Course Outcomes Guide

Course/Program Title: PLS 102 Legal Research   Date: 1/9/14

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Expected 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 legal research projects throughout the semester which utilize both the computer (Lexis-Nexis and the Internet) and law books. Outcomes are also assessed through the production of multiple case briefs designed to show mastery of both research and analytical skills. Student achievement is also assessed through participation in class discussions and projects.

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 data also indicates where we need to modify course content to improve achievement of learning outcomes.

Data for Legal Research for Fall 2013:

The five elements mirror the five learning outcomes listed above.

	Element 1	2	3	4	5

# of students who got 5 points	9	9	8	6	11
# who got 4	2	2	4	5	2
# who got 3	3	2	2	2	1
# who got 2	0	1	0	1	0

Validation: Approximately 35% of test questions come from review materials in the textbook.

Results: Learning outcomes assessments indicate that students are weak in writing skills as well as proofreading skills.
Assessments indicate that students are not prepared for the workplace through a lack of professional attitudes and behaviors.
Assessments indicate that students have a difficult time with research because they are unaware of what words to look up. (For example, if you don't enter the exactly correct keywords in Lexis-Nexis you get no results.
Assessments indicate that students have a difficult time reading and understanding the law.

Follow up: More practice assignments will be given in researching legal problems, analyzing the results, and writing the answers in an appropriate format.

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.