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| **Assurance of Student Learning**  **2020-21** | |
| Potter College of Arts & Letters | Political Science |
| Paralegal Studies (5002) | |

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| **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:** **Communicate effectively within the standards of practice.** | | | |
| **Instrument 1** | **Direct: Office Simulations (PLS 225, PLS 250 and PLS 393)** | | |
| **Instrument 2** | **Direct: Course Writing Projects (PLS 225, PLS 250 and PLS 450)** | | |
| **Instrument 3** | **Indirect: Internship Supervisor Evaluation (PLS 499)** | | |
| **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) and Internship Evaluations** | | | | **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.)** | | | |
| Student learning outcomes 1 and 2 were consistently met. Student learning outcome 3 was met based upon 2021 employer survey and FA 2020 and SP 2021 internship evaluations. | | | |

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| **Student Learning Outcome 1** | | | | | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome** | **Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical restrictions of paralegal practice.** By this we mean the following: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. A C or above is considered success. | | | | | | |
| **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** | | PLS 200 (FA20): 76% (22 out of 29 students)  PLS 393 (SP21): 80% (12/15 students) | | |
| **Methods** | Simulation assignments from PLS 200 and PLS 393 will be 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. A “P” is considered success. | | | | | | |
| **Program Success Target for**  **this Measurement** | One hundred percent (100%) of the students will perform within the industry standard and receive a “P” after instructor assessment of the portfolio and paper and the external evaluation of performance. | **Percent of Program**  **Achieving Target** | | PLS 499 (FA20): 86% (6 of 7 students)  PLS 499 (SP21): 100% (7 students) | | | |
| **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 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** | | 100% (3/3 students) | | | |
| **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.) | | | | | | | |
| PLS 393: Participation and group work are essential to success in this course as it mimics real world legal environments in preparing for and delivering civil cases at trial. Because some students were still relying on remote access to the course, their work was negatively affected primarily due to non-attendance issues.  PLS 499: Internship availability remains affected by pandemic work restrictions. There was marked improvement in completion rates from FA20 to SP21.  Certification Exam: No 2020, 2021 graduates have reported sitting for the any of the national certification exams. Most are focused on employment which is just now recovering from pandemic layoffs and work restrictions. | | | | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | | | | |
| Instructor is currently researching technology to assist remote students with attendance and group work.  Instructor has developed virtual option for internships requiring some volunteer work for WKU Student Legal Services.  Graduates are being monitored for certification exam completion. | | | | | | | |

