

**Assurance of Student Learning
2018-2019**

Potter College of Arts & Letters

Political Science

Paralegal Studies (5002)

Use this page to list learning outcomes, measurements, and summarize results for your program. Detailed information must be completed in the subsequent pages.

Student Learning Outcome 1: Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical restrictions of paralegal practice.

Instrument 1 Direct: Office Simulations (PLS 200, PLS 393)

Instrument 2 Indirect: Internship Supervisor Evaluation (PLS 499)

Instrument 3 Direct: State and/or National Certification Exam (Post-Graduation)

Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.

Met

Not Met

Student Learning Outcome 2: Apply concepts of substantive law and rules of procedure in common areas of practice including family law and real estate law.

Instrument 1 Direct: Course Projects (PLS 283, PLS 291, PLS 296, PLS 395)

Instrument 2 Direct: Mock Trial (PLS 393)

Instrument 3 Indirect: Employer/Alumni Surveys (Post-Graduation)

Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.

Met

Not Met

Student Learning Outcome 3: Execute effective legal research strategies and critically construct legal argument.

Instrument 1 Direct: Course Writing Projects (PLS 250, PLS 450)

Instrument 2 Direct: Mock Trial (PLS 393)

Instrument 3 Indirect: Employer/Alumni Surveys (Post-Graduation)

Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.

Met

Not Met

Program Summary (Briefly summarize the action and follow up items from your detailed responses on subsequent pages.)

For Learning Outcome 1, the program will focus on increasing student preparedness in legal technology as now required by the revised ethics guidelines at the state and national levels. Targeted methodology will include external technology certifications.

For Learning Outcome 2, the program will add communication skills exercises to PLS 190, PLS 250 and PLS 450 to rectify deficiencies identified as a result of employer surveys in fall 2018. Skill exercises will focus on method, propriety/decorum, timeliness and accuracy of communication with co-workers, attorney supervisors, clients and parties external to the employment environment including opposing counsel, judges and court staff.

For Learning Outcome 3, external proficiency certifications for legal research and writing will be explored and added to the program as funding allows. Curriculum comparisons to pre-professional programs and licensure tests will be completed and curriculum modifications proposed for advisory board consideration.

Student Learning Outcome 1

Student Learning Outcome	Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical restrictions of paralegal practice. i.e., Comply with ethical guidelines for paralegal practice including but not limited to competence in technology and research, diligence in practice, maintenance of client confidentiality and integrity of the practice, recognition of conflicts of interest, and contribution to public service.		
Measurement Instrument 1	In PLS 200 (Legal Ethics) and PLS 393 (Civil Procedure), students will participate in general discussions relating to moral decisions they make in their daily lives. Students will then review the Rules of Professional Responsibility for attorneys as well as suggested guidelines and standards of conduct for paralegals. They will be required to learn the ethical constraints on the practice of law and apply the concepts to practice simulations in order to make decisions as to what course of action should be taken. They will then discuss the ramifications of ethical violations for the public at large and for legal professionals.		
Criteria for Student Success	Student learning is assessed based on the student’s ability to recognize the ethics issue triggered, to identify the relevant rule or guideline, to act in compliance with the rule or guideline and to identify the legal and professional ramifications for violation. Success is defined as a C or above.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	Seventy-five percent (75%) of the students will perform within the industry standard and receive a “C” or above on the simulation assignments.	Percent of Program Achieving Target	Eighty percent (80%) of the students performed within the industry standard and received a “C” or above on the simulation assignments.
Methods	Simulation assignments from PLS 200 and PLS 393 were randomly sampled and assessed according to this rubric: A: Correctly identifies ethics issue, correctly links ethics issue to relevant rule or guideline, correctly identifies all actions required for compliance and correctly identifies all legal and professional ramifications for non-compliance; B: Correctly identifies ethics issue, correctly links ethics issue to relevant rule or guideline, correctly identifies most but not all actions required for compliance and correctly identifies most but not all legal and professional ramifications for non-compliance; C: Recognizes that an ethics issue is triggered but does not link the issue to a specific rule or guideline, correctly identifies some but not all actions required for compliance and correctly identifies some but not all legal and professional ramifications for non-compliance; D: Recognizes that an ethics issue is triggered but does not link the issue to any rule or guideline; fails to correctly identify some actions required for compliance or fails to correctly identify some legal and professional ramifications for non-compliance; F: Fails to recognize that an ethics issue is triggered and does not link the act or omission to any rule or guideline; does not identify any actions required for compliance and does not identify any legal and professional ramification for non-compliance.		
Measurement Instrument 2	In PLS 499 (Internship), students work with practicing attorneys and paralegals to complete one hundred fifty (150) hours of legal service in various employment environments including but not limited to private law firms, corporate legal departments, government offices, courts and non-profit organizations. They submit a work sample portfolio, prepare an experience paper and are evaluated by their internship supervisors. The experience paper must address an ethical issue the student encountered during his/her internship and thirty percent (30%) of the supervisor evaluation is focused on ethical standards of practice.		
Criteria for Student Success	Student learning is assessed based on the student’s ability to recognize the ethics issue triggered, to identify the relevant ethics guideline and to act in compliance with that guideline. Success is defined as a P or above.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	One hundred percent (100%) of the students will perform within the industry standard and receive a “P” or above after instructor assessment of the portfolio and paper and the external evaluation of performance.	Percent of Program Achieving Target	One hundred percent (100%) of the students received a “P” or above after instructor assessment of the portfolio and paper and the external evaluation of performance.

