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# Legal Studies

# Academic Assessment Plan

**Adopted by**

**The Justice Center faculty: September 3, 2021**

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## Mission Statement

The UAA Justice Center, established by the Alaska Legislature in 1975, has a mandate to provide statewide justice-related education, research, and service. The Justice Center is an interdisciplinary unit that provides undergraduate, graduate, and professional education; conducts research in the areas of crime, law, and justice; and provides service to government units, justice agencies, and community organizations throughout urban and rural Alaska to promote a safe, healthy, and just society.

## Program Introduction

The Legal Studies program at UAA is a cluster of four degree and certificate options that grew out of the Justice Center’s former Paralegal Studies Certificate program, a program that was approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) continuously from 1992 through 2012. The Paralegal Studies Certificate program offered one 60 credit undergraduate certificate. That certificate has been replaced by the new Associate of Applied Science, Paralegal Studies (AAS). The Legal Studies program also offers a Bachelor of Arts, Legal Studies (BA); a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Paralegal Studies (PBCT); and a Minor in Legal Studies. Enrollment in these degree and certificate options began in Spring 2013. The Legal Studies program additionally offered a Legal Nurse Consultant – Paralegal certificate from 2013 to 2020, but this option was voluntarily discontinued due to low student enrollment as part of the UAA Expedited Program Review process.

All four program options were approved at their initiation for paralegal education by the ABA Standing Committee on Paralegals. However, in Spring 2022, the Minor in Legal Studies was decoupled from ABA approval and the graduation requirements for the Minor significantly altered. As a result, students in the Minor are no longer required to take the same core sequence of courses as in the three degree programs or the Exit Exam. The Minor is therefore no longer subject to program assessment.

The three remaining degree programs (BA, AAS, PBCT) are all centered on a common core of courses combining substantive law and theory with training in legal practice skills. The courses are geared toward preparing program graduates for immediate employment as paralegals or related legal employment. The rigorous emphasis on job skills is in alignment with the goals and requirements for program approval by the ABA Standing Committee on Paralegals.

The Legal Studies program has eight broad learning goals (distinct from student learning outcomes) for all students, regardless of the degree option. Students in all three degree programs will acquire:

1. Broad-based knowledge achieved through general college education.
2. Exceptionally strong competency in critical thinking and in written and oral communication skills.
3. Clear understanding of the rules of ethics governing American judges, lawyers, and paralegals.
4. Comprehensive legal vocabulary and understanding of judicial processes.
5. Operational knowledge of legal investigatory and discovery techniques.
6. Command of skills required for legal research, critical analysis, and technical drafting.
7. Knowledge of theories of law, historical influences on the development of law, and fundamental principles of substantive law.
8. Appreciation for the role of law in the allocation of public resources and regulation of social and economic relationships.

The [Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/paralegals/2023-approval-guidelines.pdf) promulgated by the ABA establish the framework within which the program continually determines and modifies its objectives, outcomes, and assessment strategy. Under the ABA Guidelines, responsibility for program planning and development resides with the Program Coordinator, whose qualifications must meet the ABA standards.

The ABA requires each program approved to have “clearly defined, publicly stated and measurable goals and explicit objectives stated in terms of the educational results to be achieved.” Each program is also required to “have an organized plan for evaluation, review, and improvement of the program. There must be regular assessment of the extent to which a program meets its stated goals and objectives.”

As part of its assessment requirements, the ABA requires twice yearly meetings of a Legal Studies Paralegal Advisory Committee (LSPAC), consisting of local attorneys, paralegals, and members of the public, to provide an external check on program quality and currency. Minutes of these meetings must be submitted to the ABA as part of the re-approval process. The ABA additionally requires Legal Studies faculty to meet at least once a semester and submit minutes of those meetings as well.

Program objectives, outcomes and the assessment strategy, among other things*,* are identified for the ABA through periodic re-approval and interim reports. The most extensive of these, the re-approval reports, are submitted every seven years, pursuant to ABA requirements. The self-report and appendices of supporting documentation are then reviewed by the ABA Standing Committee, which requests any supplemental information deemed necessary. When all information is in hand, the ABA schedules a two or three-day site visit, and evaluates the program as a whole. The site team’s report is prepared at the conclusion of the team’s visit and shared with the Program Coordinator and faculty. The program begins evaluating its improvement strategy from that point forward. While the ABA Standing Committee on Paralegals votes on whether to recommend re-approval to the ABA Board of Governors, the program meets with its advisory committee to discuss its approaches to the recommendations made by the site team. Impacts on objectives, outcomes and assessment strategies are also discussed among the faculty, and modifications are implemented where necessary to maintain currency in the legal marketplace.

Between site visits, the ABA requires submission of interim reports during the third year of the program’s approval period. These reports address all aspects of program operation and development and allow the ABA to continuously monitor the quality and currency of the program. They also assist program faculty in assessing progress toward program improvement.

