

National Association of Legal Secretaries®— Certified Professional Legal Secretary

Review Dates: April 1992; April 1997;
March 2002

Effective Dates: March 1988–Present.

Organization Description: The National Association of Legal Secretaries (NALS), founded in 1929, has more than 12,000 members and 445 active chapters in more than forty states throughout the country. NALS promotes standards of conduct required of those in the legal profession, including observation of the rules of privileged communication, performance of professional duties with integrity and competence, and respect for the law and administration of justice. The Certified Professional Legal Secretary (PLS) designation can be earned by any person who has had three years of legal experience.

Organization Contact: National Association of Legal Secretaries, Attn: Certification Manager, 2448 East 81st Street, Suite 3400, Tulsa, OK 74137, (918) 493-3540 (ext. 26), Fax: (918) 493-5784.

Source of Official Student Records: National Association of Legal Secretaries, Attn: Certification Manager, 2448 East 81st Street, Suite 3400, Tulsa, OK 74137, (918) 493-3540, ext. 26, Fax: (918) 493-5784 or the Registry of Credit Recommendations, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 250, Washington, DC 20036-1193, e-mail: credit@ace.nche.edu.

How Examination Results Are Reported: The passing score required for the award of college credit is 65 percent for each of the seven parts. Sections with a score of less than 65 may be retaken. The passing score required for certification is 70. Sections with a score of less than 70 must be retaken.

Summary of ACE Review: The examination was originally reviewed in April 1992. Item-analysis results are used to improve the quality of the test; instructions for administering and scoring the test are clear, explicit, and standardized, and most examinees have ample time to complete the examination. Security procedures are adequate.

Content Validity: The content team reported that the test is well designed, is current in addressing content materials for legal secretaries, and covers topics that are relevant to the skills demanded of legal secretaries.

Technical Adequacy: The technical team reported that the relevant domains of content covered by the test are clearly defined; also, item quality and test reliability are generally adequate.

Description of the Examinations: The two-day NALS examination is administered three times a year at various testing sites around the country. To qualify to take the examination, candidates must have three years of legal experience. A partial waiver of the three-year legal secretarial requirement may be granted for postsecondary education.

ALS® Examination

ACE Transcript Data: NALS-0008

Dates: March 2002–Present.

Credit Recommendation: In the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree category, 3 semester hours in Business Procedures and 3 semester hours in Business Communications. **NOTE:** The 3 semester hours in Business Communications do not apply if the examinee has received this credit from the PLS® examination.

Description: ALS® a basic certification for legal professionals. The successful completion of this examination demonstrates a lawyer's assistant's preparedness for the demanding field of law. The designation is awarded after passing a four-hour, three-part examination. Attaining this goal demonstrates the lawyer's assistant's commitment and aptitude for succeeding in the ever-changing legal environment.

The ALS® examination is given the first Saturday in March and the last Saturday in September of every year. The ALS® examination also is given at the conclusion of several legal training courses sponsored by colleges and vocational schools throughout the country (usually in June and December). The ALS® is additionally offered at regional meetings held in July throughout the country, if the sponsoring region determines it will make the exam available.

Skills Measured:

Written communications—including grammar and word usage, punctuation, number usage, capitalization, spelling, and composition and expression—make up 30 percent of the exam.

Office procedures and legal knowledge—including correspondence, records management, computer information systems, miscellaneous office equipment services, office accounting, and legal knowledge and procedures—make up 30 percent of the exam.

Ethics, human relations, and judgment—including ethical situations involving contact with clients, the public, co-workers, and subordinates; other ethical considerations for the legal profession; examination of decision-making ability; and ability to recognize priorities—make up 40 percent of the exam.

PLS® Examination

ACE Transcript Data: NALS-0009

Dates: March 2002–Present.

Credit Recommendation: At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree category, 3 semester hours in Office Management, 3 semester hours in Computer Literacy, 3 semester hours in Ethics, 3 semester hours in Business Communications, and 3 semester hours in either Introduction to Law or Business Law. **NOTE:** The 3 semester hours in Business Communications do not apply if the examinee has received this credit from the ALS® examination.

Description: PLS® an advanced certification for legal professionals. PLS® is the designation for lawyer's assistants who want to be identified as exceptional. Certification is received after passing a one-day, four-part examination that demonstrates not only dedication to professionalism but acceptance of the challenge to be exceptional. Personal motivation is necessary to attain such a goal.

The PLS® examination is given the first Saturday in March and the last Saturday in September of every year. The PLS® is additionally offered at regional meetings held in July throughout the country, if the sponsoring region determines it will make the exam available.

Skills Measured:

Written communications—including grammar and word usage, punctuation, number usage, capitalization, spelling, and composition and expression—make up 20 percent of the exam.

Office procedures and technology—including records management, computer information systems, miscellaneous equipment and information services, other office procedures and practices, and office accounting—make up 20 percent of the exam.

