

**2021 ANNUAL ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM  
(Due October 15 to the dean)**

The Faculty Senate Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) is committed to a vision of assessment that leads to continuous program improvements and benefits students. Annual assessment reporting informs decision making and resource allocation aimed at improving student learning and success. It also enables the AAC to analyze assessment across the institution and to respond to UA System, Board of Regents, legislative, and Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) requests. We thank you for your continued support of and participation in this annual activity.

Starting in Spring 2021, UAA is moving to one academic assessment reporting mechanism. The below form merges and streamlines the former Annual Academic Assessment Survey and the Annual Academic Assessment Report. It also incorporates questions about how academic programs contribute to student achievement of institutional core competencies and to student success.

**This annual report will be due to the dean on October 15. Programs with suspended admissions and new programs in the first year of implementation are not required to complete this form.**

These reports are public documents and will be posted on the assessment website. Responses are to be narrative only, and must be ADA and FERPA compliant. Do not embed any links, including to webpages or other documents. To be FERPA compliant, do not include the names of any current or former students. Rather, use statements such as, "In AY21 four program graduates were accepted to graduate programs in the field." Programs with specialized accreditation or other external recognitions must comply with restrictions regarding what can be published, as per the accreditor or external organization. Do not include appendices. Appendices to this form will not be accepted.

The form uses narrative, text, and drop-down boxes. Narrative boxes have a character limit, which includes spaces. When using text and drop-down boxes, if you want to undo an answer, press "Control-Z" or "Command-Z."

For technical assistance with this form, email Academic Affairs ([uaa.oaa@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa.oaa@alaska.edu)).

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**PROGRAM SECTION (Due to the dean on October 15)**

*After completing the Program Section, the program should email this form to the dean, with a copy to the appropriate community campus director(s) if the program is delivered on a community campus.*

**Submission date:** 10/15/2021

**Submitted by:** Ryan Fortson, Associate Professor and Program Coordinator, hrfortson@alaska.edu

**Program(s) covered in this report:** Legal Studies BA and Paralegal Studies AAS/PBCT  
(Programs with suspended admissions and new programs in the first year of implementation are not required to complete this form.)

If you selected "Other" above, please identify. (100 characters or less)

**College:** College of Health

**Campuses where the program(s) is delivered:**  Anchorage  KOD  KPC  MSC  PWSC

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** American Bar Association

**If explanation is necessary, such as only some of the certificates and degrees are covered by the specialized accreditation, briefly describe:** All degree programs are approved for paralegal education by the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Paralegals.

## INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT LEARNING CORE COMPETENCIES

In 2020, UAA launched a consensus-based, deliberative process to identify the key skillsets that help students achieve academic and post-graduation success. After a year-long process that included students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and employers, the UAA community identified four "core competencies" at the heart of a quality UAA education. Students develop mastery of these competencies through curricular (e.g., courses), co-curricular (e.g., internships, conferences), and extra-curricular (e.g., student clubs) learning experiences.

After the stakeholder-based process in AY20, UAA conducted a pilot project focusing on the core competency of Personal, Professional, and Community Responsibility (PPCR). This decision was based on input from the 2020 Annual Academic Assessment Retreat.

Question #1 below is designed to engage program faculty in thinking about how they can or already do promote student learning in this core competency.

1. **Personal, Professional, and Community Responsibility: The knowledge and skills necessary to promote personal flourishing, professional excellence, and community engagement.**
  - **What would you hope a student would say if asked where in your program or support service they had the opportunity to develop proficiency in this Core Competency? (500 characters or less)**

That s/he graduates from the program with confidence both in directly marketable skills such as legal research and the accepted conventions of legal writing, and in indirect

skills such as public speaking. Students should further have a sense of the role of law in managing public interactions and opportunities for the law to improve lives.

- **Do you have an example that could be a model for the university of an intentionally designed course, assignment, or activity that showcases the student learning in this core competency?** Yes No

**If yes, please briefly describe. (500 characters or less)**

There are several activities spread across multiple courses that advance this core competency. Students learn how to draft multiple different types of legal documents, including formatting and proper legal citation requirements. Students learn to assert themselves in a simulated trial and in oral arguments before a judge on a written legal motion. Students learn about the history of law and its impact on society. And students are required to take an internship to engage with the legal community.