The most recent major report for the UAA Legal Studies program was a re-approval report due and submitted in December 2022.

## Student Learning Outcomes

The Legal Studies program has adopted six Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that are common to all three degree options. (There are no defined SLOs for the Minor.) There are additionally two SLOs required only of the BA and one SLO required only of both the AAS and the PBCT. For each SLO, the Legal Studies program has developed a set of measures intended to capture the breadth of evaluative criteria within each SLO. A rubric has been created for each measure according to whether the student exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or does not meet expectations.

The SLOs and associated measures are as follows; the full rubric is included as Appendix G:

All Degree Options

At the completion of a Legal Studies program degree option, students are able to:

* Produce superior quality university-level written documents and oral reports.
	+ Measures: control of syntax and mechanics; content development; sources/evidence; disciplinary conventions
* Identify and accurately apply the rules of professional ethics governing lawyers and nonlawyer staff, and the rules governing the unauthorized practice of law in Alaska.
	+ Measures: identification of ethical issue and corresponding rule[s]; application of rule[s]
* Interpret and accurately apply legal terminology and foundational principles of substantive and procedural law in the analysis of legal issues.
	+ Measures: interpretation of legal terms and principles; application of legal terms and principles
* Develop and execute legal research plans using law library resources and commonly used legal research databases.
	+ Measures: identification of potentially relevant authorities; development of research plan; plan execution and retrieval of authorities needed
* Synthesize primary and secondary legal authorities and draft memoranda of legal analysis.
	+ Measures: document format and organization; document content; synthesis and analysis of primary and secondary/mandatory and persuasive legal authority; tone and voice; citation usage
* 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.
	+ Measures: investigative plan identification of information resources; development of investigative plan; format and organization of pleadings/discovery requests; content of pleadings/discovery requests; tone and voice of pleadings/discovery requests; citation usage

Bachelor of Arts, Legal Studies

In addition to the outcomes first listed, at the completion of the Bachelor of Arts, Legal Studies program students are able to:

* Assess and critique theories of law and the impact of American law, both historically and currently, on social and economic relationships, access to public resources, and individual liberties.
	+ Measures: critical thinking
* Construct from disparate fields of substantive law a unified theory of law as a mechanism for ordering social and economic relationships.
	+ Measures: integrative learning

Associate of Applied Science, Paralegal Studies; Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Paralegal Studies

In addition to the outcomes listed above, at the completion of the Associate of Applied Science, Paralegal Studies program and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Paralegal Studies students are able to:

* Relate legal rules and doctrines to client problems in the performance of entry-level paralegal duties in a private law firm, public legal service agency, or law department.
	+ Measures: experiential learning; integrative learning/reflection and analysis of knowledge

## Assessment Process

### Introduction

Program outcomes for the Legal Studies courses and certificates were developed in accordance with the exacting standards promulgated by the ABA for the approval of paralegal education programs nationwide. Thus, program outcomes were identified through (1) review of the ABA’s published recommendations to the legal profession regarding the effective utilization of paralegals, (2) analysis of the ABA’s most recent program review and recommendations, (3) consultations with the program’s advisory committee, (4) review of program goals listed in the UAA Catalog, and (5) analysis of employer and graduate surveys.

In the expanded Legal Studies program, all three degree options rest on a single core of legal specialty courses. “Legal specialty” is an ABA term used to designate coursework that covers substantive law or process and is designed to develop professional workplace skills. Because of these shared core specialty courses, there is significant overlap in student learning outcomes from program to program. These shared program outcomes are measured collectively. Those program outcomes that are not shared among all programs are measured independently.

The Legal Studies program collects data from a variety of sources, primarily surveys. The program regularly conducts surveys of local employers, program graduates, and current students. The program also relies upon assessment feedback from Legal Studies faculty and the LSPAC, as well as on an exit exam given to students completing all degree and program options. In addition to using surveys and other feedback to evaluate the quality of instruction, current students are surveyed on the time and manner of course offerings so as best to tailor the program to meet the needs and interests of the broadest range of students.

### General Implementation Strategy

The coordinator of the Legal Studies program degree options is responsible for ensuring that the program assessment plan is congruent with both the current UAA guidelines and the requirements of the ABA for maintaining approval by the Standing Committee on Paralegals. The Program Coordinator is also responsible for initiating assessment planning with other faculty and outside assessors, delegating collection of student artifacts as appropriate, disseminating and collecting employer and graduate surveys, preparing and arranging administration of the program exit exam, and arranging and synthesizing faculty review of student e-portfolios or student artifacts.

