

Paralegal Studies Year 2 (PS2) Assessment Results

Program Objective

The Paralegal Studies program at MTI College prepares students for employment as paralegals working under the supervision of an attorney. The program is designed to strengthen the student's ability to reason, understand, and apply correct principles of law by emphasizing analytical and critical thinking skills as well as the practical application of substantive and procedural law.

Program Description

The Paralegal Studies program consists of two parts: general education and business classes in the first year and legal specialty classes in the second year.

Courses in the second year of the program emphasize legal writing and analysis, the civil litigation process, and major areas of substantive and procedural law. Graduates of the Paralegal Studies degree program are prepared to work as paralegals, contributing to the economical and efficient delivery of legal services in private law firms, government, or other legal environments.

To fulfill the basic goals and objectives the following PS2 Program Learning Outcomes have been adopted for the program.

Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to do the following:

- Represent the legal profession in a professional and ethical manner, adhering to the Business and Professions Code section 6450, et seq.
- Apply communication and problem-solving, and critical thinking skills to gauge and supply information that will be needed by supervising attorneys, colleagues, and clients.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to assist the supervising attorney(s) with interviews, pre-trial, trial, and post-trial preparation, discovery, and the preparation of legal documents.
- Utilize oral and written communication skills through the preparation of legal documents and by conducting research, interviews, and investigations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to maintain and update legal skills and knowledge of the legal profession through continuing education, independent learning, and/or community service.
- Work independently to complete required projects and tasks effectively and within specific time frames.
- Use technology effectively to research legal issues and cases; prepare and edit legal documents; maintain client/case files; perform electronic filing; computerized calendaring; e-Discovery, various legal software, and cloud-based repositories.

Program Outline

Courses		Quarter Units	Clock Hours
L101	Introduction to the Legal Environment*	0.0	20
LA215	Legal Writing and Analysis	4.0	40
LA218	Introduction to the Paralegal Profession, Ethics, Client Interviewing, and Investigation	4.0	40
LA221	Introduction to Civil Litigation	4.0	40
LA226	Legal Research	4.0	40
LA235	Torts in Personal Injury Cases	4.0	40
LA246	Technology for Paralegals	4.0	40
LA251	Advanced Litigation	4.0	40
LA260	Career Workshop for Paralegals	0.5	5 (Hybrid)
LA281	Principles of Contract Law	4.0	40
LA283	Administrative Law	4.0	40
LA500	Advanced Legal Writing Practicum	4.0	40

*Unless waived by the department chair of Paralegal Studies, this course is required for transferring students.

48.5 Quarter Units/485–585 Clock Hours

48-60 Weeks (Evening)

Elective Law Courses

Courses		Quarter Units	Clock Hours
LA230E	Probate and Estate Planning	4.0	40
LA240E	Family Law	4.0	40
LA282E	Employment and Workers' Compensation Law	4.0	40
LA284E	Law of Business Organizations	4.0	40
LA286E	Criminal Law	4.0	40
LA287E	Bankruptcy Law	4.0	40
LA288E	E-Discovery	4.0	40
LA560E	Internship for Paralegals	4.0	120

(Subject to scheduling availability; two courses will be chosen)

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) Assessment Report Summary

Findings:

This assessment was completed in 2022. The course student learning outcomes assessments from all of the course assessments in the PS2 program map to the program learning outcomes. The department set target achievement goals and compared the results of the actual achievement goals to the target. The results of the course and program assessment showed the following:

Overall, the results of the assessments are positive. The findings for each class are listed below.

L101

The Learning Outcomes for L101 are being met. Although the students in this class have no legal background, the average scores for each outcome indicate that the students are successfully learning legal terminology and successfully retaining the meaning of such terminology; are mastering the use of specialized legal forms such as California Judicial Council Forms; are understanding the civil litigation process from client intake through dismissal of an action; and are able to evaluate key facts of a client's case to allow them to draft relevant discovery documents. The scores also indicate that the students are mastering these outcomes at an above-rate rate. Additionally, the average outcome score has increased significantly in 4 of the 5 areas since the last Assessment. Learning Outcome 4 - Process through document creation for various legal settings – is the only outcome that saw a decrease by a negligible .2% since the last assessment. Despite the steady improvement in Learning Outcome averages, the course could be improved by providing students with more discussion regarding the general litigation process.

LA215

LA215 introduces students to the specific legal writing method called IRAC and FIRAC. Based on the assessments above, it appears that there has been a steady improvement in the performance of the students in this class. The course breaks down the importance of writing strong issue statements and does well in emphasizing the difference between the different types of facts. However, what could be improved is emphasizing the differences between Case Briefs, Case Summaries, and IRAC-ing a fact pattern and how and when the legal field uses each type of "writing tool." While these different writing tools all use a form of IRAC, it would benefit the student to know how the "IRACs" differ between the three different writing tools. Lastly, more emphasis should be given to teaching the "analysis" portion of IRAC.

