



Office Administration-Legal Program Standard

*The approved program standard for Office
Administration-Legal program of instruction
leading to an Ontario College Diploma
delivered by Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts
and Technology (MTCU funding code 52306)*

**Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
June 2015**

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I. Introduction

This document is the Program Standard for the Office Administration-Legal program of instruction leading to an Ontario College Diploma delivered by Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology (MTCU funding code 52306).

Development of System-Wide Program Standards

In 1993, the Government of Ontario initiated program standards development with the objectives of bringing a greater degree of consistency to college programming offered across the province, broadening the focus of college programs to ensure graduates have the skills to be flexible and to continue to learn and adapt, and providing public accountability for the quality and relevance of college programs.

The Program Standards and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities have responsibility for the development, review and approval of system-wide standards for programs of instruction at Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology.

Program Standards

Program standards apply to all similar programs of instruction offered by colleges across the province. Each program standard for a postsecondary program includes the following elements:

- **Vocational standard** (the vocationally specific learning outcomes which apply to the program of instruction in question),
- **Essential employability skills** (the essential employability skills learning outcomes which apply to all programs of instruction); and
- **General education requirement** (the requirement for general education in postsecondary programs of instruction).

Collectively, these elements outline the essential skills and knowledge that a student must reliably demonstrate in order to graduate from the program.

Individual colleges of applied arts and technology offering the program of instruction determine the specific program structure, delivery methods and other curriculum matters to be used in assisting students to achieve the outcomes articulated in the standard. Individual colleges also determine whether additional local learning outcomes will be required to reflect specific local needs and/or interests.

The Expression of Program Standards as Vocational Learning Outcomes

Vocational learning outcomes represent culminating demonstrations of learning and achievement. They are not simply a listing of discrete skills, nor broad statements of knowledge and comprehension. In addition, vocational learning outcomes are interrelated and cannot be viewed in isolation of one another. As such, they should be viewed as a comprehensive whole. They describe performances that demonstrate that significant integrated learning by graduates of the program has been achieved and verified.

Expressing standards as vocational learning outcomes ensures consistency in the outcomes for program graduates, while leaving to the discretion of individual colleges curriculum matters such as the specific program structure and delivery methods.

The Presentation of the Vocational Learning Outcomes

The vocational learning outcome statements set out the culminating demonstration of learning and achievement that the student must reliably demonstrate before graduation.

The elements of the performance for each outcome define and clarify the level and quality of performance necessary to meet the requirements of the vocational learning outcome. However, it is the performance of the vocational learning outcome itself on which students are evaluated. The elements of performance are indicators of the means by which the student may proceed to satisfactory performance of the vocational learning outcome. The elements of performance do not stand alone but rather in reference to the vocational learning outcome of which they form a part.

The Development of a Program Standard

In establishing the standards development initiative, the Government determined that all postsecondary programs of instruction should include vocational skills coupled with a broader set of essential skills. This combination is considered critical to ensuring that college graduates have the skills required to be successful both upon graduation from the college program and throughout their working and personal lives.

A program standard is developed through a broad consultation process involving a range of stakeholders with a direct interest in the program area, including employers, professional associations, universities, secondary schools and program graduates working in the field, in addition to students, faculty and administrators at the colleges themselves. It represents a consensus of

participating stakeholders on the essential learning that all program graduates should have achieved.

Updating the Program Standard

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will undertake regular reviews of the vocational learning outcomes for this program to ensure that the Office Administration-Legal Program Standard remains appropriate and relevant to the needs of students and employers across the Province of Ontario. To confirm that this document is the most up-to-date release, please contact the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities at the address or email address noted on the inside cover page.

II. Vocational Standard

All graduates of Office Administration - Legal program have achieved the eight vocational learning outcomes (VLOs) listed in the following pages, in addition to achieving the essential employability skills (EES) learning outcomes and meeting the general education (GE) requirement.

Preamble

The Office Administration – Legal program prepares graduates to work in fast-paced and challenging legal office settings.

Graduates of the Office Administration – Legal program apply business and legal concepts to the production of correspondence and documents in the areas of corporate, civil, family, real estate, and wills and estates law.

Graduates apply advanced office technology and keyboarding skills in the creation, production and formatting of legal correspondence, documentation and client account and billing records*.

Graduates manage office scheduling and organization to meet priorities in the legal environment. Graduates administer records management systems* ensuring security and confidentiality of legal records*.

Graduates possess strong interpersonal and client service skills which enable them to communicate effectively with diverse audiences within a variety of legal office settings.