The internship coordinator is responsible for collecting employer evaluations of student interns and submitting them to the Program Coordinator. Internship evaluations are completed as students move through the internship course at the conclusion of their studies; thus, the number of evaluations completed and the time of those evaluations varies from semester to semester.

Employer surveys are mailed to law firms in the Third Judicial District every three years. The Justice Center is in the process of shifting to electronic surveys.

Graduate surveys are emailed to all program graduates within six months of graduation and again two years after graduation. The Justice center is in the process of shifting to electronic surveys of graduates as well.

The exit exam is administered through Blackboard by Justice Center staff during the last month of the fall and spring semesters to students in their last month of their respective programs. Annual review of the exam content to maintain relevance and validity is the responsibility of the Program Coordinator.

Data from the internship evaluations, employer and graduate surveys, and exit exams is compiled by Justice Center staff and presented to the faculty for shared analysis.

Student work is also evaluated by the Legal Studies faculty in accordance with specific SLOs and cross-checked against evaluations of the same student work by the LSPAC. The Program Coordinator maintains a program assessment portfolio containing representative student assignments, instructor grading rubrics, and student work. Faculty meet to discuss how the various student learning outcomes might be reflected in student work, and faculty will agree on a division of responsibility for ensuring that the necessary artifacts are created. Individual faculty take responsibility for creating assignments and rubrics linked to specific SLOs. Thus, for example, the instructor of the Evidence, Investigation, and Discovery course (LEGL A377) may agree to assign students the drafting of a written investigation plan, linked to a specific SLO and associated measures. The collected student works are then scored by both Legal Studies faculty and the LSPAC according to whether the student works meet expectations for paralegals in the field.

### Description of Faculty Involvement

All program faculty have been involved in the initial discussions regarding development of the student learning outcomes and assessment plan. The plan presented here represents the culmination of those planning meetings. Program faculty are also involved in developing the questions used on the exit exam. Individual instructors from each of the core legal specialty courses submit exam questions reflecting the substantive content of each course. As described above, faculty also meet to determine what student assignments will generate appropriate artifacts for measuring individual program outcomes. Individual faculty take responsibility for assigning students coursework that will demonstrate program outcomes, creating appropriate and uniform assessment rubrics for the artifacts, and submitting assignments, rubrics, and representative artifacts to the Program Coordinator.

Faculty meet once a year in the Fall to review all data generated during the previous academic year, and compare that information with data collected in previous years. Faculty collaborate to identify apparent strengths and weaknesses and any discernible trends. As problem areas are identified, faculty seek to identify whether the source of the problems are external or internal to the program and look for solutions such as changes in advising procedures, required or recommended preliminary coursework, course content and/or delivery.

All data collected, together with all student work, is also made available to site team reviewers from the ABA, who assist faculty in identifying strengths and weaknesses of the program and any corrective measures that may be deemed necessary.

Modification of the Assessment Plan

The faculty, after reviewing the collected data and the processes used to collect it, may decide to alter the assessment plan. Changes may be made to any component of the plan, including the outcomes, assessment measures, or any other aspect of the plan. The changes will be approved by the faculty of the program. The modified assessment plan will be forwarded to the dean/director’s office and the Office of Academic Affairs.

All modifications of the assessment plan will be initiated in the fall semester when the faculty has returned, as this will be their first opportunity to receive the results of the previous year’s assessment report.

## Appendix A: Student Work

Measure Description

The principal way in which Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) is assessed each year is through the evaluation of student work in relation to the SLO(s) being evaluated that year. Each year, Legal Studies faculty chooses at least one SLO to evaluate for that year. Faculty may choose to evaluate all measures within a chosen SLO, specific measures within a single SLO, or multiple measures across different SLOs. The choice changes from year to year based on the SLOs that have been measured in the previous years. The goal is to evaluate all SLOs and measures over a reasonable time frame; there is no set pattern of rotation for the SLOs and measures.

Once the SLOs and measures are chosen for the year, typically early in the fall semester, the Legal Studies faculty determines which course is best suited to provide work for the chosen SLOs and measures. Selection of courses further on in the typical academic program sequence is preferred. The faculty teaching that course then collects student work (sometimes referred to as “student artifacts”) over the course of the year to be used for evaluation toward the end of the academic year. The number of artifacts collected depends on the number of students in the course and the number of available evaluators in the Legal Studies Program Advisory Committee (see below). Faculty endeavors to collect a sufficient number of artifacts for reliable evaluation. For courses with large enrollments, not all student work may be used. The selection is limited first to Legal Studies majors and then at random.

Student artifacts are evaluated both by the Legal Studies faculty and by members of the Legal Studies Program Advisory Committee (LSPAC), comprised primarily of legal practitioners. Each Legal Studies faculty member scores each student artifact on a scale of 0-2 in relation to whether each one does not meet, meets, or exceeds expectations. The same student artifacts are also scored by the LSPAC, though each member of the LSPAC only scores a limited number of artifacts corresponding to the number of Legal Studies faculty. For example, if there are four Legal Studies faculty, each student artifact would be scored by four different LSPAC members. This helps ensure comparability between the scoring.

