OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS
PARALEGAL STUDIES
2012-2013

Outcomes Assessment Plan,
Assessment Activities Conducted,
Summary and Analysis of the Results

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN

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OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN
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INTRODUCTION

The American Bar Association, which since 2001 has approved the UAF paralegal program, revised its guidelines for assessing program goals and objectives, effective September 1, 2008. The revised assessment procedures can best be summarized by reading a brief statement provided by the chair of the Approval Commission of the ABA’s Standing Committee on Paralegals, issued as a preamble to the revised guidelines:

The revised guidelines will provide flexibility for the programs without prescribing surveys as the only possible means of assessment. This reflects the national trend by allowing schools to prove that they are achieving student and program successes using a variety of tools, such as focus groups, national certification exams, common assignments, interviews, capstone courses, portfolios, exit surveys, placement data, informal polling, self-assessment, and internship evaluations.

In preparation for the new assessment guidelines, a subcommittee of the UAF paralegal advisory committee completely rewrote the program’s outcomes assessment plan. Two of the three members of the subcommittee traveled to the regional conference of the American Association for Paralegal Education in Las Vegas the first week of April 2008, to participate in a series of seminars regarding the new guidelines. The seminars were facilitated by Susan Howery and Scott Hauert, both members of the ABA Approval Commission, and also directors of paralegal programs.

The new assessment plan for the UAF paralegal program was presented and explained to the paralegal faculty at two meetings on July 15, 2008, and August 13, 2008. The new assessment plan was also reviewed by UAF Provost Susan Heinrich at a meeting on August 20, 2008, to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the university’s Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation. Finally, the plan was reviewed and approved by the paralegal advisory committee at its meeting on November 19, 2008.

STATEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSES

The University’s Three-Fold Mission. The University of Alaska Fairbanks, founded in 1917, is the nation’s northernmost Land, Sea and Space Grant University. It has adopted the motto, “America’s Arctic University.” The university is dedicated to three separate and distinct missions: 1) Research. Several colleges provide facilities and instruction for advanced research in several fields of biology, earth science, engineering, and environmental science, plus fisheries, geology, natural resources, oceanography, and petroleum. The international research center advances and disseminates knowledge, through teaching, research and public service regarding the circumpolar North and its diverse peoples. 2) Community College. The UAF Community and Technical College is organizationally an integral part of the university. It functions as a traditional community college
with an emphasis on workforce development. CTC provides training in over 40 career and technical vocations, including paralegal studies, which lead graduates to gainful employment in Alaska and throughout the nation. 3) Rural Outreach. The university provides educational opportunities for rural Alaskans through its remote campuses in Bethel, Dillingham, Kotzebue, Nome, and through the Interior Aleutian Campus, located in Fairbanks but serving the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, McGrath, Nenana, Tok, and the Yukon Flats.

Paralegal Studies Program. The primary objective of the UAF paralegal studies program is to train graduates to qualify for employment as paralegals in law and law-related offices, both locally and throughout the United States. UAF paralegals will assist in the economical and efficient delivery of legal services under the supervision of a practicing lawyer. Employers will find UAF paralegal graduates to be the most qualified applicants for paralegal positions.

The program also seeks to provide opportunities for continuing education and upgrading of existing skills for paralegals already gainfully employed in the local job market and to provide practical law-related topics for UAF students whose main focus is in other areas of study, such as justice and political science.

GOALS OF THE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN

The plan will assess three separate groups to determine whether the program is meeting its educational objectives: 1) students enrolled in the UAF paralegal program; 2) graduates of the program; and 3) employers of graduates of the program. By assessing these three groups, the following goals will be met:

1. To document for various constituencies, primarily the American Bar Association, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and the UAF Paralegal Advisory Committee, that the UAF paralegal program provides its graduates with the skills and knowledge required to become highly competitive candidates for job openings and promotions within the paralegal field, and that students in the program are working toward successful achievement of the same ultimate goal.

2. To document that employers of graduates of the UAF paralegal program are satisfied that the graduates possess a sufficient level of skills and knowledge to make them effective and desirable professionals in the paralegal field.

