

**REPORT ON AY2022-2023 ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT**

**Submission date:** 11/15/2023

**Assessment Plan covered in the report:** Legal Studies BA and Paralegal Studies AAS/PBCT

**College:** College of Health

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

**Submitted by:** Assoc. Prof. H. Ryan Fortson, Legal Studies Program Coordinator, hrfortson@alaska.edu

*After responding to the questions below, 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.*

- 1. Please list and number the Program Student Learning Outcomes your program assessed in AY23. For each outcome, indicate one of the following: Exceeded faculty expectations, Met faculty expectations, or Did not meet faculty expectations.**

***Example: 1. Communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and formats – Exceeded faculty expectations.***

The Legal Studies program evaluated two measures within the same PSLO. This PSLO applies to all three degree programs.

F.1. Prepare legal investigation and discovery plans and draft legal pleadings that conform to the rules of civil procedure and incorporate standard techniques and resources for managing a case in litigation: Investigative Plan Identification of Information Resources -- Met faculty expectations

F.2. Prepare legal investigation and discovery plans and draft legal pleadings that conform to the rules of civil procedure and incorporate standard techniques and resources for managing a case in litigation: Development of Investigative Plan -- Met faculty expectations

- 2. Describe your assessment process in AY23 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. (1000 words or less)**

Pursuant to our Assessment Plan, PSLOs are evaluated in Spring using student work that incorporates the PSLOs selected by the faculty in the Fall for evaluation. Legal Studies has 9 PSLOs (with 26 total measures). All student work is taken from the same course (though potentially from different

semesters), with the names removed for evaluation purposes. The program cycles through PSLOs and related measures from year to year. Assessment of some PSLOs is split between multiple years because of the number of measures within each respective PSLO.

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 (LSPAC), an external advisory board composed of attorneys, paralegals, and court administrators from the local legal community. A rubric is provided for each PSLO measure with criteria for exceeds expectations, meets expectations, and does not meet expectations. 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 in the Fall semester meeting.

**3. What are the findings and what do they tell the faculty about student learning in your program? (1000 words or less)**

A total of 13 student artifacts from the LEGL A377 (Evidence, Investigation and Discovery) were evaluated. The number of artifacts chosen was based on the number of available LSPAC members and comprised 60% of the total number of students (22) from the academic year. The artifacts evaluated were chosen at random from the pool of total student artifacts. The assignment involved the creation of a plan for further investigation following a mock interview of another student. Scripts and a short case synopsis were provided to the students in their role as witnesses. Following the interview, students were expected to draft an investigation plan identifying what information still needed to be obtained to pursue litigation and how to obtain that information. This investigation plan was the subject of the assessment.

Scores between faculty and LSPAC are comparable for both outcomes. Outcome F.1 received a faculty score of 1.37 and an LSPAC score of 1.31. Outcome F.2 received a faculty score of 1.29 and an LSPAC score of 1.13. A score of 1.0 = Meets Expectations. This demonstrates consistent standards of evaluation between faculty and the local legal community, though with some separation on Outcome F.2. It also shows that our students as a whole are slightly above expectations for an entry-level paralegal. The program has consistently been near or moderately above a 1.0 for all PSLO measures over the past several years.

The PSLOs measured in the last academic year addressed investigation plans, which is a central component of paralegal job responsibilities. The results of the assessment indicate that students as a whole are performing up to the expectations of both the professors and the legal community. This reflects successful teaching in this area.

**4. Based on the findings, did the faculty make any recommendations for changes to improve student achievement of the Program Student Learning Outcomes? Yes**

- i. Please describe the recommended action(s), what improvements in student learning the program hopes to see, the proposed timeline, and how the program will know if the change(s) has worked. If no recommendations for changes were made, please explain that decision. (1000 words or less)**

While the results of the student work product evaluations are on the whole positive, there is a minor over-estimation of student abilities by the faculty as compared to legal community expectations. Faculty will work to adjust their standards. Moreover, the process of legal investigation and formal discovery procedures are increasingly influenced by advances in technology, particularly the use of electronic discovery to obtain email and social media records. Faculty, particularly those who teach discovery, will increase efforts to incorporate electronic discovery principles and techniques into their instruction, with advice from the LSPAC on the use of electronic discovery by legal practitioners. Faculty will continuously keep abreast of developing technology in the legal field and make efforts to incorporate those changes into their instruction. Success will be measured by maintaining current assessment scores at or above meeting expectations.

**5. 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 AY23. *(If no options above were selected)*

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

**6. 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. (1000 words or less)**

The assessments conducted in AY 2022-2023 evaluated PSLOs associated solely with the BA program; both related to understanding the relationship between American law, history, and society. The scores from the assessments, using the same process as described above, indicated student achievement comfortably above the "meets expectations" level and close alignment between faculty and legal community expectations. No changes to instruction were made in response to this particular assessment.

The assessments conducted in AY 2021-2022 evaluated PSLOs applicable to all Legal Studies degree options. Two measures from the same PSLO were assessed, both having to do with the interpretation and application of legal terminology. There was strong alignment between faculty and LSPAC scores on both measures. Both measures scored above the "meets expectations" level, but one only barely so. Faculty strive to push students into the "exceeds expectations" range and have focused more intently on explaining the meaning and application of complex legal terminology in their courses, incorporating pedagogical techniques appropriate to the course and material. The success of these efforts can be measured next time this PSLO is assessed.

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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? (200 words or less)**

I appreciate that faculty are working to keep the curriculum current with national trends in legal education and practice. For example, as advances in technology impact the practice of law, faculty are updating the curriculum so that students are still acquiring the technical skills and specialized knowledge that will enable them to build a career working in legal service settings. To keep the curriculum current, the faculty maintain a strong connection to the legal profession and they regularly update the curriculum and assessment process. Overall, the faculty are demonstrating a strong commitment to academic assessment and student success.

2. **Discuss what the program is doing particularly well in terms of its processes for the assessment and improvement of student learning, for example, the use of a common rubric or prompt, a signature assignment, etc. (200 words or less)**

The faculty in Legal Studies assessed one of the nine program student learning outcomes (prepare legal investigation and discovery plans and draft legal pleadings that conform to the rules of civil procedure and incorporate standard techniques and resources for managing a case in litigation; this program student learning outcome is included in all program options). Two measures were used to assess this outcome (development of investigative plan, and investigative plan identification of information resources). Student artifacts were reviewed by both faculty and members of the advisory board. Results showed that students were meeting faculty expectations. Results were consistent with prior results, which showed that students were slightly above expectations for entry-level paralegals.

Dean's signature:

Debbie Craig, PhD

Date: 12/20/2023