

LEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM'S WRITTEN ASSESSMENT PLAN

PROGRAM'S MISSION STATEMENT: The mission of the program is to furnish the student with a core of legal knowledge and critical thinking, organization, communication and interpersonal skills which will enhance the student's ability to function effectively in the legal workplace.

The Legal Studies program is consistent with Illinois State University's mission in that the program fosters "a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities." The small-college atmosphere is advanced in the following ways:

- The Legal Studies Program employs two full-time professors who teach required courses thereby permitting them both get to know the students and become aware of students' specific goals.
- The two sets of required sequenced courses enable the students to get to know one another and develop camaraderie.

The large-university opportunities are provided by the proposed program in the following ways:

- Milner Library offers excellent legal resources, both in print and electronic versions.
- The university provides technical resources for instruction, such as computer labs and legal software programs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: The learning objectives for the program are:

- Develop critical thinking skills
- Foster general communications skills
- Acquire legal research skills
- Develop legal writing skills
- Improve and enhance computer skills in a legal setting
- Develop interviewing and investigation skills
- Learn and understand the paralegal profession and ethical obligations
- Acquire law office management skills

PROGRAM GOAL: Based on these learning objectives, the Illinois State University program's goal is to prepare students for employment as paralegals by developing core competencies in the following areas:

1. Critical thinking
2. General communications
3. Legal research
4. Legal writing
5. Appropriate computer applications
6. Interviewing and investigation
7. An understanding of the paralegal profession and ethical obligations
8. Law office management

Direct Measures: Learning objectives will be assessed by the instructors through classroom assessments in required courses (LGS 201, 203, 204, 370, & 371) such as tests, group projects, PowerPoint presentations, and various homework assignments (pleading drafting, research memoranda, etc.), as follows:

1. Learning Objective: Critical thinking skills
 - a. Analyze a problem; identify and evaluate alternative solutions;
 - b. Formulate logical solutions to problems; construct logical arguments in support of specific positions; evaluate solutions and arguments;
 - c. Determine which areas of law are relevant to a particular situation;
 - d. Apply principles of professional ethics to specific factual situations;
 - e. Identify interrelationships among cases, statutes, regulations, and other legal authorities; and
 - f. Apply recognized legal authority to a specific factual situation.

- LGS 201: Introduction to Paralegal Studies — Outcomes a-f (drafting and research assignments, group classroom assignments, tests)

- LGS 203: Legal Research I — Outcomes a, e-f (research assignments, tests)

- LGS 204: Legal Research II — Outcomes a, b, e, & f (drafting assignments, tests)

- LGS 370: Litigation I — Outcomes a-d, & f (drafting assignments, tests)

- LGS 371: Litigation II — Outcomes a-d, & f (drafting assignments, tests)

2. Learning Objective: General communications skills
 - a. Interact effectively with others in the workplace;
 - b. Exhibit tact and diplomacy;
 - c. Compose and format an appropriate business e-mail; and
 - d. Understand the need to ask questions and seek guidance when appropriate.

- LGS 201: Introduction to Law for Paralegals — Outcomes a, b & d (in class group activities)

- LGS 203: Legal Research I — Outcomes a, b & d (in class group activities)

- LGS 370: Litigation I — Outcomes a-d (group participation in class, including client interviews; submission of homework via e-mail or safari platform)

- LGS 371: Litigation II — Outcomes a-d (group participation in class, including client interviews; submission of homework via e-mail or safari platform)

- LGS 398A20: Professional Practice Paralegal Internship — Outcomes a, b, & d (mid-term and final evaluations by on-the-job supervisors)

3. Learning Objective: Legal research skills

- a. Prepare and carry out a legal research plan; analyze and categorize key facts in a situation;
 - b. Use both print and electronic sources of law to locate applicable statutes, administrative regulations, constitutional provisions, court cases and other primary source materials;
 - c. Use both print and electronic sources of law to locate treatises, law review articles, legal encyclopedias, and other secondary source materials that help explain the law;
 - d. Read, evaluate and analyze both print and electronic sources of law, and apply them to issues requiring legal analysis;
 - e. Properly cite both print and electronic sources of law;
 - f. “Cite check” legal sources; and
 - g. Identify, locate and appropriately use both print and electronic resources to update and verify the reliability of cited legal authority.
- LGS 203: Legal Research I — Outcomes a-g (tests, quizzes, homework)

4. Learning Objective: Legal writing skills

- a. Understand and apply principles of writing and rules of English grammar to all writing tasks;
 - b. Write in a style that conveys legal theory in a clear and concise manner;
 - c. Read and apply a court opinion to a fact situation;
 - d. Report legal research findings in a standard interoffice memorandum or other appropriate format;
 - e. Draft client correspondence and legal documents, using proper format and appropriate content; and
 - f. Locate and modify standardize forms found in formbooks, pleadings files, form files, or a computer data bank to fit a particular situation.
- LGS 201: Introduction to Law for Paralegals — Outcomes a-e (tests, quizzes, and legal brief preparation)
 - LGS 203: Legal Research I — Outcomes a-e (tests, quizzes, office memorandum and legal brief drafting assignments)
 - LGS 204: Legal Research II — Outcomes a-e (tests, quizzes, office memorandum and legal brief drafting assignments)
 - LGS 371: Litigation II — Outcomes a-f (legal memorandum, motion, discovery, and other drafting assignments)

