



Important Changes to the SSC Paralegal Curriculum

Q & A

1. ***I have heard that the paralegal curriculum is changing. Is that so and when will those changes go into effect?***

Answer: The paralegal curriculum is indeed changing. Those changes will go into effect in the fall of 2012.

2. ***What are the changes, and are the Associate Degree program and the certificate program both changing?***

Answer: Both programs are changing. The change to the certificate program is that PLA 206, Internship Two, has been dropped. The certificate program will now be a total of 39 credit hours. The change to the Associate Degree program is that PLA 206, Internship Two, has been dropped as has MIS 101, Computer Literacy, and OAT 172, Business Communication. The Associate Degree program will now be a total of 63 credit hours.

3. ***Why were the changes made?***

Answer: There were a variety of reasons for the changes. Those reasons included keeping our program competitive with other ABA approved programs in our general area, improving the quality of our program, and making our programs consistent with new Illinois Community College Board guidelines.

4. ***I am in the program now and I need to take any of PLA 206, OAT 172, or MIS 101. Do I still need to take those classes to graduate?***

Answer: The answer to that question depends on when you want to graduate. If you are desiring to graduate in May of 2012 or the summer of 2012, then you must complete the curriculum that is currently in place. That means for the certificate student, they would have to take the second internship, PLA 206. For the degree student, they would have to take OAT 172 and/or MIS 101 and/or PLA 206. However, if you are going to graduate in the fall of 2012 or later, then a certificate or a degree student would not have to take PLA 206, while a degree student would not have to take OAT 172 and/or MIS 101. As a technical matter, it is the currently enrolled student that starting fall of 2012 has to elect whether to graduate under the rules that exist now or whether to graduate under the ones starting in the fall 2012. In answering this question, it is assumed that the student would elect not to take the additional courses, but there may be reasons why a currently enrolled student would elect to graduate under the rules that exist now even starting with fall 2012. For example, perhaps the student would feel that they would benefit from taking a second internship class. In that situation, the student might elect to graduate under the current rules even in fall 2012 or after.

5. ***Will these changes affect the school's American Bar Association approval of the paralegal program?***

Answer: No. The American Bar Association has approved these curriculum changes. South Suburban College takes very seriously its approval by the American Bar Association and does everything it can to comply with their regulations.

6. ***Does another entity besides the American Bar Association have to approve the curriculum changes?***

Answer: Yes. The Illinois Community College Board has to approve these changes as well, and they have done so.

7. *I have college credit, am seeking a paralegal degree or certificate from South Suburban College, and want to transfer over those credits. How do I do that?*

Answer: If you are seeking to transfer over general education credits, what you need to do is have an official transcript sent to South Suburban College and request that an academic advisor review it to see what will transfer over. Should the academic advisor have a question about a course that you took, the advisor and/or the student will contact the Program Coordinator for a decision. If you are seeking to have paralegal courses transfer over to SSC, South Suburban College will accept up to nine credit hours of paralegal classes from an ABA approved program. The process for having paralegal classes from an ABA approved program transfer over is that you will need to get a transcript, course descriptions, and, if you have it, the syllabus for that course, to the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will then make a decision as to whether those classes will transfer over. If they do, the student will need to fill out a course(s) substitution form and have that form signed by the Program Coordinator and/or by the Dean of Legal Studies.

Where a person is taking classes at South Suburban College with the expectation that those classes will transfer over to another institution where the student will get the degree from, then it is the student's home institution the student should be in touch with respect to whether those classes he or she is taking will transfer over and enable that student to receive his or her degree from that home institution.

8. *I would like to get started in the program; do I have to apply for the program first?*

Answer: No. At South Suburban College, getting started in the program and getting admitted into the program are two different things. With respect to getting started in the program, all you have to do is register to be a South Suburban College student and then register for classes. If you live in Illinois, exclusive of Chicago, but are not in our district, then you'll want to get a chargeback from your local community college so that you can be sure that South Suburban College will charge you in district tuition rates. If you live in Chicago, or Northwest Indiana for that matter, you do not need to worry about the chargeback system, and you will be charged a slightly higher rate than in-district tuition rate.

With respect to getting admitted into the program, some points need to be covered. First, the only courses that require admission into the program as a prerequisite, are both legal research and writing classes and the internship class(es). Therefore, while experience has shown that students prefer to get admitted into the program as soon as possible (students report that it gives them a sense of ownership and motivation to complete the program), it is still theoretically possible that a student could take up to 10 paralegal courses before seeking admission into the program. The prerequisite for admission into the program are: for the certificate program, a completion of PLA 101 and BLW 201 with a combined grade point average in both of those courses of 2.66; for the degree program, completion of PLA 101, BLW 201, and English 101 with a combined grade point average in those three courses of 2.66. In addition, you will have to fill out an application, submit three letters of references, and meet with the Program Coordinator. Again, as noted above, you can start the paralegal program without being admitted into the program. Also, the vast majority of courses can be taken, if the student so chooses, without being admitted into the program.

9. *What are the humanities electives required for those students seeking an Associate Degree in Paralegal Studies?*

Answer: The humanities elective required for those seeking an Associate Degree in Paralegal Studies from South Suburban College are either Introduction to Philosophy or Introduction to Ethics.