3. To assess the general trends of the paralegal field in the community through contact with graduates and employers of graduates, and to a lesser extent through contact with students in the program, many of whom are already employed as support staff in local law or law-related offices.

4. To identify the strengths of the program and areas of weakness where improvement is needed so that the paralegal advisory committee and the paralegal faculty can make appropriate and informed decisions about curriculum, standards, instruction and allocation of resources.

5. To improve teaching and learning within the legal specialty courses taught by the paralegal program.

Formerly, the program also assessed local law offices which had not as yet hired a graduate of the program or which did not use paralegals as part of their support staff. This survey has been discontinued. The Fairbanks job market for paralegals is small and since the inception of the UAF program in 1992 almost all local law or law-related offices have now hired at least one graduate. Those that have not done so are, at a minimum, well aware of the program and envision it as the best source for paralegal support staff in the future.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SATISFACTORY ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

The UAF paralegal program is one of the smallest among the roughly 250 ABA-approved programs nationwide. Each academic year, only eight to twelve students graduate with the paralegal degree. Roughly half of these graduates seek employment in the Fairbanks job market which is made up of roughly 180 practicing lawyers, half of whom work for the government and do not make decisions regarding the hiring of support staff for their offices. Due to this small size and the close connection the advisory committee and program head have with the practicing bar in Fairbanks, the most effective means of assessing the program’s strengths and weaknesses has always been informal personal contact between the advisory committee, faculty and program head, with students, graduates and employers of graduates. Over the years, since the program began in 1992, several revisions in the curriculum and in the methods of teaching paralegal courses have resulted entirely from one-on-one contact between local lawyers, advisory committee members, students, graduates, faculty and the program head. Nevertheless, the program has continued to also rely on a more formal method of assessment by providing a system for gathering data from which it can identify the program’s strengths and weaknesses.

Initially, these methods relied on questionnaires which were mailed to graduates and employers of graduates and on the university’s system of assessing student satisfaction at the end of each course using an “Instructional Assessment System” provided by the University of Washington. While the “IAS” method of measuring student satisfaction has provided some helpful information, it has not been accepted by the American Bar Association. In addition, the surveys based on questionnaires sent to graduates and employers of graduates routinely provided a low rate of response and thus yielded unreliable results. Recognizing that “one size does not fit all,” the American Bar Association made significant changes, as noted above, to the assessment process, effective September 1, 2008. The new assessment guidelines state in pertinent part:

The program must have an organized plan for evaluation, review, and improvement of the program. There must be regular assessment of the extent to which a program meets its stated goals and objectives. Assessment and evaluation may be accomplished through assessment tools that best measure the program’s goals and objectives. The adequacy of the assessment will be evaluated by:

1. The quality of assessment instruments and methodology;
2. The frequency with which assessment is conducted;
3. The degree of participation, such as response rate, so as to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessment findings;
4. The extent to which input is sought from graduates, employers, students, advisory committees, faculty, school administrators and a cross-section of the members of the legal community;
5. The written summary and analysis of the assessment findings;
6. The extent to which the results are shared with the advisory committee, faculty, administrators and others; and
7. The extent to which assessment findings are used to make changes in the program.  

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2 ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs, section G-301.E-F.
THE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR THE UAF PARALEGAL PROGRAM

The paralegal program’s outcomes assessment plan is the primary responsibility of the Paralegal Advisory Committee, as delegated to its Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee. The advisory committee is responsible for performing annual assessments of the extent to which the program is providing the stated educational objectives to its students. The assessment plan consists of two parts.

First, the subcommittee targets three groups, students, graduates and employers of graduates and gathers information from each group using a variety of assessment tools, such as:

**Students**
- Focus Groups
- Comparison of Writing Samples
- Student Portfolios
- UAF Instructional Assessment System
- Internship Reports

**Graduates**
- Focus Groups
- Successful Placement
- National Certification
- Questionnaires

**Employers of Graduates**
- Personal Interviews

Assessment of students occurs at the end of every semester and gathers information regarding all of the legal specialty courses taught by the program during the semester. Assessment of graduates and employers of graduates normally occurs annually or once every two years, depending on the number of individuals to be surveyed.

