



Student Handbook



The Path to Career Success Begins Here!

www.blackstone.edu

info@blackstone.edu

800-826-9228

Excellence in Education Since 1890

A Message from the Director of Education

I would like to personally welcome you to Blackstone Career Institute. On behalf of the Education Department, I want you to know that we are pleased you made the decision to enroll with us. Our goal is to make your studies the best school experience possible. I have been fortunate to spend my professional career helping students like you, so I've seen first hand just how much our students really do benefit from our programs.

Our lessons are well-structured and will guide you step-by-step through the program. However, I want you to know that whenever you have a question, you can contact us. The staff here is always available to help our students.

By enrolling in this program, you have taken the first step toward a successful future. I recommend that you carefully read through this handbook before you begin your studies. You should also set up a study schedule for yourself. Maintaining good study habits will make it easier for you to progress, enjoy the program, and benefit from the material.

I would also like to let you know about Blackstone's recognition program for its highest-achieving students enrolled in our career training programs. Any student who achieves an average of 94% or higher at the end of their program will qualify as graduating "with Distinction." The certificate issued upon graduation will note this honor. If you put in the effort from the start, you will be on the right track to completing the program and earning this distinction. Steady progress with time spent reviewing key points before you take an exam will result in scores that reflect your efforts and admittance to our honors program.

Again, welcome to Blackstone, where your success is our goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valerie L. Behrle B.S., M.Ed." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Valerie L. Behrle B.S., M.Ed.
Director of Education

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ABOUT BLACKSTONE

Our History

If you search back issues of the World Book Encyclopedia you will find Blackstone listed as one of the oldest correspondence schools in the nation, founded in 1890 as the Blackstone School of Law in Chicago. In the early 1900s, the Modern American Law Series was developed for the program and was enthusiastically received by the legal community and laymen alike as a simple yet authoritative commentary on the law. In the late 1970s, Blackstone became a legal assistant/paralegal school and moved to Dallas. Additional study units on legal research, ethics, and employment skills were added so that graduating students could sit for the Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) exam.

Direct Learning Systems, Inc., an online publishing company, purchased the legal assistant/paralegal school from the retiring owner in 2001 and relocated Blackstone to Pennsylvania. Distance education programs in a variety of career fields have been added to the Blackstone curriculum, as well as continuing legal education courses.

Mission Statement

“A pioneer in distance education, Blackstone Career Institute has been meeting the needs of adult learners since 1890. The school’s mission is to change people’s lives through education, teaching them new skills and preparing them for entry-level careers in today’s high demand fields. Blackstone offers adult learners convenient and affordable training that accommodates their busy schedules while helping them successfully meet their educational goals. As a nationally and regionally accredited school, we fulfill our mission by providing high-quality, effective, technology-driven distance education programs and services.”

Licensure and Accreditation

Blackstone Career Institute (BCI) is licensed by the Pennsylvania State Board of Private Licensed Schools, ensuring the highest quality curriculum and standards of business operations available. BCI is also nationally accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council, Washington, D.C., and regionally accredited by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools, Philadelphia, PA.

GETTING STARTED

Student Information

Below you will find a place to record your Student ID number, and the Username and Password you will create when you are using our Online Student Center. The cover of this handbook includes our phone number and e-mail address for your reference. Keep this handbook somewhere safe so that this information is readily available. Please include your Student ID number on all of your correspondence and have it on hand when you contact us.

Fill in the information below and keep this book handy.

Student ID: _____

Online Student Center

Username: _____

Password: _____

First Things First!

Before you begin your lessons, please read this handbook: it will explain our procedures and policies so that you can easily access your course materials, use the Online Student Center, submit exams, and successfully obtain your certificate.


We also ask you to make sure the contact information (including the shipping address, phone number, e-mail address) shown on your enrollment agreement is correct. If there are any omissions or errors, please contact us immediately so we can correct the information to ensure that all of your materials and our communications continue to reach you.