- **Do you have any ideas about where your program or the university might develop other intentionally designed opportunities for students to develop proficiency in this core competency?** Yes No

**If yes, please briefly describe. (500 characters or less)**

We are in the process of constructing a simulated courtroom that will not only provide a more accurate environment for our students to practice legal skills but will also draw in local legal practitioners and encourage interaction between UAA Legal Studies students and the legal community. This is a joint project with the State of Alaska Department of Law.

## PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

2. Please list the Program Student Learning Outcomes your program assessed in AY21. For each outcome, indicate one of the following: Exceeded faculty expectations, Met faculty expectations, or Did not meet faculty expectations.

***Example: Communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and formats – Exceeded faculty expectations.***

C.1 Interpret and accurately apply legal terminology and foundational principles of substantive and procedural law in the analysis of legal issues -- Interpretation of Legal Terms and Principles: Met Faculty Expectations

C.2 Interpret and accurately apply legal terminology and foundational principles of substantive and procedural law in the analysis of legal issues -- Application of Legal Terms and Principles: Met Faculty Expectations

**3. Describe your assessment process in AY21 for these program student learning outcomes, including the collection of data, analysis of data, and faculty (and other, e.g., advisory board) conversations around the findings. (750 characters or less)**

SLOs are evaluated in April using student work that incorporates the SLOs selected by the faculty in the Fall for evaluation. Legal Studies has 9 SLOs (with 26 measures). All student work is taken from the same course, with the names removed for evaluation purposes. Typically, work from later in the standard course sequence is chosen. The samples are then evaluated on the same scale (0-2) by both faculty and members of the Legal Studies Program Advisory Committee. Each sample is scored by each of the four Legal Studies faculty and by four LSPAC members. This provides comparisons between faculty standards and those of the local legal community. Results are shared and discussed with both the faculty and the LSPAC the following Fall.

**4. What are the findings and what do they tell the faculty about student learning in your program? (750 characters or less)**

Scores between faculty and LSPAC are highly comparable for both outcomes. Outcome C.1 received a faculty score of 1.19 and an LSPAC score of 1.17. Outcome C.2 received a faculty score of 1.08 and an LSPAC score of 1.04. A score of 1.0 = Meets Expectations. This demonstrates consistent standards of evaluation between faculty and the local legal community. It also shows that our students as a whole are slightly above expectations for an entry-level paralegal. These results are similar to the results from 2020 for two different SLOs (Produce superior quality written work, and Identify and apply rules of ethics). The program consistently hovers around 1.0 for all SLOs and measures.

**5. Based on the findings, did the faculty make any recommendations for changes to improve student achievement of the program student learning outcomes? Please describe the recommended action, what improvement in student learning the program hopes to see with this change, the proposed timeline, and how the program will know if the change has worked. If no recommendations for changes were made, please explain that decision. (750 Characters or less)**

No specific recommendations for change were made other than continued emphasis on teaching students to write using accepted legal conventions. While the program always strives to exceed expectations, the program consistently meets industry expectations as measured by an external review body. Most work evaluated consists of legal documents meant to simulate those drafted in legal employment. Legal writing is highly stylized and often very different from academic writing to which students are accustomed. The results suggest sustained success in educating a diverse student body to write using these specialized legal conventions.

## PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS AND ASSESSING IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING

**6. In the past academic year, how did your program use the results of previous assessment cycles to make changes intended to improve student achievement of the program student learning outcomes? Please check all that apply.**

- Course curriculum changes
- Course prerequisite changes
- Changes in teaching methods
- Changes in advising
- Degree requirement changes
- Degree course sequencing
- Course enrollment changes (e.g., course capacity, grading structure [pass/fail, A-F])
- Changes in program policies/procedures
- Changes to Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs)
- College-wide initiatives (e.g., High Impact Practices)
- Faculty, staff, student development
- Other
- No changes were implemented in AY21.

**If you checked "Other" above, please describe. (100 characters or less)**

**7. Do you have any information about how well these or other past improvements are working? Are they achieving their intended goals? Please include any data or assessment results that help you demonstrate this. (750 characters or less)**

Changes have been made in various courses to improve success in achieving SLOs in required courses based on past instructional experience. In LEGL 215, there is a reduced emphasis on traditional exams and more use of interactive quizzes with immediate feedback on individual course units. In LEGL 315, increased use of primary sources and multimedia content illustrates the impact of external forces on legal change. The briefing assignment in LEGL 487 was simplified to provide students a firmer legal foundation on the topic prior to drafting. And the ethics assignment in LEGL 489 was altered to more accurately reflect a realistic legal malpractice scenario. All adjustments are improving intended SLO outcomes as reflected in student work.