Factors that Affect the Collected Data

Factors that affect the collected data include:

* students enrolled in a particular course in any given semester or academic year may not be reflective of the capabilities of Legal Studies students as a whole;
* each student artifact is scored by only a handful of Legal Studies faculty and LSPAC members, increasing variability;
* differences in expectations for student abilities by LSPAC members, which may result in unknown variances in scoring;
* each SLO and measure is only evaluated every few years, making it difficult to measure improvement over time, though aggregate trends for students can still be evaluated.

How to Interpret the Data

Evaluation of student work in this manner provides both internal assessment of students’ abilities and external verification of those expectations. Faculty can assess whether students are meeting expectations on a variety of different measures central to the Legal Studies program. This in turn can offer feedback on areas for improvement or increased focus. Reducing the scores to a numerical determination makes comparisons both to expected achievement and across measures relatively straightforward. Over the course of several years, trends in student achievement can become apparent.

The participation of the LSPAC in this process offers further feedback on student achievement. Because the LSPAC includes both working paralegals/legal assistants and attorneys, student work is assessed in relation to expectations of the job market. These scores also offer a useful check on faculty expectations to ensure that students are being adequately prepared for employment.

## Appendix B: Internship Evaluations

Measure Description

A standardized evaluation form is provided to all employers of our student interns. It is designed to assess how well each student was able to meet the employer’s expectations of the student’s written and oral communication skills, how successful the student was over the course of the internship in adhering to the rules of professional ethics and observing the rules governing the unauthorized practice of law, the extent to which the student was successful in using law library resources and legal research databases to conduct legal research and synthesize the results of the research into memoranda of legal analysis, and whether the student was able to perform other entry-level paralegal tasks to the employer’s satisfaction.

Factors that Affect the Collected Data

Factors that affect the collected data include:

* unrealistic employer expectations, which may cause the evaluation score to be inordinately low;
* limited opportunities for the student intern to perform a variety of tasks, which may cause the evaluation score to inaccurately reflect the student’s abilities;
* disparity in levels of guidance and supervision provided to interns by the internship host, which may cause the evaluation scores of poorly directed or supervised students to be inappropriately low;
* inability to norm employer ratings, which will result in differing evaluation scores not reflecting differences in student performance.

How to Interpret the Data

Reviewing the number of responses rating students average or above, as well as the overall rating of the students, allows faculty to gauge whether employers view our students’ skills as commensurate with the standards of the profession.

## APPENDIX C: Exit Exams

Measure Description

An Exit Exam is administered to students via Blackboard during the month preceding a student’s graduation. All students graduating with a Legal Studies degree are required to take the Exit Exam. (The Exit Exam is not required for students obtaining a Minor in Legal Studies.) The same exam is administered for all degree programs. The exam covers the range of substantive and technical knowledge and skills presented in the core Legal Studies courses taken by all students.

The Exit Exam takes the form of a seventy-five question multiple choice test (four choices per question) covering seven topics: U.S. legal system; legal ethics; evidence; civil procedure and litigation; legal research and writing; trial practice; application and analysis. There are between five and fifteen questions per topic.

Factors that Affect the Collected Data

Factors that affect the collected data include:

* no minimum score for the Exit Exam (it is administered purely for the purpose of self-assessment), meaning students may tend not to take the exam seriously while taking it;
* relatedly, there is no incentive for students to study for the Exit Exam prior to taking the exam;
* exams are administered at the end of the students’ academic careers and at the end of the semester, when students may have forgotten earlier coursework and may be experiencing academic fatigue.

How to Interpret the Data

The Exit Exams are highly Legal Studies program specific, i.e., designed to reflect the specific course content offered to our students. Thus, the Exit Exams do not produce results comparable with other programs either at UAA or at other institutions. The scores in each content area provide feedback on the program’s ability to provide the graduates with the expected program content. This in turn can help faculty adjust points of emphasis in their courses.

## APPENDIX D: STUDENT SURVEYS

Measure Description

An electronic survey is distributed toward the end of the Spring Semester to all student who took a Legal Studies course over the previous academic year, regardless of the student’s major (or if one has been declared) or the number of Legal Studies courses taken. Students are asked a variety of questions ranging from their level of satisfaction with their Legal Studies courses to barriers to success in their Legal Studies courses to course scheduling and manner of delivery preferences. Students are also offered the opportunity to provide written feedback as part of the survey.