You must provide an active e-mail address to us since we send important communications to you via e-mail. Please report all e-mail address changes to us promptly as well as changes to your mailing address.

Your welcome package includes everything you need to get started. However, you can begin your studies immediately by creating your online student account and reading your first study unit. When you feel sufficiently prepared, take your exam online. Remember, exams are open book, so feel free to refer to all of your study materials as you take your exams.

Signing into the Online Student Center

Blackstone's Online Student Center makes it easy to access your lessons, exams, grades, payment and shipping history, as well as to join the online community of students. Use the following instructions to begin:

- Go to www.blackstone.edu and click on the  button for the Online Student Center on the left side of the homepage under the heading “**Student Resources**,” as shown in Figure 1.
- Click on “First Time Users Click Here” (**in blue below password screen**), as illustrated in Figure 2.
- Create a **Username** and **Password** to log in with, and remember that these are case sensitive. Record your Username and Password on the student information label on page 5 of this handbook for future reference when you log in.
- Enter your Password again; then enter your **Student ID number, E-Mail Address, City/Town, and Country**.
- Click on “**Create My New Account**.”

After several minutes you will receive an e-mail confirming receipt of your registration. Click on the e-mail to complete your registration. You will now be able to access your student account.

Once you are signed in to the Online Student Center, you will see links on the left side of the screen. You can click on these links to view the following information:

- **Downloading Lessons**—click on Course Outline and follow the on-screen instructions.
- **Grade Summary**—grade reports can be viewed and printed.
- **Shipment Summary**—shipment date can be viewed.
- **Payment Summary**—payment history can be viewed.
- **Online Help**—link for additional information.

