

27 NCAC 01G .0119 STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATION OF PARALEGALS

(a) To qualify for certification as a paralegal, an applicant must pay any required fee, and comply with the following standards:

- (1) Education. The applicant must have earned one of the following:
 - (A) an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree from a qualified paralegal studies program;
 - (B) a certificate from a qualified paralegal studies program and an associate's or bachelor's degree in any discipline from any institution of post-secondary education that is accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education (an accredited US institution) or an equivalent degree from a foreign educational institution if the degree is determined to be equivalent to a degree from an accredited US institution by an organization that is a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) or the Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE); or
 - (C) a juris doctorate degree from a law school accredited by the American Bar Association.
- (2) National Certification. If an applicant has obtained and thereafter maintains in active status at all times prior to application (i) the designation Certified Legal Assistant (CLA)/Certified Paralegal (CP) from the National Association of Legal Assistants; (ii) the designation PACE-Registered Paralegal (RP)/Certified Registered Paralegal (CRP) from the National Federation of Paralegal Associations; or (iii) another national paralegal credential approved by the board, the applicant is not required to satisfy the educational standard in paragraph (a)(1).
- (3) Examination. The applicant must achieve a satisfactory score on a written examination designed to test the applicant's knowledge and ability. The board shall assure that the contents and grading of the examinations are designed to produce a uniform minimum level of competence among the certified paralegals.

(b) Notwithstanding an applicant's satisfaction of the standards set forth in Rule .0119(a), no individual may be certified as a paralegal if:

- (1) the individual's certification or license as a paralegal in any state is under suspension or revocation;
- (2) the individual's license to practice law in any state is under suspension or revocation;
- (3) the individual
 - (A) was convicted of a criminal act that reflects adversely on the individual's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a paralegal;
 - (B) engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation;
 - (C) engaged in the unauthorized practice of law; or
 - (D) has had a nonlegal state or federal occupational or professional license suspended or revoked for misconduct; however, the board may certify an applicant whose application discloses conduct described in Rule .0119(c)(3) if, after consideration of mitigating factors, including remorse, reformation of character, and the passage of time, the board determines that the individual is honest, trustworthy, and fit to be a certified paralegal; or
- (4) the individual is not a legal resident of the United States.

(c) All matters concerning the qualification of an applicant for certification, including, but not limited to, applications, examinations and examination scores, files, reports, investigations, hearings, findings, recommendations, and adverse determinations shall be confidential so far as is consistent with the effective administration of this plan, fairness to the applicant and due process of law.

(d) Qualified Paralegal Studies Program. A qualified paralegal studies program is a program of paralegal or legal assistant studies that is an institutional member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or other regional or national accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education, and is either

- (1) approved by the American Bar Association;
- (2) an institutional member of the American Association for Paralegal Education; or
- (3) offers at least the equivalent of 18 semester credits of coursework in paralegal studies as prescribed by the American Bar Association Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education including the equivalent of one semester credit in legal ethics.

(e) Designation as a Qualified Paralegal Studies Program. The board shall determine whether a paralegal studies program is a qualified paralegal studies program upon submission by the program of an application to the board provided, however, a paralegal studies program is not required to submit an application for qualification as long as the program satisfies the requirements of Rule .0119(e)(1) or (2).

- (1) A program designated by the board as a qualified paralegal studies program shall renew its application for designation every five years.
- (2) An applicant for certification who lists on a certification application a paralegal studies program that does not satisfy the requirements of Rule .0119(e)(1) or (2) or that has not been designated by the board as a qualified paralegal studies program shall be responsible for obtaining a completed application for designation from the program or shall submit the information required on the application for determination that the program is a qualified paralegal studies program.
- (3) Designation of a paralegal studies program as a qualified paralegal studies program under this section does not constitute an approval or an endorsement of the program by the board or the North Carolina State Bar.

History Note: Authority G.S. 84-23;
Adopted by the Supreme Court October 6, 2004;
Amendments Approved by the Supreme Court: March 2, 2006; March 8, 2007; February 5, 2009;
March 11, 2010; March 6, 2014; March 5, 2015; June 9, 2016; April 5, 2018.