

**DEPARTMENT REPORT
OF
PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT**

Department: Law and Legal Assisting

Program (Degree): Legal Assisting

Type of Degree: X AAS AA AS ATS AI
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Chairperson: Garnett McDonough Date: April 30, 2001

Person(s) Interviewed: Garnett McDonough

- I. **Program Curriculum:** A description of the basis for the program curriculum (i.e., how it is derived and validated). Include accreditation organizations, advisory committees or external groups that influence curriculum. Describe curriculum review activities including the review of course master syllabi*.

The American Bar Association, which accredits the program, has broad guidelines for paralegal programs, and the department follows these guidelines, as well as the national Paralegal Educator's Association recommendations for updating the curriculum.

Locally, the advisory board meets twice per year and the department meets with sub-committees on an as-needed basis. The advisory committee includes graduates of the program, a student, a member of the public at large, a prosecuting attorney, and a local judge. Internship opportunities for students also allow us to get feedback from local employers, some of whom are on our advisory board.

The department's curriculum review is in line with the program review requirements established by the college; however, curriculum review is an on going process and not specific to the two-year program review cycle. A site visit by the American Bar Association is scheduled for the first week in June 2001.

- * Note: Every department is required to review Master Syllabi and Program Learning Outcomes a minimum of every two years.

II. Program Learning Outcomes: A description of what you intend for students to know (cognitive), think/feel (affective), or do (psychomotor), when they have completed your degree program. A suggested manageable number of outcomes should be in the range of five to ten. Describe Program Learning Outcomes review activities*.

The program is a very applied program for legal assistants. This program takes a very practical perspective with respect to accessing information electronically. The introductory course has changed from a four credit hour course to a five credit hour course in order to facilitate introduction to course specific computer technology. A course in Legal Ethics has been added to the curriculum. The program learning outcomes for this degree have not been revised since the last interview.

An entry-level graduate with an Associate Degree in Legal Assisting from Sinclair Community College will be able to:

Learning Outcomes	Related Courses
1. Analyze substantive and procedural issues which arise in the litigation, real estate, business organizations, probate, criminal, family and other areas of the law.	LAP 105, 115, 121, 122, 131, 132, 201, 202, 205, 211, 212, 213, 215, 220, 225, 235, 245
2. Conduct legal research.	LAP 111, 112, 113
3. Prepare and interpret legal documents.	LAP 105, 115, 121, 122, 131, 132, 201, 202, 205, 211, 212, 213, 215, 220, 225, 235, 245
4. Apply critical thinking skills.	LAP 105, 115, 121, 122, 131, 132, 201, 202, 205, 211, 212, 213, 215, 220, 225, 235, 245
5. Communicate clearly and concisely.	ENG 111, 112; COM 206; SOC 111 or PSY 121
6. Serve as a member of a legal team.	LAP 105, 115, 121, 122, 131, 132, 201, 202, 205, 211, 212, 213, 215, 220, 225, 235, 245
7. Exemplify a high standard of ethics as a legal professional.	LAP 105, 115, 121, 122, 131, 132, 201, 202, 205, 211, 212, 213, 215, 220, 225, 235, 245

III. Assessment Method(s): A measurable indicator of success in attaining the stated learning outcome(s). The methodology should be both reliable and valid. Please describe in detail.

- a. **Formative Assessment Methods(s) and Description:** a measurable indicator of student in-progress success in attaining the stated learning outcome(s).

Formative assessment is completed on a course-by-course basis. Students must receive a 'C' or better in each course in order to progress to the next class. Department faculty have meet to discuss and ensure consistency in using this method of assessment. The department has added some classroom assessment instruments. Specified performance criteria for each assignment are being considered. Faculty members have team taught the introductory course and the research and writing class allowing for the cooperative development of assessment criteria.

As students progress through the program, they compile a notebook of assignments in each course. These assignments are corrected, and then saved. In that way, both formative and summative assessment is on going.

Students have access to computer workstations through the CIL lab which allows for group work and individual work. Students are able to receive immediate feedback and perform student self-assessment as well as assessment of the group process.