Factors that Affect the Collected Data

Factors that affect the collected data include:

* voluntary nature of the survey may result in low response rates and self-selection of respondents;
* not all respondents are Legal Studies students or likely to take Legal Studies courses in the future, though this can be addressed in data analysis;
* in order to keep survey short, generalized questions must be asked that may not reflect the circumstances or preferences of individual students;
* student scheduling preferences may change from semester to semester due to unanticipated life situations.

How to Interpret the Data

Reviewing student responses provides a snapshot of student course scheduling and manner of delivery preferences, though one that may be a bit fluid. These preferences must also be weighed against the preferences of Legal Studies faculty and the constraints of creating a course schedule with minimal overlap between courses. The student survey also provides a helpful barometer on overall student attitudes toward the program. Assessment of barriers to success, not all of which can be addressed by the program, may provide insight into reasons why students may not finish their degrees or be delayed in finishing their degrees.

## Appendix E: Alumni Surveys

Measure Description

The surveys are emailed to each program alumni at six months and two years post-graduation. The survey is designed to measure both how successful program alumni are in finding employment in their field, and alumni perceptions of how well the program prepared them for the legal workplace.

Factors that Affect the Collected Data

Factors that affect the collected data include:

* + low overall return rate makes it difficult to generalize from the data with any degree of reliability;
	+ self-reporting bias which may result in inappropriately inflated or deflated responses;
	+ unrealistic student expectations of career opportunities which may result in inappropriately low scores.

How to Interpret the Data

Responses allow program faculty to evaluate student perceptions of their level of preparedness for the workplace. The feedback assists faculty in determining whether specific teaching techniques are effective. For example, alumni are asked how helpful certain activities, such as acquiring legal research skills or participating in legal simulations, were in preparing the program graduate for her or his job.

## Appendix F: Employer Surveys

Measure Description

These are comprehensive surveys sent to each law firm within Alaska’s Third Judicial District. The survey is distributed every three years to both private and public legal employers. They are used for both program planning and measuring student learning outcomes. Among other things, the survey seeks information on legal and other job skills and level of education desired by employers, along with starting salary and benefits information. The survey also requests each firm to evaluate the professional skills and knowledge of any program graduates working in the firm.

Factors that Affect the Collected Data

Factors that affect the collected data include:

* + low overall return rate and infrequency of survey distribution makes it difficult to generalize from the data with any degree of reliability;
	+ employer expectations for legal and other job skills may reflect more an ideal than a realistic level of student attainment;
	+ the need to administer the survey to a wide variety of employers limits the specificity of the questions asked;
	+ inability to norm responses across a diverse set of employers with different expectations for starting paralegals and legal assistants.

How to Interpret the Data

Data from the survey provides broad employment information for what our students can expect on the legal job market in Anchorage and southcentral Alaska more generally. The survey also provides feedback on employer expectations for program graduates. Because of the size of the survey, it is only administered every three years. Moreover, in order to use the same survey for employers in vastly different employment setting and legal specialties, the questions must be rather generalized. The survey is thus more useful for providing a broad framing of the job market than for targeting specific types of job openings.

