

## Program Outcomes Guide

**Directions:** Please complete this form to document your progress toward improving student learning. For each item, indicate your progress and your anticipated next steps. Thank you!

**Program Title:** Paralegal Studies DEGREE      **Date:** SPRING 2014

**Program Team:** Loretta Thornhill, adjunct faculty, and members of the advisory committee

### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

- 1. apply legal practices and procedures (such as billing, time-keeping, etc.)**
- 2. explain and demonstrate mastery of substantive areas of the law common to this market (such as real estate, wills, business organizations and litigation)**
- 3. produce appropriate legal pleadings, documents and correspondence**
- 4. research the law through books and databases with appropriate analysis of the law**
- 5. communicate effectively**
- 6. demonstrate computer literacy**
- 7. think critically and problem solve**
- 8. demonstrate professional attitudes and traits**

**Assessment** (How do or will students demonstrate achievement of each outcome?)

**Outcome 1:** Through production of quality work in various classes; testing; application of material in successful internships

**Outcome 2:** Through production of quality work in various classes; testing; through completion of assignments and projects; through a professional portfolio in multiple classes; through a successful internship

**Outcome 3:** through production of quality work in multiple classes; through the production of a professional portfolio of work in multiple classes

**Outcome 4:** through successful completion of research assignments in multiple classes (using books and Lexis-Nexis); the production of quality written assignments such as case briefs and research memos in multiple classes

**Outcome 5:** through effective oral communication (including answering questions, participating in group discussions and presentations; through effective written assignments in all paralegal classes; through mock interviews done each spring with members of the Hagerstown legal community

**Outcome 6:** through production of quality work in all paralegal classes using a variety of computer skills and the ability to do legal research using Lexis-Nexis and other computer resources

**Outcome 7:** through “solving legal problems” in various case studies in multiple classes, through research projects, through the application of lecture material to work production, through revisions of form documents to legal scenarios

**Outcome 8:** through professional behavior in the classroom which includes timeliness, courtesy, responsibility, self-motivation; through interaction with guest speakers

scheduled each semester; through the mock interview which is a capstone experience for the students

**Multiple outcomes:** Through grading rubrics used on one major assignment in each class (developed Fall 2012).

**Multiple outcomes:** Through a Curriculum Map developed Fall 2012 and revised Spring 2013.

The data below summarizes the feedback from the mock interviews in Spring 2014.

	outstanding	Average	fair		
Professional appearance	8	2			
Professional demeanor	9	1			
Letter	7	3			
Resume	7	2	1		
Portfolio	6	4			

NOTE: there were multiple written comments that were very helpful too. These focused mainly on the portfolio—punctuation, proofreading and format errors..

**Validation** (What methods have you used or will you use to validate your assessment?)

**\*External validation through the mock interviews. Interviewers fill out a rubric and the results are shared with the students. Areas considered are the portfolio and professionalism of the student.**

**\*Employment in the field and continuing education would also be external measures of success.**

**\*An annual assessment (informal) of the students, courses and program by the advisory committee.**

**\*Reliance on textbooks as a partial source of exam questions in some courses.**

**Results** (What do your assessment data show? If you have not yet assessed student achievement of your learning outcomes, when is assessment planned?)

**\*Feedback indicates a need for a constant emphasis on professionalism in all classes (dress, behavior and attitudes).**

**\*Feedback indicates that writing skills are weak.**

**\*Feedback indicates proofreading is an area for improvement**

**\*Feedback indicates that students do not have realistic expectations of work demands and requirements**

**\*Feedback indicates that more hands-on, practical exercises would be valuable**

**\*Data collected from the common assessment also indicates that students don't follow directions, have trouble adapting forms, have trouble applying new facts to examples.**

**Follow-up** (How have you used or how will you use the data to improve student learning?)

**\*Stress professionalism (traits, work attitudes, dress, etc.) in all classes. The faculty is expected to incorporate this topic in each course. I have speakers so that the students might have the chance to interact with professionals. I had two guest speakers in Spring 2014 to expose the students to working professionals. I have Professional Dress Day for the students every semester. We talk about professional dress. In the Intro class we also talk about working in a legal office—the need to work independently, be organized, be loyal, etc.**

**\*Give more writing assignments. All faculty are expected to give multiple writing assignments. These should have increasing difficulty as the semester goes along.**

**\*Refer students to the Learning Success Center to address deficits in writing skills. Also, suggest that they purchase writing manuals.**

### **Budget Justification**

(What resources are necessary to improve student learning?)