The second part of the assessment plan, which involves the full Paralegal Advisory Committee, brings together all of the information gathered from students, graduates, and employers of graduates in detailed reports which are prepared by the subcommittee. The reports are used to recognize the strengths of the program and to identify areas which suffer from various weaknesses and which require the committee’s consideration. The subcommittee’s reports are provided using two separate, but similar, sets of forms. The first set of forms measures the learning outcomes for each individual legal specialty course taught during the academic year, fall semester and spring semester. The second form combines the results of the several separate course assessments into a single “master assessment” of the entire paralegal degree program for the academic year.

The subcommittee provides a copy of the “master assessment” form to each member of the full advisory committee at the committee’s fall meeting and discusses with the full committee any weakness identified by the assessment process. If a weakness is recognized, the subcommittee may also provide a copy of the report for the course or courses involved and may make a recommendation on how best to correct the weakness identified. However, the ultimate decision regarding the identified weakness is for the advisory committee.
Part 1.
Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee

Assessing Learning Outcomes of Students

1. Student Focus Groups. Since the fall of 2008 the program has used focus groups as a means of obtaining detailed and frank student assessment of the skills acquired from each legal specialty course in the program’s curriculum and the extent to which each course met the objectives stated in the course syllabus. Experience has established that much more reliable assessment results are obtained from the use of focus groups rather than from the previously-used, fill-in-the-blanks, questionnaires.

At the end of each course each semester, students in the course are gathered to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the course just completed. The focus group usually occurs during the final class and is facilitated by a member of the paralegal faculty other than the instructor for the course. Students are encouraged to be as frank as possible regarding any particular strengths or weaknesses of the course and experience has indicated that students in this particular format have been willing to provide much helpful assessment information.

While the facilitator is free to engage the students in discussion of any appropriate topic, the format for each focus group consists, at a minimum, of a discussion of each of the following: a) course objectives as stated in the course syllabus provided to students during the first class, and the extent to which students felt the course met the stated objectives; b) was the instructor knowledgeable in the area being taught; c) was the instructor prepared for each class; d) was the information presented in a meaningful fashion and was it relevant to the subject being taught; e) what did the students like about the course; f) what did the students not like about the course; and g) how could the course be improved in the future?

The facilitating faculty member will prepare a report based on the results of the focus group. It will first be analyzed by the Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee and ultimately incorporated into the “Program Assessment” report provided to the full Paralegal Advisory Committee.

2. Comparison of Student Writing Samples. The program has for several years maintained a sample of each student’s initial writing project from the introductory course, PLS 102, “Introduction to Paralegal Studies,” which is later compared with the same student’s final writing projects in PLS 280, “Legal Research and Writing,” and PLS 285, “Advanced Legal Writing.” The comparisons have allowed the faculty and advisory committee with an excellent measurement of the student’s acquisition of important skills required by the paralegal job market.

3. Student Portfolio. The program is in the process of expanding the comparison of writing samples concept into a portfolio project which will require students formally entered into the program to build a portfolio which, upon graduation, will contain a collection of the student’s writing projects throughout their course of study. While initially the portfolio project was designed to be kept in a traditional three-ring binder, the subcommittee has become aware of computer software which can also be used by students to build a program portfolio during their course of study. Students will certainly be given the option of selecting which format they prefer.

The intent of the student portfolio is two-fold: a) First it will provide a tool by which the student’s acquisition of important skills can be assessed, focusing most heavily on the skill of quality legal writing. b) Second, the portfolio will serve as part of a graduate’s presentation to prospective employers who frequently request writing samples as part of their evaluation of new support staff candidates.

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4. Internship Report. An extensive report is required of all students as they complete the required paralegal internship, PLS 299. The report is structured around questions similar to those used in the student focus group, stated above, and a more in depth analysis of the entire paralegal program, since the internship will always occur near the end of a student’s participation in the program. There will be a 100% response rate since the report is required of all internship students, more or less constituting a final exam for the internship course.

5. UAF Instructional Assessment System (IAS). The program continues to use the regular UAF “IAS” assessment tool and relies on it as a supplement to its outcomes assessment plan.