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| **Student Learning Outcome 2** | | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome** | Communicate effectively within the standards of practice. | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 1** | In three (3) targeted paralegal courses (PLS 190/225, Introduction to Law; PLS 250, Legal Research and Writing I; and PLS 393, Civil Procedure), students are presented with various practice simulations requiring them to develop appropriate lines of communication with various constituencies. Simulations include ***oral*** communication with clients, attorneys, judges, witnesses and vendors. | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Student learning is assessed on student’s ability to choose best mode of communication, to deliver appropriate content, to comply with ethics guidelines including client confidentiality and professional decorum, and to deliver content timely. 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 simulations. | **Percent of Program**  **Achieving Target** | PLS 225 (FA20): 73% (16/22 students)  PLS 225 (SP21): 63% (5/8 students)  PLS 250 (FA20): 75% (15/20 students) | |
| **Methods** | Simulation assignments from PLS 190/225, PLS 250 and PLS 393 will be randomly sampled and assessed according to this rubric:  A: Chooses best mode of communication; delivers all content precisely and succinctly; complies with ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  B: Chooses a good mode of communication; delivers all content but lack precision and succinctness; complies with ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  C: Chooses a good mode of communication; delivers most content but lacks precision and succinctness; complies with most ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  D: Chooses inappropriate mode of communication; delivers minimal content; communication violates some ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  F: Chooses inappropriate mode of communication; delivers little if any relevant content; communication violates ethics guidelines; and fails to meet deadlines. | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 2** | In three (3) targeted paralegal courses (PLS 190/225, Introduction to Law; PLS 250, Legal Research and Writing I; and PLS 393, Civil Procedure), students are presented with various practice simulations requiring them to develop appropriate lines of communication with various constituencies. Simulations include ***written*** communication with clients, attorneys, judges, witnesses and vendors. | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Student learning is assessed on student’s ability to choose best mode of communication, to deliver appropriate content, to comply with ethics guidelines including client confidentiality and professional decorum, and to deliver content timely. 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 simulations. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | PLS 225 (FA20): 73% (16/22 students)  PLS 225 (SP21): 63% (5/8 students)  PLS 250 (FA20): 75% (15/20 students)  PLS 393 (SP21): 80% (12/15 students) | |
| **Methods** | Simulation assignments from PLS 190/225, PLS 250 and PLS 393 will be randomly sampled and assessed according to this rubric:  A: Chooses best mode of communication; delivers all content precisely and succinctly; complies with ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  B: Chooses a good mode of communication; delivers all content but lack precision and succinctness; complies with ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  C: Chooses a good mode of communication; delivers most content but lacks precision and succinctness; complies with most ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  D: Chooses inappropriate mode of communication; delivers minimal content; communication violates some ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  F: Chooses inappropriate mode of communication; delivers little if any relevant content; communication violates ethics guidelines; and fails to meet deadlines. | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 3** | 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. Ten percent (10%) of the supervisor evaluation will be focused on the ability of the intern to communicate within industry standard. Students are also required to prepare a resume and participate in a mock job interview. | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Intern success is assessed on intern’s ability to choose best mode of communication, to deliver appropriate content, to comply with ethics guidelines including client confidentiality and professional decorum, and to deliver content timely. Success is defined as a P. | | | |
| **Program Success Target for this Measurement** | One hundred percent (100%) of the students will perform within the industry standard and receive a “P” after instructor review of external evaluation of performance, resume and mock interview. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | PLS 499 (FA20): 87% (6/7 students)  PLS 499 (SP21): 100% (7 students) | |
| **Methods** | Intern external evaluations, resumes and mock interviews will be assessed according to this rubric:  P: Chooses a good mode of communication; delivers most content with precision and succinctness; complies with ethics guidelines; and meets deadlines;  F: Chooses inappropriate mode of communication; delivers little if any relevant content; communication violates ethics guidelines; and fails to meet deadlines. | | | |
| **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.) | | | | |
| PLS 225 (FA20): This course was taught in hyflex modality with students in person/in class, in person/Zoom, and all online. The Zoom and online students overwhelmingly outperformed the in person/in class students. However, most of the in person/in class students’ poor performance was a direct result of nonattendance. This modality may be used in future after more comprehensive analysis of student performance.  PLS 225 (SP21): This course was added to the schedule after several requests were received for students who had declared the PLS major late and/or were interested in adding a legal course to their curriculum from other majors. There were three “FN” grades awarded to students who just stopped submitting work. | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | |
| The nonattendance and/or failure to participate and submit work in PS 225 is concerning given this is the survey course for the PLS major. This issue will be monitored in FA21 to determine whether or not this was unique to AY 20-21 as a result of Covid 19.  PLS 225 Instructor continues to work with students to complete SP21 course. | | | | |

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| **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 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 research and writing projects. | | **Percent of Program**  **Achieving Target** | PLS 250 (FA20): 75% (15/20 students)  PLS 450 (SP21): 86% (12/14 students) | |
| **Methods** | Student projects from PLS 250 and PLS 450 will be 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 argument into oral or written format as required by assignment instructions and rules of procedure;  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:  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:  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;  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. | | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 2** | 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. | | | | |
| **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 written format. 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 research and writing projects. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | | PLS 393 (SP21): 80% (12/15 students) | |
| **Methods** | Student projects from PLS 393 will be 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 argument into written format as required by assignment instructions and rules of procedure;  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:  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:  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;  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. | | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 3** | 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. Surveys will be disseminated in fall 2020. | | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | 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. | | | | |
| **Program Success Target for this Measurement** | 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. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | | 2021 Survey: 100% (12 respondents) | |
| **Methods** | Employer surveys will require 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 3.** | | | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Actions** (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.) | | | | | |
| While the target was met for PLS 250, there were two students who did not complete the course at the end of the semester. The Instructor continues to work with one student, and the other student decided to retake the course in FA21. Both indicated their inability to complete assignments was related to health issues resulting from the pandemic.  The employer survey was very positive, however, one attorney indicated that she believes the program should address more basics relating to office skills. A prior course required in the major addressed these skills and has not been replaced in the current curriculum given the use of case management software used in most firms. | | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | | |
| PLS 225 for FA21 will be revised to include two assignments relating to phone protocol, scheduling and file management. | | | | | |