## Appendix G: Student Learning Outcomes, Measures, and Rubric

| Learning outcome | Measure | Exceeds | Meets | Does Not Meet |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A. Produce superior quality university-level written documents and oral reports | Control of Syntax and Mechanics | Skillfully uses language; conveys meaning clearly and fluently; information is logically organized; document or oral report is virtually free of grammatical, structural, usage, or spelling errors | Follows language and structural conventions to convey meaning; main points are generally clear and logically organized; document or oral report has few or minor errors in grammar, structure, or spelling | Main points are generally unclear; information is poorly organized; and/or errors in grammar, structure, or spelling impede communication of ideas |
| Content Development | Skillfully and accurately discusses authoritative sources, including secondary if appropriate, to communicate, support, and fully develop key points | Discusses authoritative sources to support essential points; sources are accurately and adequately explained; sources are appropriately applied | Key points are largely unsupported by discussion of appropriate; authorities are inaccurately discussed or inappropriately applied |
| Sources / Evidence | Skillfully uses authoritative, relevant sources to support all points and conclusions; discusses a variety of authoritative, relevant sources | Uses authoritative, relevant sources to support essential points and conclusions | Essential points are largely unsupported by authoritative, relevant sources; and/or relies upon inappropriate sources |
| Disciplinary Conventions | Fluently applies all relevant disciplinary conventions, including integration of primary/secondary authorities; skillfully and accurately applies rules of citation; consistently adheres to all formatting and organizational conventions | Correctly follows essential disciplinary conventions; accurately integrates primary/secondary authorities; accurately applies the most common rules of citation; largely adheres to formatting and organizational conventions | Fails to follow essential disciplinary conventions; fails to integrate, or inaccurately integrates primary/secondary authorities; displays numerous citation errors; and/or displays numerous failures to follow formatting and organizational conventions |
| B. Identify and accurately apply the rules of professional ethics governing lawyers and nonlawyer staff, and the rules governing the unauthorized practice of law in Alaska. | Identification of Ethical Issue and Corresponding Rule(s) | Accurately identifies and fully explains ethical issue(s) and corresponding rule(s) | Accurately identifies and adequately explains ethical issue(s) and corresponding rule(s) | Fails to identify or inaccurately identifies clearly presented ethical issue(s); and/or fails to identify or inaccurately identifies corresponding rule(s) |
| Application of Rule(s) | Accurately and fully explains all aspects of problem posed, all implications for client or third party, any ambiguities in application of corresponding rule(s) of ethics, and consequences of application of the rule[s]; if applicable, accurately and fully explains relationship among rules and any potential conflict in application | Accurately explains problem posed, most critical implications for client or third party, and consequences of application of the rule(s) | Fails to identify or inadequately or inaccurately explains problem posed, fails to explain critical implications for client or third-party, and/or fails to explain or inaccurately explains consequences of application of the rule(s) |
| C. Interpret and accurately apply legal terminology and foundational principles of substantive and procedural law in the analysis of legal issues. | Interpretation of Legal Terms and Principles | Displays a nuanced understanding of standard legal usage; discusses ambiguities and contradictory usage as appropriate  | Accurately explains meaning and context of legal terms and principles in standard legal usage | Inaccurately explains or fails to explain meaning and context of legal terms and principles |
| Application of Legal Terms and Principles | Accurately predicts the most likely legal result of applying relevant legal terms and principles to a given set of facts; accurately identifies and fully discusses uncertainties and contingencies as appropriate; fully discusses counter analysis or minority viewpoints | Accurately predicts the most likely legal result of applying relevant legal terms and principles to a given set of facts; accurately identifies uncertainties and contingencies as appropriate | Inaccurately predicts or fails to predict the most likely legal result of applying relevant legal terms and principles to given set of facts |
| D. Develop and execute legal research plans using law library resources and commonly used legal research databases. | Identification of Potentially Relevant Authorities | Research plan or sources cited demonstrate comprehensive, advanced understanding of range of potentially relevant primary and secondary authorities; sources cited or referenced include less common or lesser-known authorities; sources selected directly relate to research question  | Research plan or sources cited demonstrate competency in linking a specific legal problem to potentially relevant primary and secondary legal authorities, most sources selected relate well to the research question | Research plan or sources cited omit potentially relevant primary or secondary authorities; and/or sources selected do not relate to the research question |
| Development of Research Plan | Documentation of research plan demonstrates highly efficient approach; utilizes the most appropriate resources available; demonstrates mastery of databases and database tools to gather all potentially relevant authorities | Documentation of research plan demonstrates competent approach; utilizes appropriate resources; demonstrates competent use of databases and database tools to gather sufficient applicable authorities | Research plan demonstrates inefficient approach; omits use of standard resources; unsuccessful in using databases and database tools to locate sufficient authorities |
| Plan Execution and Retrieval of Authorities Needed | Research record or sources cited demonstrate successful retrieval of all relevant authorities in their most current version or as published at the time relevant to the analysis; research record or legal analysis demonstrates mastery of electronic citators and application of citation content | Research record or sources cited demonstrate successful retrieval of sufficient authorities; research record or legal analysis demonstrates understanding or role of electronic citators and techniques for their use, as well as application of citatory content in the research process | Research record or sources cited demonstrate inability to retrieve sufficient authorities; and/or research record or legal analysis demonstrates inability or failure to use legal citators |