Assessing Learning Outcomes of Graduates

Graduate Focus Groups. Because of the small size of the program, it is easy to gather a group of four to six graduates, usually for lunch at a local restaurant, or perhaps at 604 Barnette Street for pizza at the end of the working day. Graduate focus groups are arranged as soon as at least four recent graduates have joined the local paralegal job market, and are facilitated by the program head, together with a member of the outcomes assessment subcommittee and perhaps a member of the faculty.

Successful Placement of Graduates. The small student body has allowed the program to keep track of the majority of its graduates, all the way back to the first graduates in 1994, and to verify that they have found gainful and continuing employment as a paralegal. A bulletin board outside the paralegal law library at 604 Barnette Street displays the business cards of several program graduates. This bulletin board has become such a fixture of the program that in many instances graduates, without being requested, mail their business card to the program head to be placed on the bulletin board.

It is rare, even with the small Fairbanks job market, that a graduate of the program who seeks employment as a paralegal does not succeed in finding employment as a paralegal. The program touts its near perfect placement of graduates record as a major component in the outcomes assessment process since it corroborates that local employers find UAF paralegal program graduates to be quality choices for new office support staff.

National Certification. Until the fall of 2010, the program served as the only testing site in Alaska for the “certified paralegal” (CP) exam, formerly “certified legal assistant” (CLA) exam, offered by the National Association of Legal Assistants. (As of the fall of 2010 the exam will be given entirely online). The exam is a seven-part, two day, written exam, much like the bar exam required for the licensing of lawyers. Graduates of the UAF paralegal program are qualified to sit for the exam and to date all of those who have done so have passed the exam. Again, this exam serves as another component of the outcomes assessment process. Although not all graduates seek to pass the CP exam, all of those who do successfully attain “certified paralegal” status.

The term “recent graduate” is flexible. For a graduate with no prior experience who enters the job market at the entry level, it is best to delay participation in a focus group until the graduate has been working for at least one year. This allows the student adequate time to make a meaningful assessment of the extent to which the paralegal program provided adequate preparation for the work required. However, in many instances a graduate has completed the paralegal degree while working full time in a local law office. Such a graduate can provide valuable assessment information without waiting until one year following graduation.
Questionnaires. Questionnaires sent to graduates either by mail or e-mail will remain an option for use in certain circumstances, such as when a graduate finds employment in another locality and is not available to meet with a focus group. However, in this event consideration will be given first to having the out-of-town graduate attend a focus group telephonically.

Assessing Learning Outcomes through Employers of Graduates

The third group focused by the assessment plan involves contact with employers of graduates. It is based on obtaining a 100% response through face-to-face or telephonic interviews with the employers at a specific time scheduled in advance. A single member of the paralegal advisory committee volunteers to conduct the interviews. This has the benefit of uniformity in obtaining and tabulating survey results and allows a single person to present the tabulated results to the subcommittee, and ultimately to the full advisory committee. The burden is not heavy. Over a period of two years no more than six to eight such employer contacts are required.

The purpose of the appointment with the employer of a program graduate is made known by the advisory committee member and a period of time convenient to the employer, not to exceed fifteen minutes, is requested. The 100% response from the employer interviews has provided an extremely helpful insight into those aspects of the UAF paralegal program which have met or exceeded employer expectations and those which were viewed as shortcomings. The concept of face-to-face or telephonic interviews with employers of graduates will remain a central feature of the UAF paralegal outcomes assessment program.

Tabulating and Analyzing Results

The results of each survey will be tabulated by the outcomes assessment subcommittee, incorporated into the forms discussed below, and presented for analysis and discussion at the fall meeting of the paralegal advisory committee, and often at the meetings of the paralegal faculty. Based on the survey results, the subcommittee will be prepared to discuss with the full advisory committee the following questions:

1. Is the UAF paralegal program is meeting its stated objectives?
2. Are the services of UAF paralegal graduates being utilized in the local job market?
3. Are UAF paralegal graduates securing suitable positions in the local job market or elsewhere?
4. Have members of the advisory committee, paralegal faculty, and program head assisted graduates in securing suitable positions in the local job market or elsewhere?
5. Are graduates’ perceptions of their preparation for paralegal employment and of their educational experience excellent, merely acceptable, or less than adequate?
6. Do employers of graduates consider the UAF paralegal program an excellent source for well-qualified additions to their law office support staff?
7. Are students satisfied with the curriculum, instruction, services, library, and facilities made available to them?
8. Analysis of the job market in general, how the program might become a more attractive source of potential support staff personnel for offices which have not as yet employed a UAF paralegal graduate.
The Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee organizes the results of its assessment of the individual legal specialty courses into a “Course Assessment” form for each course. The form is divided into five separate columns, PLAN, TEACH, ASSESS, ANALYZE and ADJUST. A copy of a sample course assessment form for the “Introduction to Paralegal Studies” course, PLS 102, is attached.

**Column 1**

**PLAN**

Under “PLAN” is a list of the specific skills a student in the program will acquire from the course being assessed. These skills are listed as “objectives” in the syllabus provided to all students the first day of the course.

**Column 2**

**TEACH**

The second column lists specific ways in which the learning objectives will be taught to the students in the course. For example, typical teaching tools which will apply to almost all legal specialty courses will be “reading assignments,” “class discussions, and “hands-on projects.” These may be supplemented by such additional items as “individual student presentations,” “in-class activities,” or “guest lecturers.”

More specific teaching tools may apply. For example, legal research in a law library might be taught by “conducting rudimentary legal research in a law library using the statutes of both federal and state jurisdictions, and the reported appellate cases of the state jurisdictions, along with a legal encyclopedia and dictionary.” Similarly, typical ways of teaching the skill involving “conduct client and witness interviews,” might be “conduct the initial intake interview of a prospective client and analyze which facts are important for the supervising lawyer to know initially; prepare a memorandum to record the relevant information taken during the interview.”

**Column 3**

**ASSESS**

The next column outlines the methods and techniques the course will use to evaluate and measure student success in the course; that is, how can it be determined whether or not the students have learned the specific skills/objectives intended. Typical assessment tools will usually be “take-home quizzes,” “homework projects,” “oral presentations,” and “research and writing projects.”

**Columns 4 and 5**

**ANALYZE** and **ADJUST**

The fourth column is used to document whether the skill in column 1, being taught using the tools in column 2, then tested and analyzed by the techniques in column 3, is being satisfactorily learned by students in the course. If a weakness is identified, an adjustment in what is being taught, or how it is being taught, is indicated in column 5.
**Program Assessment Form**

The second part of the plan involves a master “Program Assessment” form which states several specific program goals for the entire paralegal program curriculum which are required of paralegals employed in the local job market. This form is prepared by the Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee and is used by the Paralegal Advisory Committee as a basic guideline for discovering any weakness in the educational objectives set for the program. The form uses the same five separate columns, PLAN, TEACH, ASSESS, ANALYZE and ADJUST, as are used in the “Course Assessment” form. A copy of a sample course assessment form is attached.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>LEARN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understand the American judicial system as established by the United States Constitution, including the separate functions of trial courts as fact-finders and appellate courts as the cornerstone of our common law system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Know the specific rights granted by the U. S. Constitution, including those in the Bill of Rights; for example, the First Amendment, search and seizure, and the concept and application of due process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Engage in basic fact-finding and investigation, including the conduct of client and witness interviews, evaluation of reports by experts, police, etc., and use of the Internet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perform legal research using both traditional law library resources and computer-assisted methods. Understand the doctrine of stare decisis and the use of precedent in our common law system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Understand both substantive and procedural law and how to apply it to a reasoned analysis of an issue.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Understand the unique vocabulary used by those who work within the American legal system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Produce quality legal writing, including letters, fact memoranda, legal memoranda, pleadings, contracts, wills, and similar documents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Recognize the ethical obligations of a paralegal to a supervising lawyer, to a client, to the court system, and to the public in general.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>TEACH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The second column lists the specific legal specialty course or courses in which the objectives will be taught to students. For example, the skill listed as “conduct client and witness interviews” will be taught in PLS 102, PLS 103, PLS 203, PLS 210, and PLS 213. Included in the list will also be HUMS 215, “Individual Interviewing,” which is accepted as a “paralegal elective”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Column 3
ASSESS

The next column outlines the tools and criteria the program will use to evaluate and measure student success in each course; that is, whether or not students are meeting the intended educational objectives. Several different methods and techniques will be used to assess student outcomes, such as student focus groups, internship reports, writing samples and portfolios, assessment of graduates, assessment of employers of graduates, and the university’s instructional assessment system (IAC). Each of these assessment tools are discussed separately above.