5. Learning Objective: Computer skills

- a. Demonstrate basic Microsoft Windows functions;

- b. Demonstrate word processing program features, including preparing, editing, saving, and retrieving documents;
 - c. Describe spreadsheet program features and be able to prepare a basic spreadsheet;
 - d. Describe the features of a presentation software program including slide components and graphics and be able to prepare a basic presentation;
 - e. Describe the features of computerized litigation support programs;
 - f. Describe the features of case management and information management software;
 - g. Use e-mail functions; and
 - h. Manage information through computerized databases
- LGS 370: Litigation I — Outcomes a, b, e, g, & h (submission of homework as Word attachments; CaseMap & TimeMap homework assignments)
 - LGS 371: Litigation II — Outcomes a-h (submission of homework as Word, Excel, & PowerPoint attachments; Concordance homework assignment)

6. Learning Objective: Interviewing and investigation skills

- a. Identify witnesses, potential parties to a suit, and experts;
 - b. Conduct effective interviews with clients and witnesses; record the interview accurately;
 - c. Locate and prepare request documents to obtain information that is commonly maintained by government entities;
 - d. Prepare releases and requests to obtain medical, corporate or other non-governmental records; and
 - e. Use the Internet to obtain relevant and reliable information pertaining to a given situation.
- LGS 201: Introduction to Law for Paralegals — Outcomes b & e (interview paralegal)
 - LGS 370: Litigation I — Outcomes b-d (in-class interviews of clients and witnesses; information request drafting assignments)
 - LGS 371: Litigation II — Outcomes a, b, & e (discovery request assignments; in-class interviews of clients and witnesses; factual research homework assignment)

7. Learning Objective: Acquisition of an understanding of the paralegal profession and ethical obligations

- a. Understand the legal process and the nature of law practice, emphasizing the role of the paralegal in the delivery of legal services;
- b. Understand the ways in which paralegal services are used in the delivery of legal services, including functions and tasks commonly performed by paralegals; the

place of the paralegal in the delivery services team;

- c. Understand the respective roles and responsibilities of the members of the legal team;
 - d. Understand the legal and ethical principles that guide paralegal conduct, including, but not limited to: unauthorized practice of law and lawyer supervision of non-lawyers; confidentiality and attorney-client privilege; conflicts of interest; competence; advertising and solicitation; handling client funds, legal fees, and related matters such as attorney fee awards and fee agreements; prohibitions relating to fees including fee referrals, fee-splitting and partnerships between lawyers and non-lawyers; limitations on communications with persons outside law firms, including represented persons, judges, jurors; special rules relating to litigation such as proper courtroom conduct, honesty and candor, frivolous claims, and defenses, sanctions for misconduct; and
 - e. Demonstrate the ability to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas that may be confronted in the workplace.
- LGS 201: Introduction to Legal Studies — Outcomes a-e (tests)
 - LGS 370: Litigation I — Outcomes a-e (tests)
 - LGS 371: Litigation II — Outcomes a-e (tests)

8. Learning Objective: Law office management skills

- a. Describe law office billing practices;
 - b. Work effectively as part of a team; and
 - c. Work independently and with a minimal amount of supervision when appropriate.
- LGS 201: Introduction to Law for Paralegals — Outcome b (in-class group exercises)
 - LGS 203: Legal Research I — Outcome b (in-class group exercises)
 - LGS 370: Litigation I — Outcomes c-e (tests, participation assessment of in-class group exercises; 20+ individual homework assignments)
 - LGS 371: Litigation II — Outcomes a-e (Excel workbook assignment displaying billable hours for entire semester; tests, participation assessment of in-class group exercises; 20+ individual homework assignments)

Indirect Measures: Once a year, the program surveys current students. The program surveys recent graduates once per year. At least once every three years, the program surveys or uses an alternative assessment tool to obtain input from employers of graduates. All surveys seek input for each of the program's goals.

Review of Assessment Data: All assessment data is reviewed by the Director of Legal Studies. He tabulates, summarizes, and interprets the information collected. The results are shared with the ISU Paralegal Advisory Committee and the Legal Studies faculty. Both bodies hold separate semi-annual meetings at which they discuss the data and make recommendations on program

improvements. Some changes require action by other entities, such as the curriculum committee and the full faculty. Curriculum changes go to the College and University Curriculum Committees.

Changes resulting from assessment include the adoption of a Legal Studies major, adoption of new courses (Criminal Litigation, Real Estate Law, Intellectual Property Law; Introduction to Commercial Transactions, Law Office Technology), providing job leads to LGS students in their last semester, a mandatory paralegal internship for LGS majors, etc.