Current resources are adequate

\*\*\*\*\*

**Program Title: Paralegal Studies Degree**

**Date: SPRING 2013**

**Program Team: Loretta Thornhill, adjunct faculty, and members of the advisory committee**

### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

- 1. apply legal practices and procedures (such as billing, time-keeping, etc.)**
- 2. explain and demonstrate mastery of substantive areas of the law common to this market (such as real estate, wills, business organizations and litigation)**
- 3. produce appropriate legal pleadings, documents and correspondence**
- 4. research the law through books and databases with appropriate analysis of the law**
- 5. communicate effectively**
- 6. demonstrate computer literacy**
- 7. think critically and problem solve**
- 8. demonstrate professional attitudes and traits**

**Assessment (How do or will students demonstrate achievement of each outcome?)**

- 1. Outcome 1: Through production of quality work in various classes; testing; application of material in successful internships**
- 2. Outcome 2: Through production of quality work in various classes; testing; through completion of assignments and projects; through a professional portfolio in multiple classes; through a successful internship**
- 3. Outcome 3: through production of quality work in multiple classes; through the production of a professional portfolio of work in multiple classes**
- 4. Outcome 4: through successful completion of research assignments in multiple classes (using books and Lexis-Nexis); the production of quality written assignments such as case briefs and research memos in multiple classes**

5. **Outcome 5:** through effective oral communication (including answering questions, participating in group discussions and presentations; through effective written assignments in all paralegal classes; through mock interviews done each spring with members of the Hagerstown legal community
6. **Outcome 6:** through production of quality work in all paralegal classes using a variety of computer skills and the ability to do legal research using Lexis-Nexis and other computer resources
7. **Outcome 7:** through “solving legal problems” in various case studies in multiple classes, through research projects, through the application of lecture material to work production, through revisions of form documents to legal scenarios
8. **Outcome 8:** through professional behavior in the classroom which includes timeliness, courtesy, responsibility, self-motivation; through interaction with guest speakers scheduled each semester; through the mock interview which is a capstone experience for the students
9. **Multiple outcomes:** Through grading rubrics used on one major assignment in each class (developed Fall 2012 and implemented in those courses offered in the Fall semester.)
10. **Multiple outcomes:** Through a Curriculum Map developed Fall 2012 and revised Spring 2013.
11. **Multiple outcomes:** Through an assessment tool called the Program Outcomes Assessment. This tool was launched in the Fall 2012 semester and is intended to gather data on program outcomes. Each professor was required to identify which of the 8 program outcomes were being met in his/her class; determine a desired result (such as 85% of all students produce a portfolio of work with an overall of 70% or better); identify the actual result; identify of the outcome was being met; identify an appropriate follow up. A copy of the Program Outcomes Assessment is attached. (It will be completed at the end of the Sp 13 semester.)

## **Results from mock interview May 6, 2013; 12 students; 6 sites used**

	Outstanding	Average	Fair
Professional appearance	11	1	
Professional demeanor	11	1	
Letter of application	9	3	
Resume	11	1	
Portfolio*	9	3	

Additional comments:

Follow up:

This continues to be a very successful exercise. It markets our students to the legal community and it gives the students very valuable interviewing experience. Comments (not reflected) are very positive. Data indicates that more focus should be placed on the letter of application and making sure their portfolios are in the best shape possible.