- b. **Summative Assessment Method(s) and Description:** a measurable indicator of end-of-program success in attaining the stated program learning outcome(s).

Summative assessment is completed in LAP 291 and 292, both internship courses, lead by a full-time faculty member. The notebooks, which students have prepared throughout their program, are compiled into a portfolio which is a requirement for LAP 292. This portfolio becomes both a record of student performance (competency-based) and a tool for students to use to take to the workplace.

LAP 291 and 292 students complete an internship in a law office and are evaluated by their supervisor at the site. In addition, students in the 291 class complete a unit on career skills which includes resume writing and interviews with local attorneys. Videotaping of job interviews has been added to this course.

LAP has departmental-specific employer and graduate surveys. Results of the surveys indicate that students are well prepared for the workplace and are very likely to be promoted.

IV. Results: A description of the actual results of overall student performance gathered from the summative assessment(s). (see III.b.)

Extraordinary effort has gone into creating a realistic workplace situation. The placement rate in LAP is excellent. Students are well received by employers and many are placed before the internship experience. Others continue full-time employment at the internship site.

Student and supervisor feedback about the internship experience is very positive. Many indicate that the notebooks prepared in LAP 292 become office manuals upon placement. Real world experience builds confidence in students and assures that their skills are adequate for employment.

The department actively uses process education as a teaching/learning strategy. That methodology is a useful approach to this content area. This pedagogy is being implemented across all aspects of courses including distance learning. The intentional sequencing of courses appears to have a positive impact on student success.

Advisory committee feedback is also highly supportive and views the program as the premier program in the Miami valley.

V. Analysis/Actions: From analysis of your summative assessment results, do you plan to or have you made any adjustments to your program learning outcomes, methodologies, curriculum, etc.? If yes, describe. If no, explain.

Changes at the state and national level will impact offering in the legal field. The department is anticipating a revision of the bankruptcy law course upon passage of the upcoming federal bankruptcy laws (anticipated Fall 2001). Some consideration is being given to the creation of additional modules for the upper level LAP courses.

The department is constantly on the alert to changes that need to be made in the curriculum. Reports from students and employers prompt changes in curriculum. LAP follows a continuous improvement cycle.

VI. General Education: A description of where and how within the major the three primary general education outcomes* (communication, thinking, values/citizenship/community) are assessed.

- a. Where within the major do you assess written communication? Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Writing skills are constantly evaluated. Faculty and students work together to determine the quality standards of the written communication for each course, then use those standards consistently. Writing skills are mandatory for success as a paralegal. Students are required to take ENG-199 to help hone technical writing skills.

- b. Where within the major do you assess oral communication? Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Process learning requires that students take turns with oral communication presentations. The department also conducts mock trials and requires peer reviews of oral presentations. The faculty use a modified version of the oral communication checklist geared specifically for the program.

- c. Where within the major do you assess thinking? Thinking might include inventing new problems, seeing relationships and/or implications, respecting other approaches, demonstrating clarity and/or integrity, or recognizing assumptions. Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

There is on going emphasis of critical thinking skills. Process exercises, case studies and writing activities are used as a means of assessing and improving thinking skills. A variety of assessment tools are used to assist in this effort.

- d. Where within the major do you assess values/citizenship/community? These activities might include behaviors, perspective, awareness, responsibility, teamwork, ethical/professional standards, and service learning or community participation. Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Legal ethics, the Bill of Rights, and values clarification are built into the introductory classes. The role of legal ethics as it is part of professional behavior is part of every course in the program and a specific part of the 291 and 292 internship classes. Additionally, a course in Legal Ethics has been introduced to the curriculum. We are having an increased emphasis on teamwork and peer and self-assessment throughout the curriculum.

Internships are placed with area agencies and student deal with local issues and agencies including both private and public agencies.

- * Note: The oral communication checklist and the written communication checklist developed by the General Education Committee were adopted for college-wide use during the 1997-98 academic year by Academic Council. Thinking Guidelines developed by the General Education Committee are being piloted by faculty during the 1998-99 academic year.