Columns 4 and 5
ANALYZE and ADJUST

The final two columns indicate whether a weakness is indicated by the various assessment tools indicated in column 3 and the steps taken by the program to correct the weakness. This ensures that any shortcomings or weaknesses identified by the “PLAN, TEACH, ASSESS, and ANALYZE” process will be corrected by making appropriate changes in the paralegal studies curriculum and/or in individual courses.
## COURSE ASSESSMENT
**PLS 102 - INTRODUCTION TO PARALEGAL STUDIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>TEACH</th>
<th>ASSESS</th>
<th>ANALYZE</th>
<th>ADJUST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Objectives:</strong> Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:</td>
<td><strong>Learning Outcomes:</strong> In order to meet this objective the student will:</td>
<td><strong>Tools and Criteria:</strong> Learning will be measured and evaluated by:</td>
<td><strong>Assessment Results:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Program Adjustments:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Perform legal research using both traditional research methods and computer-assisted methods.</td>
<td>Participate in lecture by the instructor and demonstration in a computer lab. Conduct basic legal research in a law library using the statutes of both state and federal jurisdictions, the reported appellate cases of the state, and a legal encyclopedia and dictionary. Conduct online legal research using Westlaw.</td>
<td>Assigned homework projects; and a take-home quiz.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Engage in basic fact-finding and investigation. Conduct client and witness interviews.</td>
<td>Conduct the initial intake interview of a prospective client and analyze which facts are important for the supervising lawyer to know initially; plus use of forms and memoranda to record relevant information provided by the intake interview.</td>
<td>Observation of the student in an actual in-class project involving interviewing. Instructor review of forms and memoranda produced by the student.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Learn the basic vocabulary for eight different substantive areas of the law.</td>
<td>Text reading assignment for administrative, business organizations, contract, criminal, family, probate, real estate, and tort law. Read and brief relevant court case involving two of the eight areas.</td>
<td>A series of take-home quizzes. Produce quality case briefs with good grammar and without typos. Recognize set of facts which may provide a remedy in one of the areas of substantive law; plus the vocabulary terms used to discuss each area.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learn how to use Civil Rules 3-14 to file a complaint in court and file a timely answer.</td>
<td>Read Civil Rules 3-14. Draft a complaint for damages and summons. Draft an answer to the complaint.</td>
<td>Take-home quiz. Produce a quality complaint and answer with good grammar and without typos. Take-home quiz. Demonstrate in class knowledge of the “Big 5” of discovery. Turn in the documents drafted for grading.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Program Goals:
Upon completion of the paralegal program, graduates will be able to:

### Learning Outcomes:
In order to meet each goal of the program, the student will learn (course in which the student will learn the specified skill)

| 1. Perform legal research using both traditional research methods and computer-assisted methods. | PLS 102, 201, 250, 280, 285 | - Focus groups  
- Writing samples/portfolio  
- Internship Report  
- Employer Interviews |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Produce professional quality documents, including letters, fact memoranda, pleadings, contracts, wills and similar documents. | PLS 102, 201, 203, 210, 213, 215, 240, 250, 260, 275, 280, 285, 299 | - Focus Groups  
- Writing samples/portfolio  
- Internship Report  
- Employer Interviews |
| 3. Conduct client and witness interviews. | PLS 102, 201, 203, 210, 213 | - Focus Groups  
- Internship Report  
- Employer Interviews |
| 4. Engage in basic fact finding and investigation. | PLS 102, 201, 203, 210, 213, 215, 240, 250, 299 | - Focus Groups  
- Internship Report  
- Employer Interviews |
- Internship Report  
- Employer Interviews |
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **6.** Apply substantive and procedural law to a reasoned analysis of the matter. | PLS 102, 201, 203, 210, 213, 240, 250, 275, 299 | - Focus Groups  
- Internship Report  
- Employer Interviews |
| **7.** Recognize the ethical obligations of a paralegal and conduct himself or herself accordingly. | PLS 102, 105, 213, 299 | - Focus Groups  
- Writing samples/Portfolio  
- Internship Report  
- Employer Interviews |
| **Secondary Goal:** To provide continuing education opportunities to practicing paralegals. | (Any legal specialty course offered by the paralegal program. |   |
ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS

