

## Course Outcomes Guide (COG)

**Course Title: PLS 101 (01): Intro to Paralegal Studies**

**Date: FA '17**

**Course Format: Online**

**Instructor: Andrew B. Kramer**

### **Expected Learning Outcomes**

- 1) Demonstrate understanding of the origin and principles of various areas of law, including Torts, Contracts, Wills, Criminal Law, Family Law & Property Law
- 2) Be able to apply legal principles learned to new fact patterns and predict results
- 3) Gain proficiency and understanding of the principle tasks, roles, responsibilities and issues of the Paralegal in a modern legal practice

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

The assessment of outcomes in this course takes place primarily through short answer, discussion board (for online classes) and full essays that require students to apply relevant principles of law to diverse fact patterns in order to simulate the professional responsibilities of the paralegal in a modern law practice.

- Outcome No. 1: evidenced by three (3) assessment items: the week 2 Discussion Board response; One (1) regular length mid-term exam essay and one (1) regular length final exam essay.
- Outcome No. 2: evidenced by three (3) assessment items: 2 short application of law-to-facts essays from the Contracts Quiz; 1 student-selected application of law-to-facts final exam
- Outcome No. 3: evidenced by two (2) discussion board prompts in which students are required to review a factual scenario and discuss the correct manner to both research the issue and advise the attorney supervisor and/or client.

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

All Outcomes: Where the selected assessment item is a short answer, essay or discussion board, students must achieve no less than 75% of the total points available. Where the selected item is an objective question, i.e., multiple choice, the student must correctly answer the identified question.

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

- **Outcome No. 1: 81% of students achieved satisfactory mastery of this SLO**
- **Outcome No. 2: 79% of students achieved satisfactory mastery of this SLO**
- **Outcome No. 3: 91% of students achieved satisfactory mastery of this SLO**

**Follow-up** (How have you used or how will you use the data to improve student learning?)  
 FA '17 was the first semester in which the revised outcomes, above-stated and recommended in my first COG for the course were put in place. I believe that the results are positive, especially considering that the online format presented a challenge in achieving mastery of the skills associated with these outcomes. As a result, more students sought help from me during office hours and through extensive emails in which the underlying skills and concepts were explained.

Use of Videos: This was also the first online course I have taught here at HCC in which I incorporated through Adobe Connect as series of video presentations that include my speaking to students via webcam taking them through the Power Points which are incorporated into the video. These were essentially recorded classes in which the students can see and hear their instructor as he takes them through the material and slides. Student evaluations indicated that this innovation was well-received and appreciated by the students. My principal concern moving forward with this online technique is to ensure that the videos are accessible. This may require going back and re-recording them to include captions.

Outcome #2 showed the lowest level of overall student mastery. This outcome requires that students gain proficiency in the most typical daily task of a legal professional: the application of a known, relevant principle of law to the facts of a prospective client's case. As has been evident in both ADJ 203 (Criminal Law) and ADJ 206 (Criminal Procedure), students have struggled somewhat in their ability to identify and articulate the relevant principles of law to be applied in any given factual scenario. However, my observation is that this skill improved discernibly over the course of the class, and does so with practice. My take away from this is that more application of law to facts drills must be incorporated into the curriculum as either discussion boards or formalized assignments.

**Budget Justification** (What resources are necessary to improve student learning?)

The promised HCC Courtroom will:

- Allow students to experience the setting in which much of their professional work will take place
- Allow students to apply and combine all anticipated SLOs in a hands-on setting in which students communicate, demonstrate knowledge, act professionally and apply knowledge to diverse factual scenarios