Ethics and judgment—including ethical situations involving contact with clients, the public, coworkers, and subordinates; other ethical considerations for the legal profession; decision-making and analytical ability; and ability to recognize priorities—make up 20 percent of the exam.

Legal knowledge and skills—including legal knowledge, citations, legal research, and ability to prepare legal documents based on oral instructions and materials—make up 40 percent of the exam.

Written Communications Skills and Knowledge

Credit Recommendation: At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, three semester hours in Business Communications are recommended for examinees scoring 65 and above.

Description: This one-hour-and-fifteen-minute examination covers grammar and word usage, punctuation, number usage, capitalization, spelling, vocabulary, composition and expression, and word division.

Skills Measured: Written business communications.

Ethics

Credit Recommendation: At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, two semester hours in Legal/Business Ethics or Professional Responsibilities are recommended for examinees scoring 65 and above.

Description: This one-hour-and-fifteen-minute examination covers ethical considerations for the legal profession, including understanding what constitutes the unauthorized practice of law, guarding privileged information, avoiding the appearance of impropriety, and preserving identity of funds and property of clients.

Skills Measured: Ethics in the legal profession.

Office Procedures

(Formerly Legal Secretarial Procedures)

Credit Recommendation: *Version 1:* At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, three semester hours in Office Procedures are recommended for examinees scoring 65 and above. *Version 2:* At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, three semester hours in Legal Office Procedures and 1 semester hour in Computer Literacy are recommended for examinees scoring 65 or above.

Description: This one-hour-and-fifteen-minute examination covers records management, office equipment and supplies, information processing, mailing and shipping services, telephone equipment and services, correspondence, and other legal secretarial procedures.

Skills Measured: Legal office procedures.

Accounting

(Formerly Legal Secretarial Accounting)

Credit Recommendation: At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, three semester hours in Office Accounting or Introductory Accounting are recommended for examinees scoring 65 and above.

Description: This two-hour examination covers general banking and financial activities, accounting theory and terminology, and principles of accounting including double-entry system, debits and credits, classification of accounts, record book, and financial statements. (Non-printing calculators may be used for this part of the examination.)

Skills Measured: Office accounting and bookkeeping.

Legal Knowledge and Procedures

(Formerly Legal Terminology, Techniques, and Procedures)

Credit Recommendation: At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, three semester hours in Legal Terminology I and three semester hours in Legal Methods or Legal Bibliography are recommended for examinees scoring 65 and above.

Description: This one-hour-and-fifteen-minute examination covers legal terminology, legal knowledge and procedures, citations in briefs, memoranda, and opinion letters using general citation rules and basic citation forms, legal bibliography, and basic legal research procedures.

Skills Measured: Legal research procedures.

Exercise in Judgment

Credit Recommendation: *Version 1:* At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, four semester hours in Legal Office Procedures II are recommended for examinees scoring 65 and above.

Version 2: At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, three semester hours in Legal Secretarial Capstone or Legal Secretarial Judgment are recommended for examinees scoring 65 or above.

Description: This one-and-one-half-hour examination covers decisions regarding judgment on appropriate actions and priorities. Appropriate action questions and priority questions are based on a factual situation, a calendar, and items such as memos, letters, and legal documents, all contained in the examination packet.

Skills Measured: Legal office procedures.

Legal Secretarial Skills

Credit Recommendation: *Version 1:* At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, six semester hours in Applied Legal Office Procedures or Legal Secretarial Skills are recommended for examinees scoring 65 and above.

Version 2: At the lower division baccalaureate/associate degree level, three semester hours in Applied Legal Office Skills and three semester hours in Legal Document Formatting and Preparation are recommended for examinees scoring 65 or above.

Description: This three-hour examination covers decisions regarding preparation of legal papers based on oral instructions and materials in the examination packet. Topics include comprehension of legal procedural rules and instructions, computations for legal documents, building a legal document in litigation, probate/estate planning, real estate, and proof-reading a legal document.

Skills Measured: Implementation of legal procedures.

Summary of Credit Recommendations for the National Association of Legal Secretaries

Certified Professional Legal Secretary

Test Title	Minimum Score for Awarding Credit	Number of Semester Hours*
ALS Examination	65	3–Business Procedures 3–Business Communications
PLS Examination	65	3–Office Management 3–Computer Literacy 3–Ethics 3–Business Communications 3–Introduction to Law or Business Law
Ethics	65	2–Introduction to Law
Exercise in Judgment	65	4–Legal Office Procedures II
Accounting	65	3–Office Accounting
Office Procedures	65	3–Legal Office Procedures
Legal Secretarial Skills	65	6–Applied Legal Office Procedures or Legal Secretarial Skills
Legal Knowledge and Procedures	65	3–Legal Terminology I and 3–Legal Terminology II
Written Communications	65	3–Business Communications

* All credit recommendations are in the lower-division baccalaureate/associate degree category.