## STUDENT SUCCESS AND THE CLOSING OF EQUITY GAPS

Programs are not required to respond to question #8 below for their report due on October 15, 2021. Question #8 will be required for the next round and moving forward.

8. Respond to at least one of the following metrics. Student success depends on many aspects of a student's experience. On the academic program level, it can relate to correct placement, course sequencing, standardized pre-requisites, the intentional use of high impact practices, proactive advising, course scheduling practices, etc. UAA is using the following two metrics in its cyclical Program Review process, as well as in its reaffirmation of accreditation process. These data are included in the most recent IR-Reports Program Review dashboard. Please review these data for your program, note any equity gaps, and describe steps you are taking or plan to take to close those gaps.

Metric	Definition	Rationale
JUNIOR GRADUATION RATE - BACCALAUREATE	The percentage of students who graduate with a bachelor's degree within four years of first reaching junior class status (60 credits). <i>Data source: RPTP end-of-term freeze files. Disaggregate as per accreditation.</i>	Junior graduation rate (after 60 credits) can reflect a department's success in helping students complete their degrees. Within their first 60 credits, students typically focus on completing GERs and often switch majors. Tracking how long it takes students to complete their degrees after 60 credits, when many students have likely committed to a specific major, can provide actionable information for departments.
COURSE PASS RATES BY COURSE LEVEL (Undergraduate lower-division, undergraduate upper-division, and graduate).	The percentage of students who receive a passing grade (A, B, C, P) for all undergraduate students and (A, B, P) for graduate students in a course offered by a program compared to the same rate calculated for all courses at that level. Based on a 5-year trend. Included in the denominator for undergraduate courses are the grades D, F, W, I, NP, NB. Included in the denominator for graduate level are the grades C, D, F, W, I, NP, NB. Discipline acts as a proxy for a program. <i>Data source: RPTP end-of-term freeze files. Disaggregate as per accreditation.</i>	Low pass rates are one critical way to identify courses that are barriers to student success and degree completion. Failing key courses correlates with low retention and more major switching. Mitigation strategies can be internal or external to the course itself, including, among other things, the use of high-impact pedagogical practices, appropriate placement, course sequencing, tutoring, and other means to ensure student success within a particular course. This metric and the disaggregation of the data can inform planning, decision making, and the allocation of resources to programs and services designed to mitigate gaps in achievement and equity.

9. **Do you have any examples of post-graduate success you want to highlight? For example, major scholarships, the percent of students who pass licensure examinations, the percent of students accepted to graduate programs, the percent in post-graduation employment in the field or a related field. (750 characters or less)**

Several of our students have found permanent employment through internship placements arranged by the department, including at the Federal Public Defender Office, the Judge Advocate General, and P.F. Chang Corporate. We continue to send students onto law school, one of whom received multiple scholarship offers of over \$100,000 each. And within the last year, two of our recent Legal Studies graduates finished law school, passed the Alaska Bar exam, and are now practicing attorneys in the state.

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**DEAN SECTION (Due to the program on January 15)**

*After completing the Dean Section and signing it, the dean should email this form to the program, and copy [uaa\\_ooo@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa_ooo@alaska.edu) for posting. If the program is delivered on one or more community campus, the dean should consult with the appropriate community campus director(s) on the response and copy the appropriate community campus director(s) when emailing the response to the program.*

1. **Based on the program's responses above, what guidance and support do you have for the program moving forward? Is there a particular area the program should focus on? (750 characters or less)**

The Legal Studies BA and Paralegal Studies AAS/PBCT engage students in opportunities to demonstrate personal, professional, and community responsibility (most notably in the internship). The simulated courtroom will also offer important opportunities for students to develop proficiency in UAA's core competencies. Two program student learning outcomes were assessed, and faculty expectations were met for both. The program continues to meet industry and student expectations. Courses and assignments are continuously improved to facilitate the achievement of program student learning outcomes. In preparation for next year's assessment report, I encourage the program to examine equity gaps in student success and address those gaps.

2. **Is there something the program is doing particularly well in terms of its processes for the assessment and improvement of student learning, including the closing of equity gaps, that might serve as a model for other programs? If yes, please explain. You may skip this question. (750 characters or less)**



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Dean's signature: André B. Rosay

Date: 1/6/2022