Methods	Student portfolios, experience papers and external evaluations will be assessed according to this rubric: P: Correctly identifies ethics issue, links ethics issue to relevant ethics guideline and acts in compliance with relevant guideline; F: Fails to recognize that an ethics issue is triggered and/or fails to act in compliance with relevant guideline.		
Measurement Instrument 3	Post-graduation, students will sit for state certification exam administered by the Kentucky Paralegal Association and/or national certification exam administered by the National Association of Legal Assistants. Both exams focus on ethical standards of practice.		
Criteria for Student Success	Student learning is assessed based on the student's ability to recognize the ethics issue triggered, to identify the relevant rule or guideline, to act in compliance with the rule or guideline and to identify the legal and professional ramifications for violation. Success is defined as a Pass on a certification exam on the first try,		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	Seventy-five percent (75%) of the students will receive a "Pass" on a certification exam on the first try.	Percent of Program Achieving Target	Ninety-two percent (92%) of students received a "Pass" on the KPA certification exam on the first try; and eighty-four percent (84%) of students received a "Pass" on the NALA certification exam on the first try.
Methods	Passing standards are established by the external certification exam administrators and results are self-reported by program graduates and employers via program surveys.		
Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.		Met	Not Met
Actions (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.)			
Current market data from paralegal employment databases was reviewed and the program advisory board was consulted regarding trends in the profession. It was noted that revisions to ethics rules and guidelines on practice "competency" have occurred, specifically requiring technology proficiency. As a result, an external technology certification will be added to the assessment process and will be extended beyond PLS 200 and PLS 393. Specifically, in PLS 190, the technology assessment will be used to determine competency in Microsoft Office products including but not limited to Word, Excel, Publisher and PowerPoint. In addition, external certification will be used in PLS 200 and PLS 393 to determine competency in law office management and billing software and in PLS 250 and 450 to determine competency in online legal research.			
Follow-Up (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.)			
External technology certification options will be explored and implemented in AY 2019-20 - assuming funding is available. Certification methodology and results will then be reviewed by the program advisory board to determine propriety of use going forward. Also, program graduates and employers will be surveyed in AY 2020-21 to determine compliance with new ethical guidelines as to technology proficiency.			