| E. Synthesize primary and secondary legal authorities and draft memoranda of legal analysis. | Document Format and Organization | Flawless application of disciplinary formatting conventions; all standard elements are included and effectively organized according to disciplinary conventions; subheadings are skillfully used and labeled to facilitate reader comprehension | Competent application of disciplinary formatting conventions; critical elements are included and organized according to disciplinary conventions; in most instances subheadings are used and labeled appropriately to facilitate reader comprehension | Fails in several instances to apply disciplinary formatting conventions; critical elements are omitted or organized in a manner inconsistent with disciplinary conventions; subheadings are omitted or in numerous instances inappropriately inserted or mislabeled |
| Document Content | Content is flawlessly aligned with the purpose of each document section; skillfully uses language; conveys meaning clearly and fluently; information is virtually free of grammatical, structural, usage, or spelling errors  | Content is generally well aligned with the purpose of each document section; follows language and structural conventions to convey meaning; main points are generally clear and logically organized; memorandum has few or minor errors in grammar, structure, usage, or spelling | Content in several instances is misaligned with the purpose of the section; main points are generally unclear; information is poorly organized; and/or errors in grammar, structure, usage, or spelling impede communication of ideas |
| Synthesis and Analysis of Primary and Secondary / Mandatory and Persuasive Legal Authority | Skillfully organizes and synthesizes primary and secondary/mandatory and persuasive authority to fluently and accurately explain impact of principles on specific set of facts; all points are well supported by citation to appropriate authority; discussion seamlessly integrates law and fact | Effectively organizes and synthesizes primary and secondary / mandatory and persuasive authority to accurately explain impact of principles on specific set of facts; essential points are adequately supported by citation to appropriate authority; discussion competently integrates law and fact | Poorly organizes, inadequately synthesizes, and/or insufficiently applies primary and secondary/mandatory and persuasive authority; numerous essential points are unsupported or inadequately supported by citation to appropriate authority; and/or discussion fails to integrate law and fact to accurately communicate a legal result |
| Tone and Voice | Tone and voice are highly appropriate for intended audience and document purposes; skillfully selects between active and passive voices to meet document’s purpose; word usage consistently follows disciplinary conventions and effectively furthers author’s purpose | Tone and voice are generally appropriate for intended audience and document purposes; word usage generally follows disciplinary conventions and effectively furthers author’s purpose | Tone and voice are inappropriate for intended audience and document purposes; in numerous instances word usage is inappropriate for the discipline |
| Citation Usage | Demonstrates mastery of disciplinary conventions; citations are nearly error-free; citation signals and parentheticals are used accurately and effectively; short and long form citations are accurately employed consistently | Demonstrates competent use of disciplinary conventions; most citations are error free; short and long form citations are generally accurately employed; pinpoint citations are generally accurately employed | Fails to follow or inadequately follows disciplinary conventions; citation errors are common; necessary pinpoint citations are frequently omitted |
| F. 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 | Investigative/discovery plan demonstrates advanced use of range of potentially relevant sources of information; includes all potentially relevant standard sources; includes less commonly known or utilized resources as well as standard resources; resources selected directly relate to the facts in controversy | Investigative/discovery plan demonstrates competent use of range of potentially relevant sources of information; includes all essential resources; resources selected generally relate well to the facts in controversy | Investigative/discovery plan demonstrates inadequate use of range of potentially relevant sources of information; resources selected are generally unrelated to the facts in controversy |
| Development of Investigative Plan | Investigative plan demonstrate highly efficient approach to developing sources of proof; differentiating between internal investigation and discovery pursuant to the Rules of Civil/Criminal Procedure; consistently utilizes the most appropriate resources available, seamlessly integrating internal investigation processes with discovery processes; demonstrates mastery of databases and database tools to gather all potentially relevant information | Investigative plan demonstrates competent approach to developing sources of proof, differentiating between internal investigation and discovery pursuant to the Rules of Civil/Criminal Procedure; generally utilizes the most appropriate resources, competently integrating internal investigation processes with discovery processes; demonstrates competence in use of databases and database tools to gather all potentially relevant information | Investigative plan demonstrates inefficiency or inadequacy in developing sources of proof; fails or generally fails to differentiate between internal investigation and discovery pursuant to the Rules of Civil/Criminal Procedure; fails or generally fails to identify standard resources, fails or generally fails to integrate internal investigation processes with discovery processes; demonstrates ineffective use of databases and database tools to gather information |
| Format and Organization of Pleadings / Discovery Requests | Flawless application of disciplinary formatting conventions; strict adherence to applicable Rules of Procedure; all standard elements are included and effectively organized according to disciplinary conventions; subheadings are skillfully used and labeled as appropriate | Competent application of disciplinary formatting conventions; document adheres in most respects to applicable Rules of Procedure; critical elements are included and organized according to disciplinary conventions  | Fails in several instances to apply disciplinary formatting conventions; applicable Rules of Procedure are generally not followed; critical elements are omitted or organized in a manner inconsistent with disciplinary conventions; subheadings are omitted or in numerous instances inappropriately inserted or mislabeled |
| Content of Pleadings / Discovery Requests | Content is flawlessly aligned with the purpose of each document section; all content required under applicable Rules of Procedure is included; skillfully uses language; conveys meaning clearly and fluently; document is virtually free of grammatical, structural, usage, or spelling errors | Content is generally well aligned with the purpose of each document section; most content required under applicable Rules of Procedure is included: follows language and structural conventions to convey meaning; main points are generally clear and logically organized; document has few or minor errors in grammar, structure, usage, or spelling | Content in several instances is misaligned with the purpose of the section; content required under applicable Rules of Procedure is omitted; main points are generally unclear; information is poorly organized; and/or errors in grammar, structure, usage, or spelling impede communication of ideas |