Figure 1

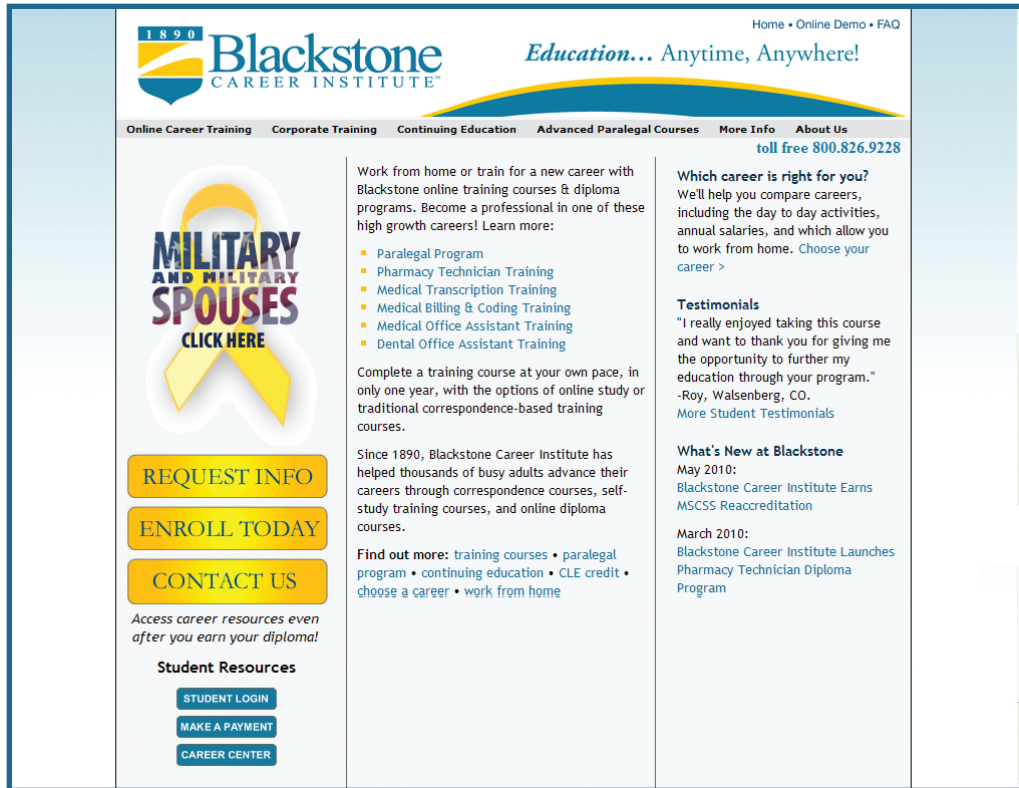
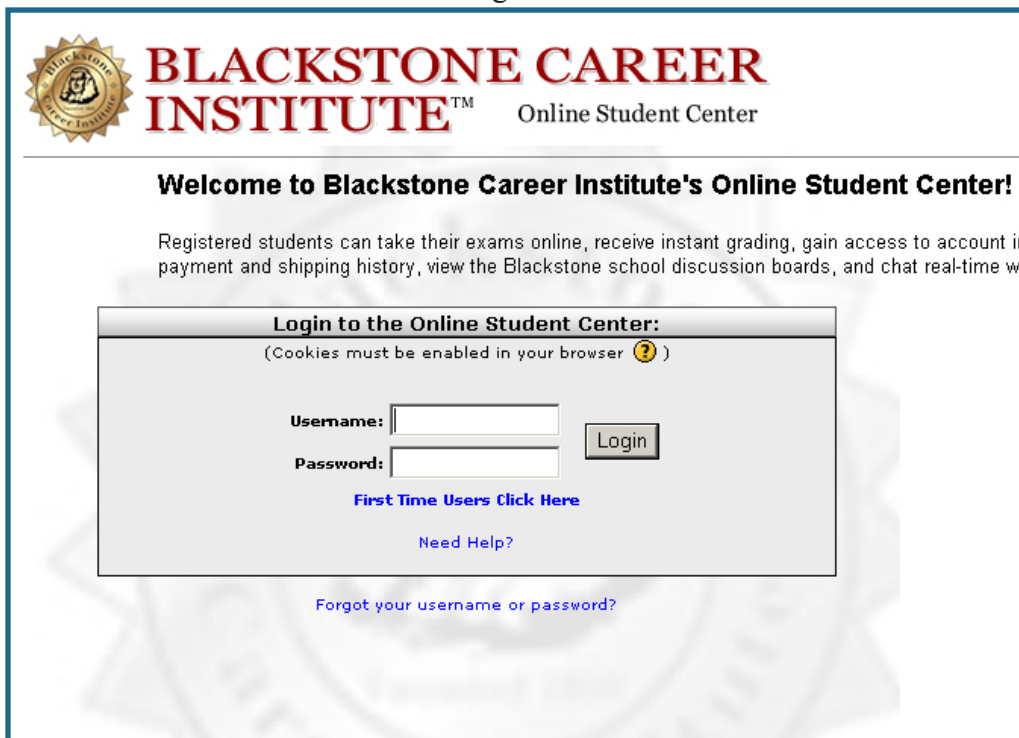


Figure 2



How to Contact Us

Your success is important to us. If you have a question about your account or need help with your studies, our friendly staff is here to help you. We take pride in delivering outstanding service and our staff can be counted on to assist you in your program.

There are two ways to contact us:

1. You may reach us by e-mail at instructor@blackstone.edu. Tell us what lesson you are studying, the page number, exam/question number, and how we can help. Please include your Student ID number. You will receive a response within one business day.
2. You may call the school Monday through Friday during the hours of 8:30 A.M.–4:30 P.M. (EST). If you call after hours, please leave a message with your name, Student ID number, the lesson name, and the page number where you are having trouble or the exam and question number. Also, let us know the best time to call you back. We will try to reach you as quickly as we can. Our phone number is **(800) 826-9228**.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Program Schedules

The time limit for the completion of lesson assignments depends upon the program or course in which you are enrolled and will either be six months or one year from your official start date. If additional time is needed an extension may be granted if requested in writing, by phone, or by e-mail.