**Spring Semester 2010**

Student Focus Groups Assessing Individual Courses
- PLS 102, “Intro to Paralegal Studies”
- PLS 103, “Intro to Paralegal Skills”
- PLS 105, “Paralegal Ethics”
- PLS 203, “Torts”
- PLS 215, “Contracts and Real Estate”
- PLS 240, “Family Law”
- PLS 242, “Employment and Administrative Law”
- PLS 250, “Probate Law”
- PLS 260, “Computers in the Law Office”

Internship Student Surveys (1) Assessing the Entire Paralegal Program
- Audrey Abbott

Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee Reviewing Comparison of Student Writing Samples
Graduate Focus Group of six 2010 Program Graduates
- Lacy Ahumada, Michael Drew, Tonia Glen, Jan Ohmstede, Melonie Ross, Keith Rueben

Assess successful placement of graduates
Assess successful completion of NALA’s “CP” exam

**Fall Semester 2010**

Student Focus Groups Assessing Individual Courses
- PLS 102, “Intro to Paralegal Studies”
- PLS 103, “Intro to Paralegal Skills”
- PLS 105, “Paralegal Ethics”
- PLS 210, “Civil Procedure”
- PLS 213, “Criminal Law”
- PLS 240, “Family Law”
- PLS 275, “Business Organizations”
- PLS 280, “Intro to Legal Research and Writing”

Internship Student Surveys (3) Assessing the Entire Paralegal Program
- Karen Austermuhl, Elena Reisland, Debra White

Personal Interviews of Employers of Graduates
- Ruth Meier, Clerk of Court; Herb Kuss, City Attorney; Sgt. Kelley, JAG Office, Ft. Wainwright; Ward Merdes, Merdes & Merdes, PC.

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**Spring Semester 2011**

Student Focus Groups Assessing Individual Courses
- PLS 102, “Intro to Paralegal Studies”
- PLS 103, “Intro to Paralegal Skills”
- PLS 105, “Paralegal Ethics”
- PLS 203, “Torts”
- PLS 215, “Contracts and Real Estate”
- PLS 242, “Employment and Administrative Law”
PLS 250, “Probate Law”
PLS 260, “Computers in the Law Office”
PLS 285, “Advanced Legal Writing”

Internship Student Surveys (9) Assessing the Entire Paralegal Program
Bobbie Brouhard, Victoria Eaton, Kandice Foster, Patricia Gregory, Jody Martin, Tracy Packee, Valerie Robancho-Andresen, Taira Shelton, Bonnie Thompson

Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee Reviewing Comparison of Student Writing Samples
Graduate Focus Group of nine 2011 Program Graduates
Bobbie Brouhard, Victoria Eaton, Kandice Foster, Jennifer Gamerdinger, Patricia Gregory-Lekanoff, Jody Martin, Taira Shelton, Bonnie Thompson, Jackie Young
Assess successful placement of graduates
Assess successful completion of NALA’s “CP” exam

Fall Semester 2011

Student Focus Groups Assessing Individual Courses
PLS 102, “Intro to Paralegal Studies”
PLS 103, “Intro to Paralegal Skills”
PLS 105, “Paralegal Ethics”
PLS 210, “Civil Procedure”
PLS 213, “Criminal Law”
PLS 240, “Family Law”
PLS 275, “Business Organizations”
PLS 280, “Intro to Legal Research and Writing”

Internship Student Surveys (2) Assessing the Entire Paralegal Program
Marlies Hill, Steve Simmons

Personal Interviews of Employers of Graduates
Jolene Cooper, District Attorney’s Office; Ken Ringstad, Paskvan & Ringstad, PC.;