As members of the legal office work team, graduates demonstrate professionalism and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing priorities. Graduates work independently as well as collaboratively and act in accordance with all relevant legislation, regulations and codes of ethics guiding legal environments.

Graduates of the Office Administration - Legal program find entry-level jobs as legal assistants. Employment opportunities exist in a broad range of legal office environments including law firms, banks and trust companies, real estate firms, legal departments of corporations, government legal departments and agencies, financial institutions and court offices.

There may be opportunities for graduates to pursue further educational qualifications through transfer pathways between colleges and universities or occupational certifications through professional organizations. Graduates should contact individual colleges and professional associations for further information.

Endnote: The Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) maintains the [provincial postsecondary credit transfer portal, ONTransfer](#).

**See Glossary*

Synopsis of the Vocational Learning Outcomes

Office Administration-Legal (Ontario College Diploma)

The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to

1. conduct oneself professionally and adhere to relevant legislation, standards and codes of ethics.
2. manage the scheduling, coordination and organization of administrative tasks and workflow within specific deadlines and according to set priorities and procedures.
3. coordinate the collection, analysis, distribution and response to communications in the workplace to facilitate the flow of information.
4. operate and provide support to others related to the use of office equipment and technologies.
5. evaluate, establish and administer legal records management systems* to ensure confidential, secure, accessible and organized electronic and paper records*.
6. produce client account and billing records* for legal services by compiling relevant information and using accounting software.
7. produce legal documentation for corporate, civil, family, real estate and wills and estates law using available technologies and applying industry standards.
8. use interpersonal and client service skills to respond to diversity and to support the goals of the organization.

**See Glossary*

Note: The learning outcomes have been numbered as a point of reference; numbering does not imply prioritization, sequencing, or weighting of significance.

The Vocational Learning Outcomes

1. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

conduct oneself professionally and adhere to relevant legislation, standards and codes of ethics.

Elements of the Performance

- accept feedback in a positive, respectful and professional manner
- adhere to relevant legislation, business standards, and codes of conduct applicable to the legal environment e.g., The Law Society of Upper Canada, Paralegal Rules of Conduct, 2007
- apply ethical principles to legal service settings, including the handling of confidential information
- maintain confidentiality and security of all personal and organizational information acquired in the course of one's work
- use appropriate judgment, tact and discretion in handling sensitive information
- be self-directed and show initiative
- act responsibly with coworkers and clients, and be accountable for own words and actions
- organize an office workspace according to a full understanding of the roles and responsibilities assigned and efficiency guidelines
- apply knowledge of ergonomics and health and safety guidelines (e.g., *Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1990*)
- identify and seek out professional development activities that lead to the enhancement of work performance and career opportunities
- identify and adapt to changing needs and resources related to the office administration legal field
- present a professional appearance and demeanour
- act honestly and with integrity

2. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

manage the scheduling, coordination and organization of administrative tasks and workflow within specific deadlines and according to set priorities and procedures.

Elements of the Performance

- establish work priorities and develop a plan to meet deadlines
- ascertain deadlines and limitation dates related to action in legal matters
- adapt to unforeseen circumstances, changing priorities and timelines
- collaboratively plan team tasks and responsibilities
- use and update contacts, calendar and reminder systems
- determine and coordinate facilities, equipment, services and supplies to support meetings
- use critical thinking techniques to develop decision-making skills
- make decisions appropriate to workplace and position
- identify and recommend process improvements to enhance productivity and operational efficiency

multitask in a fast-paced legal office environment

3. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

coordinate the collection, analysis, distribution and response to communications in the workplace to facilitate the flow of information.

Elements of the Performance

- use listening and analytical skills to accurately summarize and record key information
- prepare, review and edit written communication
- respond to inquiries in a timely fashion
- apply knowledge of communication theories and systems (e.g., telephone, email, voicemail) and online collaboration and social media tools to the legal environment
- use appropriate professional language, legal terminology, style and tone for oral, written and electronic communication in the legal environment
- apply business ethics and online etiquette to Internet communications
- use communications technology appropriately and in accordance with legal services' communications and social media use guidelines
- analyze and annotate correspondence received to determine appropriate action and follow-up when necessary
- create and complete a variety of forms to record communications and support the flow of information in the legal environment
- determine and prepare replies to routine correspondence
- compose clear, concise, articulate and timely communications
- use judgment, tact and discretion in handling confidential and sensitive information
- determine appropriate electronic and paper distribution methods for a variety of internal and external communications
- prepare internal and external communications for distribution using formatting and quality standards appropriate to legal environments, and in accordance with legislative requirements, i.e., Canada's Anti-spam Legislation (CASL), 2014

4. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

operate and provide support to others related to the use of office equipment and technologies.

