

Course Outcomes Guide

Course/Program Title: PLS 101 Introduction to Paralegal Studies
2014

Date: May

Course/Program Team: Loretta Thornhill

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of terms and facts of this subject
2. Apply basic knowledge to new situations
3. Solve problems
4. Communicate solutions
5. Demonstrate professional and ethical behavior

Assessment:

1. Students demonstrate achievement of the outcomes through quizzes and exams. In addition, the outcomes are assessed through the production of homework assignments which include billing, drafting legal documents and drafting pleadings. The assignments are to be corrected and included in a professional portfolio of the semester's work. Outcomes are also assessed through class discussions and class projects. This past semester I added a short research project and oral presentation to the class to stress communication.
2. The Paralegal Studies program has an active advisory committee which meets at least once annually. One of the topics of discussion is always an assessment of our students, the courses and the program. The following are a constant topic for discussion:
 - *a deficit in writing skills
 - *a deficit in proofreading skills
 - *lack of professionalism
3. In the Fall semester 2012 we launched a pilot assessment tool. Each paralegal professor was asked to select at least one major assignment which would demonstrate skills and knowledge offered in the course. The course outcomes assessments consisted of three parts:
 - *a common grading rubric
 - *a common grading sheet
 - *a common data collection sheet

Based on the data we are able to assess whether students have successfully met desired outcomes (the 5 outcomes listed above). The data also indicates where we need to modify course content to improve achievement of learning outcomes.

DATA from Spring 2014 assessment:

A complaint and bill were used as the assessment tool to retrieve this data.

OUTCOME

	Element 1	Element 2	Element 3	Element 4	Element 5	
# of students w/ 5 pts	3	2	2	3	3	
# of students w/ 4 pts			1			
# of students w/ 3 pts	1	1	1	1		
# of students w/ 2 pts	1	1	1	1	2	
# of students w/ 1 pts		1				
# of students w/ 0 pts						

Validation: approximately 35% of test questions come from chapter review questions/terminology lists in the textbook.

Input from the advisory committee also serves as validation.

Results: Learning outcomes assessments indicate that students are weak in writing skills.

Assessments indicate that students are not prepared for the workplace through a lack of professional attitudes and behaviors.

Assessments indicate that students are weak in proofreading skills.

There is evidence that the students do not follow directions.

There is evidence that the students cannot adapt forms.

Follow up: More and more assignments will be given for additional practice in writing and proofreading as well as in translating instruction into practice. If indicated, students are referred to the Learning Success Center for additional assistance.

All instructors in all Paralegal courses should incorporate discussions and exercises to focus on the need to dress professionally, demonstrate good manners, and demonstrate self-motivation and initiative. Each semester a working professional in the legal field is invited to focus on professional expectations and realities in the legal field.

Course Outcomes Guide

Course/Program Title: PLS 101 Introduction to Paralegal Studies

Date: 1/9/14

Course/Program Team: Loretta Thornhill

Student Learning Outcomes:

6. Demonstrate knowledge of terms and facts of this subject
7. Apply basic knowledge to new situations
8. Solve problems
9. Communicate solutions
10. Demonstrate professional and ethical behavior

Assessment:

1. Students demonstrate achievement of the outcomes through quizzes and exams. In addition, the outcomes are assessed through the production of homework assignments which include billing, drafting legal documents and drafting pleadings. The assignments are to be corrected and included in a professional portfolio of the semester's work. Outcomes are also assessed through class discussions and class projects. In the Fall 2013 semester I changed the **instructional design** of the course to spend more time in class "doing" rather than lecturing.

2. The Paralegal Studies program has an active advisory committee which meets at least once annually. One of the topics of discussion is always an assessment of our students, the courses and the program. The following are a constant topic for discussion:

- *a deficit in writing skills
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3. In the Fall semester 2012 we launched a pilot assessment tool. Each paralegal professor was asked to select at least one major assignment which would demonstrate skills and knowledge offered in the course. The course outcomes assessments consisted of three parts:

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Based on the data we are able to assess whether students have successfully met desired outcomes (the 5 outcomes listed above). The data also indicates where we need to modify course content to improve achievement of learning outcomes.

DATA from Fall 2013 assessment:

A complaint and bill were used as the assessment tool to retrieve this data. There were 13 students who participated in the assessment.

	Element 1 (see learning outcome 1 above)	Element 2	Element 3	Element 4	Element 5
# of students with 5 (the maximum) points	8	5	5	2	6
# of students with 4	4	6	2	5	1
# of students with 3	1	2	5	6	6

Validation: approximately 35% of test questions come from chapter review questions/terminology lists in the textbook.

Input from the advisory committee also serves as validation.

Results: Learning outcomes assessments indicate that students are weak in writing skills.

Assessments indicate that students are not prepared for the workplace through a lack of professional attitudes and behaviors.

Assessments indicate that students are weak in proofreading skills.

Follow up: More and more assignments will be given for additional practice in writing and proofreading as well as in translating instruction into practice. If indicated, students are referred to the Learning Success Center for additional assistance.

All instructors in all Paralegal courses should incorporate discussions and exercises to focus on the need to dress professionally, demonstrate good manners, and demonstrate self-motivation and initiative. Each semester a working professional in the legal field is invited to focus on professional expectations and realities in the legal field.

In Spring 2014, a new assessment will be added to this course: a research project where the student will be required to do research on a course-related topic, submit an outline of their material with an appropriate works cited page, and do a short presentation to the class.