

Program Outcomes Guide

Program Title: Paralegal Studies

Date: FA/17 – SP/18

Program Team: Andrew B. Kramer & Adjunct Faculty

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Understanding of administrative practices and procedures (such as billing, time-keeping, etc.)
2. Mastery of substantive areas of the law common to this market (such as contracts, family law, torts, real estate, wills, business organizations and litigation)
3. Production of appropriate legal pleadings, documents and correspondence
4. Development of legal research skills using multiple resources, including both books and databases, with appropriate analysis of the law
5. Effective communication (both oral and written)
6. Sufficient computer literacy to accomplish program outcomes
7. Critical thinking and problem solving through application of legal principles and decisions to diverse factual scenarios
8. Demonstration of professional attitudes and behaviors

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

1. Through objective assessments for individual areas of law/terminology/legal principles and concepts
2. Through evaluation of internship placements on the basis of HCC guidelines and criteria.
3. Through a professional and/or writing portfolio as required on a case by case basis
4. Through successful completion of research assignments and written production generated therefrom across all classes
5. Through the production of written assignments in all classes, assessed for grammar, spelling, tone, diction and audience type;
6. Through effective oral & written communication and position advocacy in various classes, evidenced by both individual and group presentations and assignments
7. Through “solving legal problems” in which students are tasked to know and apply accepted legal principles to client scenarios and fact patterns.

Note: All the above are assessed through grading rubrics tailored to individual assignments or categories of written production.

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

For objective items (multiple choice/fill-in-blank/true-false), students must enter a correct response.

For other types of items (short answer, writing and research assignments and/or discussion/group, position advocacy, problem solving and outcome prediction through application of law to facts, students must achieve a minimum of 70% of the total possible point value of the item of the responses in order to demonstrate satisfactory mastery of a specific outcome.

The items chosen to assess mastery across the course outcomes are selected on the basis of:

- i) In-textbook discussion questions
- ii) Experience teaching prior iterations of the course and relevant item creation therein
- iii) Practical experience of full-time and adjunct faculty as legal professionals, jurists or in the relevant legal field, e.g. real property

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

PLS 101

Outcome No. 1: Demonstrate understanding of the origin and principles of various areas of law, including Torts, Contracts, Wills, Criminal Law, Family Law & Property Law

Outcome No. 2: Be able to apply legal principles learned to new fact patterns and predict results

Outcome No. 3: Gain proficiency and understanding of the principle tasks, roles, responsibilities and issues of the Paralegal in a modern legal practice

Results

- **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?)

**Incomplete SLOA: Not all instructors in the program have gathered SLOA data in order to report it in this year-end POG. It is anticipated that the formation and convening of a new advisory committee will assist in this process. In the meantime, the program coordinator has formally encouraged all adjuncts to participate in the process and suggested a methodology for doing so. With a more comprehensive set of data, a clearer overall snapshot of program successes will be produced.

The only course in which SLOA data was gathered and reported was PLS 101, Intro to Paralegal Studies. More detail on the data and its impact on future teaching of the course is available in the COG for that course. It is anticipated that a full set of SLOA data for PLS will be available for the FA/18 semester.

Advisory Committee: With the addition of two new adjuncts in PLS starting FA/17, greater efforts will be made to identify and recruit a new advisory committee for FA/18. It is expected that the newly constituted committee will be able to review course offerings and curricular issues to determine if required skills and substantive material are being adequately covered in the program. In the meantime, individual program faculty have ensured that the following practices are incorporated into the assessment of outcomes:

- i) The professional portfolio produced in Legal Writing and Documents assesses both the quality and quantity of work the students have produced.
- ii) Overlay of both professional and academic standards employed in the practice of law as determined by current and prior professional activity of Program faculty, 3 of whom are sitting jurists, and one of whom is an attorney admitted to the practice of law in the state of Maryland.
- iii) Skills necessary for entry-level paralegals in the local legal market are identified by faculty at all times, as changing standards, rules and decisions may impact them.

Revision of SLOs: This academic year has seen the revision of student learning outcomes in 3 classes: PLS 101, PLS 102 and PLS 103. In all PLS classes, adjunct faculty have been encouraged to review and amend these outcomes as they believe necessary or appropriate. This revision was recommended in the last POG for PLS, completed in May of 2017. The result has been increased emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving by application of law to diverse factual scenarios to solve problems and attempt to predict client outcomes.

Hon. Viki Pauler, Associate Judge, Circuit for Washington County: This academic year saw the on-boarding of sitting Circuit Judge Viki Pauler as a PLS adjunct for both PLS 102 and PLS 103. Judge Pauler is well-liked and respected by her students. Moreover, she has offered instruction to a number of students whose unique circumstances required that they participate in tutorials to gain credit necessary for graduation. Through her status as an active trial court judge, Judge Pauler has been able to offer HCC students access to the law library in the Courthouse and, of course, access to the cases she hears. Judge Pauler has a genuine interest in student learning, and is a valuable addition to the PLS instructional team.

Deborah Henry: Adjunct Faculty, PLS 207, Real Estate Law: We are pleased to have Professor Henry with us this year. She brings to the position significant professional experience both in the classroom and in the area of real estate.

Budget Justification

(What resources are necessary to improve student learning?)

HCC Courtroom: As discussed in Unit Planning and committed to by the College, our request is renewed for the installation of a mock courtroom that will:

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