Elements of the Performance

- provide support within the workplace related to office equipment (e.g., telephones, printers, scanners, fax and photocopy machines, mobile devices)
- work comfortably with a variety of workplace related software packages
- provide support to others related to the use of common software packages used in the legal environment
- identify and adapt to changing needs and resources related to office equipment and technologies used in legal environments

5. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

evaluate, establish and administer legal records management systems* to ensure confidential, secure, accessible and organized electronic and paper records*

Elements of the Performance

- identify and establish the structure, components, equipment and supplies required for electronic and paper records management systems* in the legal environment
- identify and use appropriate procedures for creating and maintaining electronic and paper records*
- identify and use appropriate storage, transfer and retrieval methods for electronic and paper records* including online storage and file sharing systems
- organize and prepare records* for appointments and court/tribunal attendances
- manage records* in a manner that complies with legal requirements governing retention of records* and privacy of information. (e.g., *The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, 2000*; *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990* and requirements of the Law Society of Upper Canada)
- comply with established protocols and procedures to ensure the security and confidentiality of legal records*
- comply with regulatory requirements for the electronic preparation, dissemination and filing of specific legal records*
- use and maintain data within database software
- maintain organized, current electronic and paper records* in the legal environment
- maintain and evaluate an existing records management system and make recommendations for improvement

**See Glossary*

6. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

produce client account and billing records* for legal services by compiling relevant information and using accounting software.

Elements of the Performance

- apply basic accounting principles to the management of client account and billing records* including client ledgers, general and trust accounts
- use correct financial terminology
- read and interpret client billing terms and conditions
- create and maintain time dockets/records*/accurate accounting of time spent and disbursements incurred
- compile client accounts using available accounting software
- make calculations and verify their accuracy
- apply proofreading skills to client account and billing records*
- prepare final-form client account and billing records* within established deadlines
- manage spreadsheets and other applications to complete financial tasks
- follow established procedures for collecting outstanding billings

**See Glossary*

7. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

produce legal documentation for corporate, civil, family, real estate and wills and estates law using available technologies and applying industry standards.

Elements of the Performance

- use correct legal terminology
- make notes of instructions
- identify and use reference sources and materials
- use document production, proofreading and editing skills
- prepare legal documentation using a variety of legal software
- determine the appropriate elements and produce documents for corporate, civil, family, real estate, wills and estates law matters
- apply current rules, regulations and procedures to the production of legal documents
- use correct grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation and formatting
- meet industry standards for keyboarding speed and accuracy
- transcribe voice files to legal industry standard using transcription software
- comply with legislation related to the production of business and legal documents including the *Canadian Copyright Act, 1985* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*
- convert draft information from paper and electronic sources into final-form documentation
- adapt to changing technology

8. *The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to*

use interpersonal and client service skills to respond to diversity and to support the goals of the organization.

Elements of the Performance

- use respectful verbal, written, electronic, and nonverbal communications in a variety of situations in the legal environment
- adapt language and communication style to ensure understanding by a diverse range of people
- apply ethical principles to workplace situations
- use methods for handling confidential information in the legal environment
- work effectively and collaboratively in multi-generational and multi-cultural environments
- apply the principles of client service in the legal environment
- identify and manage personal beliefs recognizing their impact on interpersonal relationships
- identify the impact of personal image on the image of a legal environment
- facilitate the solution to a variety of workplace issues applying communication and conflict resolution strategies
- work independently to efficiently and accurately complete tasks within a specified time frame
- contribute effectively as a team member to tasks and work projects
- identify one's own role within the legal office environment and describe the role's relationship to other legal professionals

Glossary

Records – Information created, received and maintained by an organization or person for business purposes, legal obligations, or both, regardless of medium or form. Records include a variety of formats and mediums, including textual records (memos, letters, documents, files, reports, contracts etc.), electronic records (emails, databases, intranet data etc.) new communication media (instant messages, wikis, blogs, podcasts etc.), publications (reports, magazines), films, photographs and graphics (adapted from Treasury Board of Canada (2010), Standard for Electronic Documents and Records Management Solutions).