Spring 2013

<b>COURSE</b>	<b>Which outcomes are being met</b>	<b>Desired result</b>	<b>Actual result</b>	<b>Outcomes being met or not</b>	<b>Follow up</b>
PLS 101 Intro to Paralegal Studies	1,2,3,5,6,7,8	85% of students produce a portfolio of work with an overall average of 70% or better	Spring 2013 40% of the students met the goal	Outcomes not being met	The most significant factor is that students simply did not do their homework. I plan to “flip” the class and use more class time doing interactive projects with the students.
PLS 103 Legal Writing and Documents	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	85% of students produce a portfolio of work with an overall average of 70% or better	Spring 2013 100% of the students met the goal	Outcomes were met	No major changes required
PLS 104 Principles of Litigation	2,3,4,5,6,7,8	90% of students to demonstrate a mastery of principles of litigation by testing and production of portfolio of	Spring 2013 100% of students met the goal	Outcomes were met	No major changes required

		assignments with an overall average of 70% or better			
PLS 203 Domestic Relations	2,3,4,5,6,7,8	85% of students produce a portfolio of work with an overall average of 70% or better	Spring 2013  63% of the students met the goal	Outcomes were not met	The data indicates that use of vocabulary and writing are areas needing most improvement. Possible solutions would be to give more assignments using those skills and also referring students to the Learning Success Center
PLS 207 Real Estate	2,3,4,5,6,7, 8	85% of enrolled students produce course work with an overall average of 75% or better	Spring 2013 63% produced work with an overall average of 75% or better	Outcomes not being met	Data indicates that the areas needing improvement are format, vocabulary and writing. Solutions include additional assignments using those skills as well as referring students to the Learning Success Center

**Validation** (What methods have you used or will you use to validate your assessment?)

**\*External validation through the mock interviews. Interviewers fill out a rubric and the results are shared with the students. Areas considered are the portfolio and professionalism of the student.**

**\*Program review conducted by the advisory committee in June 2009. Skills necessary for the local market were identified as well as necessary subject areas for entry-level paralegals. Course offerings were examined to determine if the appropriate skill and substantive areas were being adequately covered.**

**\*Employment in the field and continuing education would also be external measures of success.**

**\*An annual assessment (informal) of the students, courses and program by the advisory committee.**

**\*Reliance on textbooks as a partial source of exam questions in some courses.**

**Results** (What do your assessment data show? If you have not yet assessed student achievement of your learning outcomes, when is assessment planned?)

**\*Feedback indicates a need for a constant emphasis on professionalism in all classes.**

**\*Feedback indicates that writing skills are weak.**

**\*Feedback indicates proofreading is an area for improvement**

**\*Feedback indicates that students do not have realistic expectations of work demands and requirements**

**\*Feedback indicates that more hands-on, practical exercises would be valuable**

**\*Some data has been collected from the Grading Rubric for the course level assessment and the Program Outcomes Assessment).**

**Follow-up** (How have you used or how will you use the data to improve student learning?)

**\*Stress professionalism (traits, work attitudes, dress, etc.) in all classes. All faculty are expected to incorporate this topic in each course. A speaker in Fall 2010 spoke to the Introduction to Paralegal Studies class on this topic focusing on the transition from school to work. Students were also invited to dress professionally or bring in photos of appropriate professional attire. In the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters I had Professional Dress Day for the students. I plan to have a professional dress day every semester to encourage students to think about their appearance. In the Fall 2011 I had two guest speakers talking about building a professional wardrobe and professional dressing. In Spring 2012 the speaker spoke about mediation. In Fall 2012 I had an attorney speak to my students and she spoke about the transition from school to work as well as the “Top Ten Things You Need to Know to be Successful.”**

**\*Give more writing assignments. All faculty are expected to give multiple writing assignments.**

**\*Continue the speaker series so that students have a better idea of what is expected in the workforce.**

### **Budget Justification**

(What resources are necessary to improve student learning?)