| Tone and Voice of Pleadings / Discovery Requests | Tone and voice are highly appropriate for intended audience and document purposes; skillfully selects between active and passive voice to meet document’s purpose; word usage consistently follows disciplinary conventions and effectively furthers author’s purpose | Tone and voice are generally appropriate for intended audience and document purposes; word usage generally follows disciplinary conventions and effectively furthers author’s purpose. | Tone and voice are inappropriate for intended audience and document purposes; and/or in numerous instances word usage is inappropriate for the discipline |
| Citation Usage | Demonstrates mastery of disciplinary conventions; citations are nearly error-free; citation signals and parentheticals are used accurately and effectively; short and long form citations are accurately employed consistently | Demonstrates competent use of disciplinary conventions; most citations are error free; short and long form citations are generally accurately employed; pinpoint citations are generally accurately employed | Fails to follow or inadequately follows disciplinary conventions; citation errors are common; necessary pinpoint citations are frequently omitted |
| G. Relate legal rules and doctrines to client problems in the performance of entry-level paralegal duties in a private law firm, public legal service agency, or law department. (AAS and PBCT only) | Experiential Learning | External assessment (site supervisor evaluation) reflects high (above average) level of satisfaction with student performance on entry-level paralegal tasks | External assessment (site supervisor evaluation) reflects satisfaction with student performance on entry-level paralegal tasks | External assessment (site supervisor evaluation) reflects dissatisfaction with student performance on entry-level paralegal tasks |
| Integrative Learning/Reflection and Analysis of Knowledge | Student journals, formal papers, ePortfolios, and/or internship work product demonstrate student meaningfully synthesizes connections among experiences outside the classroom to deepen understanding of legal ethics and other principles of substantive and procedural law; independently adapts and applies legal knowledge and practice skills to solve real or hypothetical client problems or explore complex legal problems in effective ways; independently draws conclusions or solves legal problems by synthesizing multiple legal concepts and/or practice skills | Student journals, formal papers, ePortfolios, and/or internship work product demonstrate student recognizes connections among experiences outside the classroom with rules of legal ethics and other principles of substantive and procedural law; applies legal knowledge and practice skills to move toward solution of real or hypothetical client problems or explore solutions to legal problems in effective ways | Student journals, formal papers, ePortfolios, and/or internship work product demonstrate student generally fails to recognize connections among experiences outside the classroom with rules of legal ethics and other principles of substantive and procedural law; in most instances is unsuccessful in applying or fails to apply legal knowledge and practice skills to move toward solution of real or hypothetical client problems; and/or fails to explore solutions to legal problems in effective ways |
| H. Assess and critique theories of law and the impact of American law, both historically and currently, on social and economic relationships, access to public resources, and individual liberties. (BA only) | Critical Thinking | Position taken is considered critically with comprehensive evaluation of all relevant information necessary for full understanding; information discussed is taken from highly authoritative, appropriate source(s); thoroughly analyzes own and/or others’ assumptions, evaluating the relevance of social, political, and/or economic context; conclusions or positions are logical and reflect informed evaluation and ability to prioritize evidence and conclusions in explaining outcomes in legal, social, political, and/or economic development in American law and history | Position taken is considered critically with evidence of evaluation of relevant information; information discussed is generally taken from authoritative, appropriate source(s); recognizes own and/or others’ assumptions, and the relevance of social, political, and/or economic context; conclusions or positions generally reflect assessment of evidence in explaining outcomes in legal, social, political, and/or economic development in American law and history | Position taken fails or generally fails to consider relevant information; information discussed is taken or frequently taken from nonauthoritative, inappropriate source(s); generally fails to recognize own and/or others’ assumptions, and the relevance of social, political, and/or economic context; conclusions or positions reflect little consideration of evidence in explaining outcomes in legal, social, political, and/or economic development in American law and history |
| 1. Construct from disparate fields of substantive law a unified theory of law as a mechanism for ordering social and economic relationships. (BA only)
 | Integrative Learning | Meaningfully synthesizes principles and influences on the development of disparate fields of substantive law to deepen understanding of social and economic relationships; independently adapts and applies knowledge of the circular relationship between the development of law and social, economic, and political change to explore complex problems in legal, social, political and/or economic change in ways that enhance understanding; independently draws conclusions or predicts or explains legal change or changes in social and economic relationships by synthesizing influences on legal development in multiple disparate fields of substantive law  | Compares principles and influences on the development of disparate fields of substantive law and connects them to the ordering of social and economic relationships; applies knowledge of the circular relationship between the development of law and social, economic, and political change to discuss problems in legal, social, political and/or economic change; draws conclusions or predicts or explains legal change or changes in social and economic relationships by referencing influences on legal development in multiple disparate fields of substantive law | In most instances fails to connect disparate principles of substantive law and/or influences on the development of disparate fields of law to the ordering of social and economic relationships; in most instances fails to apply knowledge of the circular relationship between the development of law and social, economic, and political change to draw conclusions or predict or explain legal change or changes in social and economic relationships |