Student Learning Outcome 2

Student Learning Outcome	Apply concepts of substantive law and rules of procedure in common areas of practice including family law and real estate law.		
Measurement Instrument 1	In two (2) targeted paralegal courses, PLS 296 (Family Law) and PLS 283 (Real Estate Law), students must complete projects that require application of substantive law concepts and rules of procedure from a federal, state and local perspective. Projects include analyzing fact scenarios to identify issues of law and fact, drafting pleadings and other relevant documents according to rule requirements, and predicting legal outcomes.		
Criteria for Student Success	Student learning is assessed on student's ability to identify and apply key concepts of law as well as rules of procedure governing the civil and criminal legal processes. Success is defined as a C or above.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	Seventy-five percent (75%) of the students will perform within the industry standard and receive a "C" or above on course projects.	Percent of Program Achieving Target	Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the students performed within the industry standard and received a "C" or above on course projects.
Methods	<p>Student projects from PLS 296 (Family Law) and PLS 283 (Real Estate Law) were randomly sampled and assessed according to this rubric:</p> <p>A: Correctly identifies all rules of law triggered by fact scenario; accurately analyzes case outcome utilizing appropriate methodology; and complies with rules of procedure in drafting, filing and/or recording documents;</p> <p>B: Correctly identifies some but not all rules of law triggered by fact scenario; accurately analyzes case outcome utilizing appropriate methodology; and complies with rules of procedure in drafting, filing and/or recording documents;</p> <p>C: Correctly identifies some but not all rules of law triggered by fact scenario; analyzes case outcome but fails to utilize appropriate methodology; and complies with some but not all rules of procedure in drafting, filing and/or recording documents;</p> <p>D: Correctly identifies a rule of law triggered by fact scenario; fails to analyze case outcome utilizing appropriate methodology; and fails to comply with rules of procedure in drafting, filing and/or recording documents;</p> <p>F: Fails to correctly identify any rule of law triggered by fact scenario; fails to analyze case outcome utilizing appropriate methodology; and fails to comply with rules of procedure in drafting, filing and/or recording documents.</p>		
Measurement Instrument 2	In PLS 393 (Civil Procedure), students prepare a civil case for mock trial proceedings. As part of this process, students must work in groups to conduct pre-trial discovery; to prepare jury instructions, pre-trial motions and a pre-trial memorandum; to interview witnesses and prepare them for trial; to prepare documentary evidence utilizing courtroom technology; and to prepare and deliver opening statements and closing arguments. A judge from the community volunteers to preside over the proceedings.		
Criteria for Student Success	Student learning is assessed on student's ability to work effectively in groups, to develop persuasive legal argument applying the correct rules of law and to prepare a civil case for trial in compliance with the rules of civil procedure. Numerical scores were attached to each criterion and averaged across all. Success is defined as a C or above.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	Seventy-five percent (75%) of the students will perform within the industry standard and receive a "C" or above on the mock trial project.	Percent of Program Achieving Target	Eighty-five (85%) of the students performed within the industry standard and received a "C" or above on the mock trial project.
Methods	<p>Student participation in the mock trial project were assessed by the instructor and the presiding judge according to this rubric:</p> <p>A: Average score of "90-100" on ability to work well in group setting; trial preparation; and trial proceedings;</p> <p>B: Average score of "80-89" on ability to work well in group setting, trial preparation and trial proceedings;</p> <p>C: Average score of "70-79" on ability to work well in group setting, trial preparation and trial proceedings;</p> <p>D: Average score of "60-69" on ability to work well in group setting, trial preparation and trial proceedings;</p> <p>F: Less than average score of "60" on ability to work well in group setting, trial preparation and trial proceedings.</p> <p>Student self-evaluations were also considered in assessment of student learning.</p>		
Measurement Instrument 3	Employers of program graduates are surveyed bi-annually to determine employee knowledge of substantive law and rules of procedure. Thirty percent (30%) of the survey questions are focused on the family and real estate practice areas. In fall 2018, there was a seventy-six		

