

Paralegal



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Paralegal associate degree for those with a bachelor's degree

About our program

The Paralegal program is one of the most highly-regarded academic paths offered at Greenville Technical College. Upstate attorneys have long relied on our graduates to help keep law offices running smoothly and efficiently.

Faculty members in the Paralegal Department teach from experience as well as their own impressive academic credentials. Faculty members include attorneys who have practiced in a variety of specializations such as real estate, family law, litigation and business law.

The Paralegal program is approved by the American Bar Association, and is an institutional member of AAFPE, the American Association for Paralegal Education. The program is also a sustaining member of the South Carolina Upstate Paralegal Association. Greenville Technical College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award certificates, diplomas and associate degrees. Contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call (404) 679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Greenville Technical College. This standard assures transfer destinations and employers of the educational quality a Greenville Technical College education represents.

One-year curriculum track for those with a bachelor's degree

Graduates earn an Associate in Applied Science Degree with a major in Paralegal. For students who have already earned a bachelor's degree, GTC's Paralegal program offers an accelerated one-year track to completion. A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university can reduce the required number of credit hours to about 46, instead of the 64 credit hours needed for the traditional Paralegal Associate Degree.



Program Award

- Paralegal Associate Degree

Paralegals work only under the supervision of a licensed attorney and are not authorized to practice law in South Carolina (S. C. Code § 40-5-310).

Career Opportunities

Paralegals most often work in law firms, but there is demand for the skills of a paralegal or legal assistant in many corporate settings including insurance companies, government agencies, and corporate legal departments. The job is attractive for many reasons including a comfortable, professional work environment and generous pay.

Employers prefer formal paralegal training and strong computer skills. Also essential are those intangible abilities such as professionalism, good judgment, and communication skills.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), job prospects for paralegals and legal assistants are expected to increase 15 percent between 2016 and 2026. The demand generally results from firms trying to reduce billing costs, with paralegals increasingly entrusted with duties previously performed by attorneys. Smaller firms may choose to hire a paralegal rather than a legal assistant, so that a greater range of responsibility can be placed with a single employee. Large firms sometime prefer paralegals with experience in high-demand areas of specialization, such as commercial real estate.

The BLS gives the median pay as \$49,500 per year. In the Upstate region, industry professionals estimate a starting salary range of \$35,000 to \$40,000.

More information about employment options can be found on the websites of professional organizations, including

- The South Carolina Upstate Paralegal Association
- The American Association for Paralegal Education
- The International Paralegal Management Association
- The Standing Committee on Paralegals (American Bar Association)
- The American Alliance of Paralegals

What You'll Learn

- The Rules of Professional Conduct (Ethics)
- Legal Writing and Research
- Family Law
- Civil Litigation
- Property Law
- Tort Law
- Wills, Trusts, & Probate Law
- Claims Investigation
- Contracts

Electives allow a student to begin developing knowledge in a particular area, with choices such as workers' compensation and corporate law. The option for an internship, generally with a law firm, allows a unique educational experience and often influences a graduate's chosen field of practice.

Certification

Professional certification for paralegals is becoming increasingly important, and Greenville Technical College is at the forefront of preparing students to earn this credential. The program encourages certification by requiring all students to complete a review course for the Certified Paralegal (CP) exam offered by NALA. In addition, Greenville Technical College's Paralegal Program is an approved testing site for the CP exam. The CP exam is administered free of charge on campus. For more information about the Certified Paralegal Exam, go to www.nala.org and click on certification.