based. There will be a section involving social media and its usage within the business environment.

### **Business Math**

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Through lectures, demonstrations, textbook exercises, and MathXL, classroom labs, this course teaches students the skills and knowledge necessary to apply basic business math (whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percentages) when working with percentage formulas, graphs and statistics that are present in everyday business transactions.

### **Business Communications**

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In this course, students will be continuing to learn how to communicate professionally within a business environment. The two major goals for this course are (1) to learn proper, grammatically correct writing and (2) preparing & giving professional presentations, whether prepared prior or given impromptu. As well, attention to editing documents will be given through practical textbook and homework assignments. A portion of the course will also focus on spelling accuracy.

### **Document Formatting**

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During this course, students will learn the proper formatting of various standard business documents for the office setting. They will learn correct formatting, spacing and design to ensure what they create is an effective business tool. Students will also work on improving their keyboarding speed and accuracy on a daily basis and take 3 timings daily to track progress.

### **Office Skills**

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During this course, students will be engaging in activities and scenarios to provide them with the real-life tools needed daily within the office environment. Focus on the daily tasks, managing workload, and handling conflict allows students to gain a working knowledge of what the norms are for most settings. The course will end with a final project whereby they will participate in a simulated day in the office over a two-day period.

### **Bookkeeping Fundamentals**

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This module introduces fundamental bookkeeping principles and practices for small businesses. Students will study the accounting equation, account categories, the debit and credit system of bookkeeping, and correcting entries. Regular business transactions and adjusting journal entries are recorded, and the trial balance and basic financial statements are prepared. Students will be evaluated through a variety of assignments, projects, quizzes and exams in addition to the participation throughout the course.

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### **Business Law**

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A comprehensive survey course of Canadian law from a business perspective is provided through a blended lecture and a case study approach. Emphasis is on the application of the law to practical business situations. Topics for discussion include the Canadian legal system, torts affecting property, torts affecting a person, unintentional negligence, the formation of contracts, factors affecting the contractual relationship, and factors that end the contractual relationship. Other topics include the sale of goods and consumer protection, statutes concerning securing debt, and bankruptcy, agency, partnership, and incorporation, regulations pertaining to personal and real property, and legislation regarding copyright, patents, trade-marks, and industrial design.

### **Law Office Procedures, Management and Accounting**

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This module introduces the student to the law-office environment and the day-to-day procedures affecting all support staff. Current methods and software tools for document creation, editing, storage, and management in the law office environment are covered, with an emphasis on the development of practical skills necessary to be a competent legal administrative assistant. Topics include the role of the lawyer and the role of legal support staff, the principle of confidentiality, trust versus general accounting, the tickler (reminder) system, file management, time sheets, telephone techniques, managing accounts, legal correspondence, legal letter composition and punctuation, memoranda and legal instruments. Students will be evaluated through a variety of assignments, projects, quizzes and exams in addition to their participation throughout the course.

### **Legal Ethics**

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This course explores the Professional Code of Conduct and the Uniform Trust Account Rules required for legal professionals practicing in the field. Students will also study ethics involved in client confidentiality as well as the importance of maintenance of the trust account.

### **Interviewing, Researching and Writing**

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Topics include types and sources of research materials, computer assisted research, and preparation of legal memoranda. Instruction is provided on techniques used to locate statutes, regulations and cases, citation of cases and statutory authorities. General rules of style in legal writing are reviewed. Students will be given a legal research topic on which they will produce a memorandum. Additionally, students will practice interviewing and fact gathering, as well as the principles of negotiation. Students are also given as a class project the research and writing of a settlement conference brief in a family law file. Students are afforded the opportunity to role play at a mock settlement conference that of the client, legal counsel, and settlement conference Judge.

### **IT in the Law Office**

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Topics include an overview of software programs currently available in the legal marketplace and in common usage in law office environments. Particular emphasis will be placed on software tools designed to work with the creation, management and conversion of portable document format [PDF] files and the use of cutting-edge voice dictation/transcription software. Students will be evaluated through a variety of assignments, quizzes and exams in addition to their participation throughout the course.

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### **Civil Litigation**

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In this module students are introduced to the court system within the province. Subjects include an emphasis on the civil courts and litigation as a process for dispute resolution, at both the small claims and senior trial court levels, including the role and interaction of the rules of court and court forms. Students are also introduced to the emerging fields of ADR [Alternate Dispute Resolution Mechanisms] such as mediation and arbitration as alternatives to litigation. The module takes a wholistic approach to the processing of a civil action from the originating process to the bill of costs, as well as review of pre-trial procedural steps (i.e., motions, discovery of documents, oral examination for discovery, and use of court-based settlement mechanisms such as pre-trial settlement conferences. The module is focused on the role of support staff in document production and the management of various stages and steps in the civil litigation process. Students will be evaluated through a variety of assignments, projects, quizzes and exams in addition to their participation throughout the course.