	percent (76%) response rate to the survey.		
Criteria for Student Success	Graduate preparedness for employment is assessed on program graduates' ability to identify and apply key concepts of law as well as rules of procedure governing the civil and criminal legal processes. Success as defined as being deemed to meet expectations.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	Seventy-five percent (75%) of the survey respondents will indicate that program graduate met expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure.	Percent of Program Achieving Target	Ninety-four percent (94%) of the survey respondents indicated that program graduates met expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure.
Methods	Employer surveys required employers to rank program graduate performance as follows: Exceeds expectations: Employee exceeds employer expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure in practice; Meets expectations: Employee meets employer expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure in practice; Does not meet expectations: Employee does not meet employer expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure in practice due to reasons beyond control of program; Requires remediation by program: Employee does not meet employer expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure in practice due to deficiencies within program curriculum, methodology or assessment.		
Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.		Met	Not Met
Actions (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.)			
Employer survey results from 2018 indicated that two program graduates fell below "meets expectations." The reasons supplied related to communication skills, both oral and written. Even though the referenced employees were lower performers in the program, the program will add this assessment measure to its ASL. To support this measure, additional assignments focusing on communication skills will be added to PLS 190 (Intro to the Paralegal Profession); PLS 250 (Research and Writing I); and PLS 450 (Research and Writing II). The employers, program advisory board and part-time faculty will be consulted regarding the addition of skills-based assignments in these courses.			
Follow-Up (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.)			
The communication skills-based exercises will be added to the PLS 190, PLS 250 and PLS 450 beginning in spring 2020. The advisory board and part-time faculty will review the completed exercises and determine viability for future use and/or explore additional options to more effectively develop this skill set in program graduates.			

Student Learning Outcome 3			
Student Learning Outcome	Execute effective legal research strategies and critically construct legal argument.		
Measurement Instrument 1	In PLS 250 (Legal Research and Writing I) and PLS 450 (Legal Research and Writing II), students will complete legal research projects utilizing resources in the WKU Law Library and online databases such as Westlaw. Students will utilize the results of the legal research projects to construct and articulate persuasive legal argument both in the form of oral argument and legal pleadings and briefs.		
Criteria for Student Success	Student learning will be assessed on the student's ability to conduct efficient and accurate legal research, to incorporate the results of legal research into persuasive legal argument and to articulate that argument effectively in oral and written format. Success as defined as a C or above.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	Seventy-five percent (75%) of the students will perform within the industry standard and receive a "C" or above on the research and writing projects.	Percent of Program Achieving Target	Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the students performed within the industry standard and receive a "C" or above on the research and writing projects.
Methods	Student projects from PLS 250 and PLS 450 were randomly sampled and assessed according to this rubric: A: Correctly identified relevant primary law; effectively utilized primary law to construct persuasive legal argument; and articulated legal		

