

Paralegal Portfolio

Your work, military, volunteer, education, training, and other life experiences have probably taught you many valuable skills and knowledge along the way that could potentially allow you to receive college credit at MSPS. To receive experiential learning credit, students must create and present a Paralegal Portfolio that consists of materials that demonstrate mastery of targeted competencies (e.g., pleadings, letters, and work samples that verify learning) in a subject matter area. Faculty members will review the quality of the portfolio and determine whether documentation supports awarding credit. Students can receive up to 3 credits (equivalent to one Paralegal course) per portfolio with a maximum of 2 portfolios allowed (or up to 6 credits). The portfolio is for course credit only and does not factor into a student's GPA.

A key criterion used to evaluate each portfolio is the student's ability to organize and present verifiable evidence of college-level learning through proper documentation and a narrative that explains the rationale for the claim for credit. This may include:

- Demonstrating proficiency in researching federal and state case law, statutes, ordinances.
- Demonstrate proficiency in using online research tools, such as Westlaw and Lexis.
- Demonstrating proficiency in practical computer and writing skills required for paralegals.
- Demonstrating proficiency with client interviews and intake.
- Demonstrating a basic understanding of the various areas of law within the U.S. legal system.
- Demonstrating proficiency in legal research and legal writing.
- Demonstrate ability to draft legal documents, such as Memorandums of Law, Legal Briefs, and establish authority to support an argument or position.

Beginning the Portfolio Process

To initiate the portfolio process or any questions related to the Paralegal Portfolio students should contact Chad Smith, Director of Legal Programs, at smithcha@cua.edu or (202) 319-4389. Students should be prepared to discuss his/her eligibility which will aid in the determination process.

Eligibility for the Portfolio

Any student admitted and/or enrolled in the Paralegal Studies Certificate or Associate of Arts in Paralegal Studies program who has life experience and/or experiential learning as a Paralegal or other related legal capacity may apply for Experiential Learning Credit via the portfolio process.

Time to Completion

Once approved and deemed eligible, students will have a maximum of 2 semesters (includes Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters) to complete and submit the Paralegal Portfolio.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does the portfolio process work?

You will build a portfolio documenting your work and life experiences for review by experienced instructors qualified to assess portfolios and recommend credit.

How long will it take to determine if credit was earned for the portfolio?

Approximately two weeks from the time of final submission.

Can revisions to the portfolio be made?

If the portfolio is incomplete, additional documentation may be requested/required to make a determination.

Does the portfolio affect my GPA?

No, the portfolio is for course credit only and is not calculated as part of your GPA.

For which courses may I earn credit?

You can earn up to 3 credits (1 course) per portfolio with a maximum of 2 portfolios (up to 6 credits) for any of the following courses:

- MLA 101: Introduction to Paralegal Studies
- MLA 201: Legal Research and Writing
- MLA 211: Civil Procedure
- MLA 230: Criminal Law and Procedure

How can I benefit from this completing a portfolio?

By completing a portfolio, you can reduce your costs and time to completion of the Paralegal Certificate or Associate of Arts in Paralegal Studies (up to 6 credits or 2 courses).

How much does the submission of the portfolio cost?

The portfolio is a free option for students as a means of reducing the overall time to completion and tuition cost of the Paralegal Studies Certificate or Associate Arts in Paralegal Studies.

Whom should I contact if I have further questions or to begin the portfolio process?

Chad Smith, Director of Legal Programs
smithcha@cua.edu
(202) 319-4389

PARALEGAL PORTFOLIO – MLA 201: LEGAL RESEARCH AND WRITING

In order to receive credit for a specific course, the student must document the fulfillment of course outcomes, demonstrate the necessary skills, and provide specific examples of competence. To receive credit for *MLA 201: Legal Research and Writing* you must provide examples of work product by following the guidelines and requirements outlined below:

Topic Guide

Section 1: Portfolio Deliverables Guidelines

Section 2: Scoring Guide

Section 3: Work Product Essays

Section 4: Frequently Asked Questions

Section 1: Portfolio Deliverables Guidelines

If you choose to submit a Paralegal Portfolio and work product the project you select must be one where you demonstrated the successful management of the learning function or learning activity. The work product samples that you submit will be a portfolio made up of various documents that provide evidence of your work and proficiency in 3 Focus Areas: Legal Writing / Pleadings, Legal Research, and Legal Correspondence.

The documentation listed below is intended to be illustrative and is not exhaustive. You may make substitutions or additions as you deem necessary:

Focus	Documentation / Work Product
Legal Writing / Pleadings	Example of types of documentation to include in your submission: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memorandums of Law• Complaints• Answers• Motions<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Motions to Dismiss* Motion to Compel* Motion for Summary Judgment* Motion in Limine* Motion for New Trial* Motion for Judgment Notwithstanding the Verdict
Legal Research	Example of types of documentation to include in your submission: <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Case Research* Case and Statutory Analysis* Statutory Research* Proficiency with Westlaw, Lexis, etc.* Case & Legal Briefs
Legal Correspondence	Example of types of documentation to include in your submission: <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Business Letters* Client Letters* Cover Letter* Opinion Letter* Demand Letter

Portfolio Assembly Instructions

The final presentation of your work product will be a portfolio of evidence organized by the Focus Areas (Legal Pleadings, Legal Research, and Legal Correspondence). To differentiate the categories, include a title page for each section and a table of contents for the documents/work product provided within each section. **Each of the 3 Focus Areas is worth 1 credit and students can earn up to 3 credits for the portfolio. In order to receive 1 course credit for a Focus Area, your work product must be deemed “Outstanding” or “Successful” for the Focus Area. Upon completion of the portfolio students will earn 0-3 credits.**

Portfolios must be submitted as one file (PDF) via email to smithcha@cua.edu or a physical/paper copy mailed to the following address:

Metropolitan School of Professional Studies
The Catholic University of America
334 Pangborn Hall
620 Michigan Ave NE,
Washington D.C., 20064
ATTN: Director of Legal Programs

The following is an example of how to assemble/organize your portfolio:

- 1. Portfolio Title Page**
- 2. Table of Contents**
- 3. Title Page – Focus – Legal Writing / Pleadings**
 - a. Work Product #1
 - b. Work Product #2
 - c. Work Product #3
- 4. Title Page – Focus – Legal Research**
 - a. Work Product #1
 - b. Work Product #2
 - c. Work Product #3
- 5. Title Page – Focus – Legal Correspondence**
 - a. Work Product #1
 - b. Work Product #2
 - c. Work Product #3
- 6. Title Page – Work Product Essays**
 - a. Answer to Essay #1
 - b. Answer to Essay #2
 - c. Answer to Essay #3
 - d. Answer to Essay #4
 - e. Answer to Essay #5
 - f. Answer to Essay #6
 - g. Answer to Essay #7
 - h. Answer to Essay #8
 - i. Answer to Essay #9

Section 2: Scoring Guide

To receive 1 credit (maximum of 3 credits per portfolio) your work product must be deemed “Outstanding” or “Successful” for the specific Focus Area.

Legal Writing / Pleadings Key Actions	Legal Writing / Pleadings – Work Product Scoring Guide		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates proficiency in the drafting of legal pleadings. • Demonstrates proficiency in legal writing. • Demonstrates proficiency in formatting documents that meet/exceed the standards for filing in court. 	Outstanding	Successful	Unsatisfactory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in a professional manner that meets or exceeds the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product meets and exceeds the standard/requirements for filing in court. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is excellent to perfect. • Essay question answers demonstrated superior understanding and went above and beyond the call of the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in a professional manner up to the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product meets the standard/requirements for filing in court. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is satisfactory and meets paralegal standards. • Essay questions were answered, demonstrated satisfactory understanding, and identified locations/citations/examples within work product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in that is below the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product is below the standard/requirements for filing in court. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is below paralegal standards. • Essay questions were not completed or below standard and did not meet the call of the question.
Legal Research Key Actions	Legal Research – Work Product Scoring Guide		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates proficiency in legal research. • Demonstrates proficiency in researching case and statutory law. • Demonstrates proficiency in online legal research. 	Outstanding	Successful	Unsatisfactory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in a professional manner that meets or exceeds the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product meets and exceeds the standard/requirements for legal research and/or filing in court. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is excellent to perfect. • Essay question answers demonstrated superior understanding and went above and beyond the call of the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in a professional manner up to the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product meets the standard/requirements for legal research and/or filing in court. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is satisfactory and meets paralegal standards. • Essay questions were answered, demonstrated satisfactory understanding, and identified locations/citations/examples within work product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in that is below the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product is below the standard/requirements for legal research and/or filing in court. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is below paralegal standards. • Essay questions were not completed or below standard and did not meet the call of the question.

Legal Correspondence Key Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates proficiency with the drafting of legal correspondence. • Demonstrates proficiency with grammar and spelling. • Demonstrates proficiency in formatting documents in a business letter and/or legal letter format. • Demonstrates proficiency with computers/technology, word processing, and document creation.

Legal Correspondence – Work Product Scoring Guide		
Outstanding	Successful	Unsatisfactory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in a professional manner that meets or exceeds the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product meets and exceeds the standard/requirements for legal correspondence. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is excellent to perfect. • Essay question answers demonstrated superior understanding and went above and beyond the call of the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in a professional manner up to the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product meets the standard/requirements for legal correspondence. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is satisfactory and meets paralegal standards. • Essay questions were answered, demonstrated satisfactory understanding, and identified locations/citations/examples within work product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 3 work product examples provided. • Work product was completed in that is below the standard of a paralegal. • Format/style of the work product is below the standard/requirements for legal correspondence. • Grammar, spelling, and readability of the work product is below paralegal standards. • Essay questions were not completed or below standard and did not meet the call of the question.

Section 3: Work Product Essays

Essay Instructions: Please respond to each question outlined below. Responses to each question should be approximately 3-5 paragraphs in length.

LEGAL WRITING / PLEADINGS

1. Provide 3 examples of your proficiency in drafting/writing, researching, and filing legal pleadings. What were tasked to do for each of these pleadings? How did each help/affect the case? What was the outcome/result/ruling for each pleading? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)
2. Describe your process/steps taken to complete each of these pleadings. What work went into each? (e.g., How much time and research?) Was there any issues or complexities with the case that made this work more demanding? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)
3. What did you learn from the process of drafting these pleadings? How did it help and/or further your knowledge as a Paralegal? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)

LEGAL RESEARCH

4. Provide 3 examples of your proficiency in legal research. What were your tasks for each research projects? How did each help/affect the case? What was the outcome/result/ruling for each research project? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)
5. Describe your process/steps taken to complete each of these pleadings. What work went into each? (e.g., How much time and research?) Were there any issues or complexities with the case that made this work more demanding? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)
6. What did you learn from the research process? How did it help and/or further or knowledge as a Paralegal? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)

LEGAL CORRESPONDENCE

7. Provide 3 examples of your proficiency in drafting correspondence. What tasks were you responsible for (for each correspondence example)? How did each help/affect the case you working on? What was the outcome/result for each? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)
8. Describe your process/steps taken to complete each of these pleadings. What work went into each? (e.g., How much time and research?) Was there any issues or complexities with the case that made this work more demanding? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)
9. What did you learn from each correspondence example? How did it help and/or further or knowledge as a Paralegal? (Please identify/cite the location within your work product sample(s) that supports your answer.)