Current resources are adequate

\*\*\*\*\*

SPRING 2012

1. apply legal practices and procedures (such as billing, time-keeping, etc.)
2. explain and demonstrate mastery of substantive areas of the law common to this market (such as real estate, wills, business organizations and litigation)
3. produce appropriate legal pleadings, documents and correspondence
4. research the law through books and databases with appropriate analysis of the law
5. communicate effectively
6. demonstrate computer literacy
7. think critically and problem solve
8. demonstrate professional attitudes and traits

**Validation** (What methods have you used or will you use to validate your assessment?)

**\*External validation through the mock interviews. Interviewers fill out a rubric and the results are shared with the students. Areas considered are the portfolio and professionalism of the student.**

**\*Program review conducted by the advisory committee in June 2009. Skills necessary for the local market were identified as well as necessary subject areas for entry-level paralegals. Course offerings were examined to determine if the appropriate skill and substantive areas were being adequately covered.**

**\*Employment in the field and continuing education would also be external measures of success.**

**\*An annual assessment (informal) of the students, courses and program by the advisory committee.**

**\*Reliance on textbooks as a partial source of exam questions in some courses.**

**Results** (What do your assessment data show? If you have not yet assessed student achievement of your learning outcomes, when is assessment planned?)

**\*Feedback indicates a need for a constant emphasis on professionalism in all classes.**

**\*Feedback indicates that writing skills are weak.**

**\*Feedback indicates proofreading is an area for improvement**

**\*Feedback indicates that students do not have realistic expectations of work demands and requirements**

**\*Feedback indicates that more hands-on, practical exercises would be valuable**

**\*Some data has been collected from the Grading Rubric for the course level assessment and the Program Outcomes Assessment).**

**Follow-up** (How have you used or how will you use the data to improve student learning?)

**\*Stress professionalism (traits, work attitudes, dress, etc.) in all classes. All faculty are expected to incorporate this topic in each course. A speaker in Fall 2010 spoke to the**

**Introduction to Paralegal Studies class on this topic focusing on the transition from school to work. Students were also invited to dress professionally or bring in photos of appropriate professional attire. In the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters I had Professional Dress Day for the students. I plan to have a professional dress day every semester to encourage students to think about their appearance. In the Fall 2011 I had two guest speakers talking about building a professional wardrobe and professional dressing. In Spring 2012 the speaker spoke about mediation. In Fall 2012 I had an attorney speak to my students and she spoke about the transition from school to work as well as the “Top Ten Things You Need to Know to be Successful.”**

**\*Give more writing assignments. All faculty are expected to give multiple writing assignments.**

**\*Continue the speaker series so that students have a better idea of what is expected in the workforce.**

**Budget Justification**

(What resources are necessary to improve student learning?)

Current resources are adequate

Spring 2012

<b>COURSE</b>	<b>Which outcomes are being met</b>	<b>Desired result</b>	<b>Actual result</b>	<b>Outcomes being met or not</b>	<b>Follow up</b>
PLS 101 Intro to Paralegal Studies	1,2,3,5,6,7,8	85% of students produce a portfolio of work with an overall average of 70% or better	Spring 2012 100% of the students met the goal	Outcomes being met	No major changes required
PLS 102 Legal Research	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	85% of students produce case briefs with an overall average of 70% or better	Course not offered in the Spring 2102		
PLS 103 Legal Writing and Documents	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	85% of students produce a portfolio of work with an overall average of 70% or better	Spring 2012 83% of the students met the goal	Outcomes were not met— academic integrity issue with two students; otherwise the outcomes	No major changes required

				were met	
PLS 104 Principles of Litigation			Not offered in Fall 2012		
PLS 105 Contracts and Torts	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	90% of students to demonstrate a mastery of contracts and tort law by testing and production of portfolio of assignments with an overall average of 70% or better	Fall 2012 92% of students met goal	Outcomes being met	No major changes are required
PLS 203 Domestic Relations			No data collected		
PLS 207 Real Estate	2,3,4,5,6,7, 8	100% of enrolled students produce course work with an overall average of 75% or better	Spring 2012 67% produced work with an overall average of 79.5%	Outcomes not being met	3 students were chronically absent, 3 failed to turn in homework assignments, 2 failed to turn in a major project; require better word processing skills, more emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, communication and professional development