LA218

LA218 introduces students to the responsibilities and expectations of paralegals in a professional legal environment. The course has a heavy focus on the ethical "do's" and "don'ts" for paralegals and attorneys so that students understand that there are strict rules that govern paralegal tasks. Such a heavy focus on legal ethics is great because it sets the tone early-on in the Paralegal Studies program that practicing law ethically is the number one task for both attorneys and paralegals. The course also provides many opportunities for students to work on their oral presentation from PowerPoint presentations on specific areas of law to mock client interview. Such experiential/hands-on learning is exceptionally important. Given that the class does an excellent job on conveying the importance of legal ethics and provides for a variety of experiential learning, no action plans are required for LA218.

LA221

The purpose of LA221 is to expose students to preparing common documents used in litigation so that students become familiar with the litigation process. Students are provided with a "case file" and are required to perform chronological tasks that simulate working on a case at a law firm beginning with "intake" and moving the case through filing a Motion to Compel Discovery responses. By using this method, the students are provided with a real-world law firm experience that correspond with the subject matter that they are reading about in the textbook and obtaining lecture on. This assessment has revealed a slight decline in student performance although it is still above the stated goal. This class may be one of the most important classes in the Paralegal Program because the assignments in this class will make up greater than 90% of the tasks a litigation paralegal will perform in their career.

LA226

LA226 is designed to introduce students to the important task of legal research. Becoming proficient and accurate at Legal Research is a necessity in the legal industry. LA226 does an excellent job in distinguishing the difference between different forms of primary authority and the different uses of primary authority versus secondary authority. However, more emphasis should be placed on the importance of using secondary authority such as treatises and practice guides as a source for understanding legal issues and finding primary authority. Additionally, more emphasis should be placed on the *modern* resources that are provided on Lexis Nexis. Rather, plain word searches are sufficient to run search queries. Similarly, introducing students on how to use the Notes of Decision and Headnotes will allow students to be more efficient in finding relevant sources.

LA230E

LA230E is a Third Quarter Elective that has been consistently chosen as the elective of choice by the students since February 2021. LA230E is intended to expose the students to basic concepts of Estate Law – specifically, the probate procedure, wills, trust, estate planning, and tax implications that are part and parcel of Estate Law. The course is one of the most popular courses amongst Students because of its “real world” application. The Course does exceptionally well in providing “practical” application of the law in that Students must draft both a Will and a Trust to pass the course. In addition to the materials used to teach the course, additional teaching materials could be used to create a more interactive process with the students. Accordingly, to assist with improving scores not just for LA230E but across the Paralegal Program, additional interactive teaching methodologies should be integrated.

LA235

LA235 is intended to expose students to the substantive common law of Tort Law. The purpose of LA235 to provide students with a working knowledge of basic tort concepts with emphasis on Negligence and defenses to negligence. The course, as a whole, does well with respect to teaching negligence and exposing students to miscellaneous torts such as nuisance, product liability, subrogation, etc. However, the course is very light on covering intentional torts and principals of agency.

LA240E

Students had a new project and client folder which gives them practical experience in preparing draft and final pleadings and judicial council forms involved in the dissolution of marriage. This class hasn't been taught since February 2020 as it is one of the electives and isn't chosen as often as others.

LA246

The students were very successful in meeting the assessment goals in this class. No action items are needed. We will continue to monitor the class and student progress.

LA250

The purpose of LA250 is to familiarize students with more advanced paralegal tasks of preparing for trial. While LA221 – Intro to Civil Litigation – exposes to students to drafting pleadings, discovery, and simple motions, LA250 exposes students to the more rigorous and demanding tasks involved with preparing for trial. Students will draft Motions in Limine, determine how to select expert witnesses, understand the concepts pertaining to post-trial motions, and appeal. The culmination of the students' body of work is the Trial Notebook. The Trial Notebook is intended to simulate the preparation of a Trial Binder which contains every important document leading up to trial for which an attorney will need at the time of trial. The Trial Notebook, itself, is not the only measure of the students' understanding of the post-discovery pretrial process and trial process. Accordingly, this assessment focused more on the practical preparations of Motions in Limine, selecting experts, and the breadth and depth of understanding the subject matter through the Midterm

and Final. Because this Assessment relied on the aforementioned work product, the assessment scores were significantly lower. Drafting Motions in Limine is a difficult task and understanding the complexities of post-discovery, pretrial/trial process is also very difficult which would explain the low-test scores. To better prepare the students for the realities of post-discovery, pretrial/trial process, the tasks should be adjusted to include drafting Trial Briefs, preparing a Witness/Exhibit List, emphasis on timelines pertaining to discovery cutoff and expert witness cutoff, etc. Additionally, several weeks should be spent on the MSJ/MSA process.