### **Family Law**

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This module offers an overview of statutory provisions, including the Divorce Act, and Provincial legislation governing the resolution of family law matters for unmarried persons, as well as an introduction to legislation governing marital property division. Students are introduced to the function and purpose of drafting, preparation, and execution of domestic contracts in the consensual resolution of family law matters. Students are tasked with the preparation of the required documents to commence a divorce proceeding, and documents required to initiate family law proceedings under provincial legislation. Specific topics include court jurisdictions in family law matters, contested and uncontested family law proceedings.

### **Corporate and Commercial Law**

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This module introduces the various forms of business ownership, including proprietorships and partnerships, franchises, licenses, and joint ventures, along with the steps required to incorporate, including incorporation and organization procedures, maintenance of the minute book and post incorporation matters, corporate structure and corporate documentation. Additionally, basic legal procedures and documents associated with buying and selling business assets, commercial transactions and instruments, along with the registration of a security interest in personal property, including the Personal Property Security Act, are discussed.

### **Image Development**

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This module teaches the student how to develop and manage a professional image. Topics include appearance-visual and verbal, interpersonal interaction, business etiquette, and networking skills. At the end of the module, students will have an appreciation and understanding of the importance of a professional image in the business environment.

### **Wills and Estates**

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This module provides an overview of the legal principles and practices governing a typical solicitor's practice including the making of a will, and enduring powers of attorney for health care and/or asset management. Students will learn the terminology used in wills and powers of attorney, the steps in preparation and execution of wills and powers of attorney. Other aspects of estate planning considered include the law of intestacy, and the role of codicils, and holograph wills. Students are introduced conceptually and legislatively to the process and purpose of a grant of letters probate and administration, as well as the purpose and function of legislation governing the legal validity of Wills, dependent relief claims against estates, and the governing legislation dealing with intestacy. The principal perspective of the module is on the role of the solicitor and his/her support staff in relation to estate planning.

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### **Real Estate Law**

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This module focuses on the purchase, sale, and mortgaging of residential property and the preparation of all documents needed to facilitate such transactions, including typical correspondence. Students will be given practical classroom assignments illustrating the role and functions of the paralegal when representing a purchaser or vendor. Topics include an explanation of the land registry and land title systems, the interplay between the two, as well as hands-on training in the navigation and use of provincial on-line electronic databases used for the electronic searching and transfer of title to real property. Students will also be sensitized to the purpose and function of the contract of purchase and sale in relation to the rights and obligations of the parties in real estate transactions, including problem-solving skills in relation to issues raised by the latter.

### **Criminal Law and Summary Conviction Procedure**

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Students are introduced to the most typical aspects of criminal law as it affects legal administrative specialists and paralegals in their support of lawyers who practice criminal law. Rules and procedures governing criminal prosecutions will be reviewed which are applicable to the students' Province. Essential concepts in criminal law, including the actus reus and mens rea of criminal law offences, for both general and specific intent offences, will be examined. Legal defenses to criminal offences, including diminished capacity, drunkenness, insanity, and non-insane automatism, are discussed. Strict and absolute liability offences such as statutory and regulatory violations are reviewed. Emerging areas of criminal law, including regulation of the sex trade and legalization in Canada of marijuana use will be canvassed.

### **Career Planning & Preparation - Level I**

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This module introduces tools for planning and preparing for a successful job search, so that students can maintain a career-focused approach throughout their education program. Students will learn about the "Hidden" Job Market and ways to access it in their upcoming job search, how to research opportunities and network for industry contacts, and use appropriate etiquette when communicating with prospective employers. Students will identify their personal skills, values and preferences for the workplace, begin preparation of a professional resume and references, and organize proof documents for their career portfolio. Class discussions on various self-management topics introduced in Student Success Strategies will round out this module, which is a pre-requisite for Career Planning and Preparation II.

### **Career Planning & Preparation - Level II**

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This module continues to build on the concepts and skills introduced in Career Planning and Preparation - Level I. Students will learn how to conduct an effective job search and identify various methods of applying for work with today's technology. Students will create a personal list of "Top Employers" and target current industry opportunities, while finalizing their professional resume, portfolio and career correspondence. Students will learn to identify the different types and forms of interviews, practice responding to typical questions, and practice follow-up, evaluation and negotiation techniques they can use to ensure success. Self-management topics from Career Planning and Preparation - Level I will be reviewed, with a focus towards on-the-job success in both learner placements and post-graduate employment.

### **Field Placement - Paralegal**

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On successful completion of the classroom hours of this program, students will be placed on field placement at an outside organization. Students will have the opportunity to apply their newly developed knowledge and skills in a real-world environment.

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