- **The Legal Assistant/Paralegal Program** has 31 lessons and exams. You will need to complete a lesson and submit an exam every week to two weeks in order to complete your studies within 12 months.
- **Career Training Programs** range from 16 to 18 Study Units. You should complete a lesson and exam approximately every two to three weeks in order to complete your studies within 12 months.
- **Advanced Paralegal Courses** have six lessons and six exams. We recommend that you complete a study unit once a month to finish within six months.

Setting a Study Schedule

Here is an easy way to make a study schedule:

1. How many lessons in your course? _____
 2. Number of weeks to complete a lesson? _____
 - If you can study 1 hour a day - 2 weeks.
 - If you can study 2 hours a day - 1 week.
1. _____ x 2. _____ = _____
(number of lessons) (number of weeks to complete a lesson) (completion time)

Course Interruption

If you need a temporary leave of absence from the program, a request should be made in writing to Blackstone. One three-month leave of absence regarding your study will be granted for good cause. A leave of absence does **not** extend the required time for completion.

Holidays and Closures

Blackstone provides a calendar of scheduled closures for the year on our website, in the "Contact Us" page (<http://www.blackstone.edu/contact-us/>).

Honesty

The basis of independent study is each student individually completing his or her own work. Since students study at their own pace and schedule their own exams, there should never be any undue pressure when taking an exam. Blackstone does encourage students to be fully prepared prior to taking any exam. The use of any notes or program materials is allowed since each exam is open-book. The objective is to learn and understand the materials you are studying. Any student suspected of academic dishonesty will be suspended from the program.

Online Student Center Discussion Board Acceptable Use Policy

Students can post comments on a variety of topics pertaining to their program, but they are prohibited from sharing exam answers or discussing specific exam material. We also ask students to respect each others' opinions and to refrain from inappropriate language. We reserve the right to delete any comments that we feel are inappropriate for the student community. If we feel that you are not staying within our guidelines, we will remove your posting privileges for 30 days. They can be reinstated after that time period.

Student Grievance Procedure

If a student has a question or problem, please contact the Blackstone Student Services staff. If your problem is not resolved, you may direct your complaint in writing to the General Manager/Director of Operations and he will respond within 10 business days. Concerns that have not been satisfactorily resolved by the Blackstone staff may be directed to 1) the State Board of Private Licensed Schools, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Education, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333, Phone: 717-783-8228, or 2) the Accrediting Commission, Distance Education and Training Council, 1601 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009, Phone: 202-234-5100.

Exams and Grading

Upon conclusion of each lesson or study unit, students will be required to complete an exam through the Online Student Center. Grade Reports are returned instantly to students upon taking their exam in the Online Student Center.

Blackstone continually revises its course materials—please read all questions carefully and respond to questions as they appear in your online exam.

The individual examinations are scored on a straight numerical basis. Once a student has completed all of the examinations in a course, the final grade is determined by averaging all the lesson grades together. The equivalent letter grade is determined by the following scale:

Letter Grade		Numerical Equivalent
A	Excellent	94-100
B	Good	86-93
C	Satisfactory	78-85
D	Passing	70-77
F	Failing	Below 70
W	Withdrawal	

Homework assignments, if included in your program, are graded on a satisfactory vs. unsatisfactory basis. Students are required to resubmit an unsatisfactory assignment. Homework grades are not calculated into your average; however, satisfactory completion of all assignments is required for graduation.

Retesting

Students who receive 69% or lower on any exam will be eligible for a retest. Blackstone policy is that any student who passes a retest may not score higher than 70%, no matter what grade they received on the retest. Students who fail to achieve a minimum passing grade (70%) on a retest will receive the higher grade of the two failed exams and the score will be calculated into the final average. No further retesting is available.

Academic Records

Blackstone Career Institute complies with the Family Education and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. This act is designed to protect the privacy of educational records, to establish the rights of students to inspect and review their educational records, and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate or misleading data through informal and formal hearings.