LA260

LA260 seems to be working well for the students. The purpose of the class is to refine their resumes, cover letters and references to match a legal employment environment. The students in this assessment saw the value of the class and completed their assignments in the time specified at a level of acceptable quality.

LA281

LA281 is intended to expose students to the substantive common law of Contract Law. The purpose of LA281 is to provide students with a working knowledge of basic Contract Law concepts with emphasis on Contract Formation and Defenses to formation. LA281 provides the necessary depth so that students can understand how contracts are formed, what constitutes a breach of contract, how contractual obligations can be discharged. At the end of the course students are able to answer a California Bar Exam Contracts Fact Pattern, can Draft Settlement Agreements and can determine proper contractual terms to include in a transaction so that the transaction is valid and enforceable. The class provides students with both theoretical analysis and pragmatic application of Contract Principles. No action items are needed based on the assessment.

LA282E

This elective is not taught very often. The last time was in 2020. The students who took the course did well with the current curriculum. It is recommended that this class is monitored for any updates needed but no new action items will be needed

LA283

LA283 is intended to teach students how Administrative Law differs from Litigation; and how administrative regulations are created differently than statutes. Administrative Law is a difficult subject to conceptualize because it does not follow the traditional Litigation track. Understanding that Administrative Agencies have broad powers and are able to make binding decisions that are subject to high standards of judicial review and are therefore rarely overturned, is difficult. Accordingly, to better assist students in understanding these concepts, more time should be taken to develop assignments that are more practical.

LA284E

This elective class has not been chosen by students for quite some time so there is not data for an assessment.

LA286E

Students did very well in LA286E. No action items needed.

LA287E

This elective class has never been selected by students. The class is being assessed to remove from the elective choices.

LA288E

LA288E teaches the students further technique and skills related to e-Discovery. At the time of this assessment, the course had been offered only once in November 2021. Assessment data will be compiled with the next assessment schedule.

LA500

Summary of Findings- LA500 is a Capstone Course that is intended to simulate working at a real-life law firm. The instructor is the managing partner, and the students are the paralegals. The instructor, as the partner, assigns real-world research assignments and asks students to either draft letters to the client or opposing counsel based on the results of the students' research. As this course simulates working in a real-world law firm environment, the course is difficult, and the students are not expected to do well in the first three weeks of the course as the students must learn from their mistakes and adapt to the methods, requirements, and expectations of the firm. Just as an employee cannot know or understand a firm's procedure or requirements on day one but is expected to "get up to speed" quickly, so too are the expectations of the students in this class. Accordingly, the class is about "growth". Students who learn from their mistakes and apply what is being taught will succeed. While the assessment scores appear low in the beginning, students reflect their academic growth by the end of the course. A better assessment of this course would be to review the week-to-week scores. If the average score increases on a weekly basis, then the course is achieving its goal.

LA560E

LA560e has not been selected since 2015. There is no new data to assess from the 2016 assessment report.

Action Items:

Action Items
L101
Provide Students with more interactive discussion regarding the Civil Procedure process.
Provide students with more variety in types of legal documents to draft so that student have greater breadth in understanding what to expect in a legal environment.
LA 215
Provide Students with more opportunity to IRAC fact-pattern hypotheticals as opposed to IRAC-ing cases.
Clarify in detail the different methods of legal writing – e.g.: how do Case Summaries, Case Briefs, and IRAC-ing fact patterns differ and when do we use each legal writing tool.
Place more emphasis on the "Analysis" portion of IRAC so that students can explain the application of law to a fact patters as opposed to being conclusory in their analysis.

LA221
The Case File should be updated to be more relevant/modern.
Encourage instructors to provide more detailed feedback so that the students have a better understanding of what they are doing wrong so that they can make the corrections properly on future tasks.
Incorporate more California Rules of Court and relevant CCP into the classes
LA226
Continue to teach Treatises, Practice Guides and additional secondary sources that can be used to narrow/focus searches so that students can become more proficient at finding primary authority.
Amend course to include a class on using Notes of Decision and Headnotes to narrow/focus searches so that students can become more proficient at finding primary authority.
LA230E
Look into providing more interactive teaching methodologies whether it is videos, use of breakout rooms for small discussion, law jeopardy, etc.
LA235
Continue to add hypotheticals to enhance identifying the issues of Torts
LA250
Provide more real-world pre-trial tasks such as Drafting Trial Briefs
Provide more tasks that focus on the emphasis on pre-trial deadlines such as MSJ/MSA, Discovery Cutoff, and Expert Witness Cutoff
LA283
Provide students with more practical assignments that will allow them to understand how Administrative Law works pragmatically.
LA287E
This class is being assessed to remove from the elective course choices.
LA500
Review week-to-week scores and note improvement
LA560E
This class is being assessed to remove from the elective course choices.