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Spring Semester 2012

Student Focus Groups Assessing Individual Courses
PLS 102, “Intro to Paralegal Studies”
PLS 103, “Intro to Paralegal Skills”
PLS 105, “Paralegal Ethics”
PLS 203, “Torts”
PLS 215, “Contracts and Real Estate”
PLS 240, “Family Law”
PLS 242, “Employment and Administrative Law”
PLS 250, “Probate Law”
PLS 260, “Computers in the Law Office”
PLS 285, “Advanced Legal Writing”

Internship Student Surveys (6) Assessing the Entire Paralegal Program
Deborah Drong-Bjork, Jennifer Gamerdinger, Desiree Gauges, Sage Lewis, Karmen Tobin, Ashley Webster

Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee Reviewing Comparison of Student Writing Samples
Graduate Focus Group of eight 2012 Program Graduates
Debby Drong-Bjork, Jennifer Gamerdinger, Christie Hampton, Marlies Hill, Sage Lewis, Tracy Packee, S.T. Tong, Ashley Webster
Assess successful placement of graduates
Assess successful completion of NALA’s “CP” exam

**Fall Semester 2012**

Student Focus Groups Assessing Individual Courses
- PLS 102, “Intro to Paralegal Studies”
- PLS 201, “Intro to Paralegal Skills”
- PLS 105, “Paralegal Ethics”
- PLS 210, “Civil Procedure”
- PLS 213, “Criminal Law”
- PLS 240, “Family Law”
- PLS 275, “Business Organizations”
- PLS 280, “Intro to Legal Research and Writing”

Internship Student Surveys (xx) Assessing the Entire Paralegal Program

Personal Interviews of Employers of Graduates

**Annual Outcomes Assessment Report to the Full Paralegal Advisory Committee**

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**SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OBTAINED BY EACH ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY**

**2010**

Assessment results from students and graduates led to the following three revisions of the curriculum for the degree in paralegal studies.

1. **Add JUST 110.** Most students take JUST 110, “Introduction to Justice,” in place of the required PS 101, “Introduction to American Government,” which requires a petition to substitute JUST 110 for PS 101 for each student. The catalog will now list either JUST 110 or PS 101 as a required course.

2. **Add JUST 300X.** Most students take JUST 300X, “Ethics and Justice,” which is offered online, to meet the requirement for a 300-level, law-related course. Since the catalog still lists only PS 303, “Politics and the Judicial Process,” for this requirement, a petition is required for every student to substitute JUST 300X for PS 303. The catalog will now list either JUST 300X, or PS 300X, PS 303, or any other, program-approved, law-related course at the 300 level.

3. **Add JRN 413.** Most students take JRN 413, “Mass Media Law,” which is offered online, to meet the requirement for a 400-level, law-related course. Since the catalog still lists PS 435 or 436, “Constitutional Law I and II,” for this requirement, a petition is required for every student to substitute JRN 413 for PS 435 or 436. The catalog will now list either JRN 413, PS 435, PS 436, or any other, program-approved, law-related course at the 400 level.
2011

1. Revision of the 100-level, Introductory Courses. The advisory committee and paralegal faculty revamped the former PLS 103, “Introduction to Paralegal Skills,” and upgraded it from an “introductory” course to a 200-level course which will be named “Practical Paralegal Skills” and numbered PLS 201. Based on assessment criteria, it was determined PLS 103 was actually being taught at the 200-level and was not an “introductory” course. In addition, having three introductory level courses, PLS 102, “Introduction to the Law,” PLS 103, “Introduction to Paralegal Skills,” and PLS 105, “Introduction to Paralegal Ethics,” was confusing to students who were more accustomed to having a single, introductory level prerequisite course. The revision will retain PLS 102 and make it the sole prerequisite course. However, its name will be changed to “Introduction to Paralegal Studies” since the former name “Introduction to the Law” has proven to be misleading. The former PLS 103, “Introduction to Paralegal Skills,” will be dropped and in its place the same course will now be taught as PLS 201, “Practical Paralegal Skills.” The remaining 100-level course, PLS 105, “Introduction to Paralegal Ethics,” will remain at the 100-level but will no longer be a prerequisite to the 200-level courses. It can be taken by students at any time.

2012