Records management system - A framework or system used to capture, maintain and provide access to evidence over time, as required by the jurisdiction in which it is implemented and in accordance with common business practices. Record keeping systems include both records practitioners, and records users; a set of authorized policies, assigned responsibilities, delegations of authority, procedures and practices; policy statements, procedures manuals, user guidelines and other related documents (adapted from the International Council on Archives (ICA), 2008. Principles and Functional Requirements for Records in Electronic Office Environments).

III. Essential Employability Skills

All graduates of the Office Administration-Legal program of instruction must have reliably demonstrated the essential employability skills learning outcomes listed on the following pages, in addition to achieving the vocational learning outcomes and meeting the general education requirement.

Context

Essential Employability Skills (EES) are skills that, regardless of a student's program or discipline, are critical for success in the workplace, in day-to-day living and for lifelong learning.

The teaching and attainment of these EES for students in, and graduates from, Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology are anchored in a set of three fundamental assumptions:

- these skills are important for every adult to function successfully in society today;
- our colleges are well equipped and well positioned to prepare graduates with these skills;
- these skills are equally valuable for all graduates, regardless of the level of their credential, whether they pursue a career path, or they pursue further education.

Skill Categories

To capture these skills, the following six categories define the essential areas where graduates must demonstrate skills and knowledge.

- Communication
- Numeracy
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Information Management
- Interpersonal
- Personal

Application and Implementation

In each of the six skill categories, there are a number of defining skills, or sub skills, identified to further articulate the requisite skills identified in the main skill categories. The following chart illustrates the relationship between the skill categories, the defining skills within the categories and learning outcomes to be achieved by graduates from all postsecondary programs of instruction that lead to an Ontario College credential.

EES may be embedded in General Education or vocational courses, or developed through discrete courses. However these skills are developed, all graduates with Ontario College credentials must be able to reliably demonstrate the essential skills required in each of the six categories.

SKILL CATEGORY	DEFINING SKILLS: Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	LEARNING OUTCOMES: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Speaking • Listening • Presenting • Visual literacy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience. 2. respond to written, spoken or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.
NUMERACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and applying mathematical concepts and reasoning • Analyzing and using numerical data • Conceptualizing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. execute mathematical operations accurately.
CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing • Synthesizing • Evaluating • Decision making • Creative and innovative thinking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. apply a systematic approach to solve problems. 2. use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.

SKILL CATEGORY	DEFINING SKILLS: Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	LEARNING OUTCOMES: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering and managing information • Selecting and using appropriate tools and technology for a task or a project • Computer literacy • Internet skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>locate, select, organize and document information using appropriate technology and information systems.</i> 2. <i>analyze, evaluate and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.</i>
INTERPERSONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork • Relationship management • Conflict resolution • Leadership • Networking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>show respect for the diverse opinions, values, belief systems and contributions of others.</i> 2. <i>interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.</i>
PERSONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing self • Managing change and being flexible and adaptable • Engaging in reflective practices • Demonstrating personal responsibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>manage the use of time and other resources to complete projects.</i> 2. <i>take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions and their consequences.</i>

IV. General Education Requirement

All graduates of the Office Administration-Legal program must have met the general education requirement described on the following pages, in addition to achieving the vocational and essential employability skills learning outcomes.

Requirement

The General Education Requirement for programs of instruction is stipulated in the Credentials Framework (Appendix A in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive *Framework for Programs of Instruction*).

In programs of instruction leading to either an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3 to 5 courses (or the equivalent) designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities.

This general education learning would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes.

Purpose

The purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively and positively to the society in which they live and work.

General Education strengthens students' essential employability skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and/or societal importance.

Themes

The themes listed below will be used to provide direction to colleges in the development and identification of courses that are designed to fulfill the General Education Requirement for programs of instructions.

Each theme provides a statement of Rationale and offers suggestions related to more specific topic areas that could be explored within each area. These suggestions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They are included to provide guidance regarding the nature and scope of content that would be judged as meeting the intent and overall goals of General Education.

1. Arts in Society:

Rationale:

The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of the artist's and writer's perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

2. Civic Life:

Rationale:

In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national and global level and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, as well as Canada's place in the international community.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the

meaning of freedoms, rights and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in a Canadian and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

3. Social and Cultural Understanding:

Rationale:

Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

Content:

Courses in this area are those that deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic or linguistic characteristics.

4. Personal Understanding:

Rationale:

Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and vocationally.

Content:

Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

5. Science and Technology:

Rationale:

Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena

Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the human mind that is unique in human history. This and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

Content:

Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing) and assorted computer-related technologies should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.