Approval for Limited Use of Virtual Site Visits and Approval Commission Authority to Address Changes Necessitated by COVID-19 Pandemic

Pursuant to G-104.J, paralegal education programs seeking ABA approval or reapproval must host a site visit at their own expense. The hosting of site visits has been impacted due to continuing concerns relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) has given its accreditors, including the American Bar Association for the accreditation of its Law Schools, the authority to move site visits online during the period where schools are closed. While the ABA Standing Committee on Paralegals (Standing Committee) is not an accrediting agency approved by the DOE, the Standing Committee recognizes the difficulties for the continuing approval of paralegal programs absent some accommodation and adaption to the present situation. Therefore, in order to ensure the integrity of the ABA approval process for paralegal programs while also ensuring the health and safety of all those concerned, the Standing Committee has adopted the following policy:

1. In order to continue the work of the Approval Commission of the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Paralegals (Approval Commission) to recommend approval of paralegal education programs, virtual site visits may be conducted during the period September 1, 2020 through April 30, 2021.
2. The approval for virtual site visits is authorized solely to ensure the continuation of the ABA approval process during the period paralegal programs were impacted due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, virtual site visits will not be permitted prior to September 1, 2020 or subsequent to April 30, 2021.
3. Paralegal programs seeking initial approval and programs currently under sanction may not host a virtual visit.
4. The approval period for approved programs will be extended if a site visit cannot take place during the period the programs are impacted due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
5. The Approval Commission is given the authority to determine under what circumstances the Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs (Guidelines) are deemed to be satisfied when a program, operating in accordance with its institution’s policies addressing changes necessitated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, falls out of compliance with the Guidelines.
6. The Approval Commission will issue Guidelines for Conducting Virtual Site Visits.

Adopted by the Standing Committee on Paralegals June 9, 2020