	<p>argument into oral or written format as required by assignment instructions and rules of procedure;</p> <p>B: Correctly identified relevant primary law; utilized primary law to construct legal argument somewhat persuasive argument; and articulated legal argument into oral or written format as required by assignment instructions and rules of procedure;</p> <p>C. Correctly identified relevant primary law; utilized primary law to construct legal argument that lacked persuasion; and articulated argument into oral or written format that complied with some but not all of the assignment instructions and rules of procedure;</p> <p>D. Identified primary law that lacked relevance; failed to construction persuasive legal argument; and articulated argument into oral or written format that complied with few but not all of the assignment instructions and rules of procedure;</p> <p>F: Failed to identify relevant primary law; failed to construct persuasive legal argument; and failed to articulate argument in compliance with assignment instructions and rules of procedure.</p>		
Measurement Instrument 2	<p>In PLS 393 (Civil Procedure), students prepare a civil case for mock trial proceedings. As part of this process, students must conduct legal research and use the results of their research to construct legal argument for delivery in pre-trial motions, jury instructions, pre-trial memorandum and closing argument.</p>		
Criteria for Student Success	<p>Student learning will be assessed on the student’s ability to conduct efficient and accurate legal research, to incorporate the results of legal research into persuasive legal argument and to articulate that argument effectively in written format. Success is defined as a C or above.</p>		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	<p>Seventy-five percent (75%) of the students will perform within the industry standard and receive a “C” or above on the research and writing projects.</p>	Percent of Program Achieving Target	<p>Eighty-five percent (85%) of the students performed within the industry standard and receive a “C” or above on the research and writing projects.</p>
Methods	<p>Student projects from PLS 393 were randomly sampled and assessed according to this rubric:</p> <p>A: Correctly identified relevant primary law; effectively utilized primary law to construct persuasive legal argument; and articulated legal argument into written format as required by assignment instructions and rules of procedure;</p> <p>B: Correctly identified relevant primary law; utilized primary law to construct legal argument somewhat persuasive argument; and articulated legal argument into written format as required by assignment instructions and rules of procedure;</p> <p>C. Correctly identified relevant primary law; utilized primary law to construct legal argument that lacked persuasion; and articulated argument into written format that complied with some but not all of the assignment instructions and rules of procedure;</p> <p>D. Identified primary law that lacked relevance; failed to construction persuasive legal argument; and articulated argument into written format that complied with few but not all of the assignment instructions and rules of procedure;</p> <p>F: Failed to identify relevant primary law; failed to construct persuasive legal argument; and failed to articulate argument in compliance with assignment instructions and rules of procedure.</p>		
Measurement Instrument 3	<p>Employers of program graduates are surveyed bi-annually to determine employee’s legal research and writing skills. Twenty percent (20%) of the survey questions are focused on the library and online legal research. Twenty percent (20%) of the survey questions are focused on the employee’s ability to articulate persuasive legal argument in written format. In fall 2018, there was a seventy-six percent (76%) response rate to the survey.</p>		
Criteria for Student Success	<p>Graduate preparedness for employment will be assessed on the graduates’ ability to conduct efficient and accurate legal research, to incorporate the results of legal research into persuasive legal argument and to articulate that argument effectively in written format. Success is defined as being deemed to have met expectations.</p>		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	<p>Seventy-five percent (75%) of the survey respondents will indicate that program graduates met expectations regarding the ability to conduct legal research and articulate persuasive legal argument in written format.</p>	Percent of Program Achieving Target	<p>Eighty-one percent (81%) of the survey respondents indicated that program graduates met expectations regarding the ability to conduct legal research and articulate persuasive legal argument in written format.</p>
Methods	<p>Employer surveys required employers to rank program graduate performance as follows:</p> <p>Exceeds expectations: Employee exceeds employer expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure in practice;</p>		

	<p>Meets expectations: Employee meets employer expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure in practice;</p> <p>Does not meet expectations: Employee does not meet employer expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure in practice due to reasons beyond control of program;</p> <p>Requires remediation by program: Employee does not meet employer expectations regarding knowledge and application of substantive law and procedure in practice due to deficiencies within program curriculum, methodology or assessment.</p>	
<p>Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Met</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Not Met</p>
<p>Actions (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.)</p>		
<p>The regional employment market differs from the state or national market on this skill set. Locally, employers have little to no expectation of proficiency in complex research and writing. However, as more graduates gravitate toward larger markets, employer expectations are higher as to these skills and the program must be responsive. While the success target was met, it is a goal of the program to increase success on the measurement for students in all markets. To that end, the program will pursue two (2) initiatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add external proficiency certifications to PLS 250 and PLS 450; and 2. Modify curriculum in research/writing courses to more closely align with that being offered by institutions who are preparing paralegals for licensure in the states of Washington, Utah and California. 		
<p>Follow-Up (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.)</p>		
<p>The proficiency certifications are an additional expense to the program. Cost options will be explored during AY 2019-2020. The unit coordinator for the program will research pre-professional curriculum requirements as well as licensure testing and will propose curriculum modifications for consideration by the advisory board in AY 2019-2020.</p>		