

**MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
LEGAL ASSISTANT PROGRAM**

**COMPETENCY STATEMENT**

**PLA –2932: Seminar on Computer Assisted Legal Research**

**Course Description:**

This seminar provides students with an understanding of computer assisted legal research. The course meets for eight hours on two consecutive Saturdays. Students are required to attend both complete sessions. The first meeting covers the use of Westlaw and the second covers Lexis-Nexis. Students are not required to purchase textbooks. Westlaw and Lexis instruction books are distributed in class. After explaining each system, research assignments are distributed to students by the instructor. Some assignments are completed in class where the instructor guides and assists with the research and others are given as homework assignments, which students complete for a grade. Each student has an individual computer to use in class and an individual training password, which can be used without limitation for several weeks during the term.

**Credits: 1**

**Prerequisites and co-requisites:** The student must complete PLA-2003, Fundamentals of Law, PLA-2104, Legal Research, and PLA-2114, Legal Writing, before enrolling in this course.

**Course Competencies:**

*Competency 1: The student will understand how to conduct online research using Westlaw.*

The student will be able to:

- A. Sign on to the Westlaw system.
- B. Explain how information is arranged on the system.
- C. Describe available databases including those consisting of legal and non-legal material.
- D. Describe how much it costs to research with the system.
- E. Explain how to get help when researching by using toll free numbers.
- F. Describe how to locate a case.
- G. Describe how to locate a statute.
- H. Explain how to research with natural language.
- I. Explain how to research with terms and connectors.
- J. Describe how to check citations using Keycite.
- K. Discuss the existence of other websites and software.
- L. Explain when it would be better to use books than a computer system.
- M. Describe browsing and display options.
- N. Explain how to print.

*Competency 2. The student will learn how to conduct electronic research using Lexis-Nexis online systems.*

The student will be able to:

- A. Sign on to Lexis-Nexis.
- B. Explain how information is arranged.
- C. Describe available databases including those consisting of legal and non-legal material.
- D. Describe how much it costs to research with the system.
- E. Explain how to get help when researching by using toll free numbers.
- F. Describe how to locate a case.
- G. Describe how to locate a statute.
- H. Explain how to research with terms and connectors.
- I. Explain how to research with natural language.
- J. Explain how to use Shepard's Citation Service
- K. Explain when it would be better to use books than a computer system.
- L. Describe browsing and display options.
- M. Explain how to print.

Rev. 4/03