A student who believes that an error has been made in assignment of a grade must initiate contact with the school within 30 days from the date the grade was posted. Failure to act within 30 days disqualifies the student from further consideration of the matter.

Students are responsible for reporting any other type of error on their academic record. Blackstone Career Institute is not liable for unreported errors

Change of Name or Address

In order to receive information essential to your studies, you must promptly report all changes in name, mailing address, or e-mail address to Blackstone by telephone, e-mail or mail. A change in name will require proof, such as a marriage license. Blackstone is not responsible for reshipment or replacement costs of course materials if an address change has not been received by the school.

Graduation and Completion Documents

Upon successful completion of the program the student is awarded a transcript and a certificate. In order to earn a certificate, a student must achieve a minimum average of 70% in the course.

A certificate and an official transcript of record are furnished to the student at the conclusion of the course without charge. For additional copies, a nominal fee is charged. Students may print an unofficial transcript from the Online Student Center at any time.

Honors Program

The Honors Program is for recognition of Blackstone Career Institute's highest achieving students in the career training programs. Any student who attains a final average of 94–100% at the end of their career training program will qualify as graduating "with Distinction." The certificate issued upon graduation will note this honor.

LexisNexis

For students in the Legal Assistant/Paralegal Program, Blackstone includes four months of access to the LexisNexis® Total Research System. The student membership includes an online tutorial, a 24-hour help line and a step-by-step LexisNexis® learning guide. LexisNexis provides online access to state and federal case law; codes and statutes; court documents; over 3.5 billion public records; business, legal, and regional news; expert commentary on the law; Shepard's® Citations Service; and more. You will also complete the Paralegal Certificate of Mastery Program at lexis.com® to receive additional training and a Paralegal Certificate of Mastery.

STUDENT RESOURCES

The Blackstone Online Community

As a distance education student, you may be wondering how you can communicate with fellow students and keep in touch with your school. Blackstone has several ways for you to become engaged in our community, including:

- Discussion boards and live chat rooms in our Online Student Center.
- A growing Facebook group that you can use to network with current students and alumni.
- An quarterly e-newsletter that offers useful information and tips for career success, as well as school news.

We welcome you to the BCI Student Community and encourage you to take an active role by participating in all of our online opportunities!

Blackstone Career Center

BCI's online career center provides valuable information for job seekers, with information specially geared to assist graduates of the career training programs. Look for the link to the career center at www.blackstone.edu under the heading "Student Resources." The career center is organized into three areas:

Job Search Strategies: Learn how to coordinate your job search, find resume writing and interviewing tips, become skilled in networking, and make yourself marketable to employers.

Job Search Databank: Search employment networks to find local or national job listings or companies in your field. You can search general job databases or sites dedicated solely to your career choice. Find career fairs, internships, or a career counselor in your area.

Career Resources: Search sites dedicated to your career, such as organizations, research tools, books, journals, job forums and job postings. Find valuable information on certifications that may be available and read articles on the latest updates in your field.

Questions?

E-mail: info@blackstone.edu, 24 hours

Fax: 610-871-0034, 24 hours

Call toll-free: 1-800-826-9228, Monday–Friday 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Blackstone Career Institute



LICENSURE, ACCREDITATION, AND MEMBERSHIPS

Blackstone Career Institute's credentials are your assurance that Blackstone meets quality educational and business standards set by reputable organizations that have assessed our programs and business operations. Blackstone is:

- Licensed by the State Board of Private Licensed Schools, Department of Education, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- Nationally accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council, Washington, D.C.
- Regionally accredited by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools, Philadelphia, PA.
- An accredited member of the Better Business Bureau with a rating of A+
- Member of the Greater Lehigh Valley, PA Chamber of Commerce
- Selected by *G.I. Jobs* magazine as a Military-Friendly School
- Active Corporate Partners with the Military Spouse Employers Partnership



VISIT US ONLINE AT
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