



New courses for legal assistants (paralegals) follow the same winning recipe as the flagship courses at the Gawie le Roux Institute of Law

The world of law is not cold or calculating but intricate and has many moving parts. When watching medical dramas, surgeons are often at the forefront. However, these surgeons cannot perform any operation successfully without the contribution of fellow medical professionals and their support team. Likewise, court dramas often highlight the surgeons of law, trial attorneys and advocates, but the contribution of support staff, their paralegals and fellow legal assistants cannot be underestimated. Institutions like the Gawie le Roux Institute of Law are committed to ensuring that this is not the case.

A surgeon cannot perform surgery without a diagnosis, and similarly, an attorney or advocate cannot represent defendants in a trial without detailed documents and support. The complex system of the legal profession cannot function without a variety of legal professionals and support staff in a range of roles, ensuring consistency and information that is up to date. One such complexity can be seen in the roles of paralegals, conveyancing attorneys, and notaries public.

Paralegals are legal assistants or secretaries who offer other legal support to advocates and attorneys, performing administrative tasks, doing research, and drafting documents. Conveyancers are attorneys who specialise in and are qualified to prepare deed documents and transfer properties from one entity to another. Lastly, notarial practice/notaries refer to an attorney who possesses in-depth knowledge of a set of legal facts. They are authorised to witness signatures, draw and attest contracts and statements, and they can also authenticate the validity of certain documents.

With the necessity of this diverse area of expertise in mind, the Gawie le Roux Institute of Law offers several sets of courses, relevant to all aspects of the legal field, including various general and specialised courses for paralegals as well as courses in conveyancing and notarial practice for attorneys who are preparing for the Legal Practice Council's examinations. The general courses for paralegals consist of three introductory courses which lay the foundation for a legal assistant's understanding of the law and the formal legal environment. The specialised paralegal training focuses on conveyancing; debt collection; business law; civil litigation; and legal bookkeeping.

Gawie le Roux reiterates that, "Both general and specialised courses are vocational training par excellence. Our training prepares attendees for their practical day-to-day duties as a legal assistant in various specialised roles in an attorney's firm, as a secretary to an advocate, or as a legal assistant working alongside a legal practitioner in a large corporate institution or in the public sector. Our paralegal training is also suitable for candidate attorneys."

Paralegals play a vital role in the legal system. Their role is to assist attorneys, advocates, or legal advisors in the delivery of legal services. There are several sectors for paralegals as long as they have knowledge of the particular area of the law in which he or she is working. This will be the case in specialised departments with high volumes of turnover and repetitive work, such as conveyancing, debt collection, legal accounting, and administration of estates. However, ultimately the attorney must still sign off on all the work done by the paralegal.





The range of the duties of a paralegal varies daily between assisting attorneys with the typing of legal documents, organising case files, preparing trial notes, making appointments, preparing legal briefs, and sometimes sitting in with an attorney during client and witness interviews.

With its practical approach and comprehensive notes, the Institute is still the biggest private conveyancing and notarial practice in South Africa, through which many legal practitioners have forged a path and made their mark.

Estelle Lessing, a Gawie le Roux Institute of Law alumna and paralegal, received a Gold Certificate for each level of the '[Conveyancing for secretaries \(paralegals\)](#)' course. Estelle says she did the [self-study courses](#) and had to study at night. Reflecting on this, she shares that future students must understand that conveyancing is a complex legal process to maintain the high standard of land registration. These courses and manuals are set out so meticulously and in detail making it easy for her to complete her daily tasks with confidence. She is also able to deal with clients and the public's queries in a professional manner and resolve any questions and uncertainty they may have. She still uses the course manuals on a daily basis as a go-to guide.

What are the most important personal qualities that a legal assistant (paralegal) should have?

- The most important thing is to know your files well. You must know exactly what is happening at all times in your work so that you can speak confidently to clients about the progress of their case.
- It is also important to be very organised and to think ahead all the time. Then you can give clients the best service possible.
- You must be able to function under high pressure and be able to run multiple files at the same time.
- The turnaround time in some legal matters may be very short and you must be able to work fast and with great accuracy.
- Finally, always be prepared to learn new things. The more eager you are to learn, the better the progress you will make in your work.

Additionally, adaptability is important as your role at different companies may vary in scope and nature. A great paralegal is also investigative, methodical, logical, and inquisitive.

The picture of a lawyer or advocate standing before a judge may be the most recognisable one, but the world of law is extensive and intricate. The roles of professionals like legal assistants are critical in making things run smoothly. The Gawie le Roux Institute of Law ensures that these roles do not go underappreciated and that the next generation of legal professionals, regardless of speciality or role, stand out.

For more information on the paralegal courses offered by The Gawie le Roux Institute of Law, visit our website – <https://www.gawieleroux.co.za/paralegal-training>

