

ASSURANCE OF LEARNING IN LW202

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ACTIVITIES

In an effort to assess our students; knowledge and competency in demonstrating a general understanding of the various roles of criminal justice professions in the public and private sector (BSCJ Learning Goal 1), demonstrating learning and teamwork skills (BSCJ Learning Goal 2), demonstrating criminal thinking and analytical skills in solving real world problems in criminal justice (BSCJ Learning Goal 3), and demonstrating an understanding of ethical professional and socially responsible behavior (BSCJ Learning Goal 4), the Instructor, Professor Lopez, has incorporated three assessment tools into LW202 – a pre-test (first administered this Spring 2009), subject exams, and a mock trial project (first administered in Fall 2008).

INSTRUMENTS

Pre-Test

The test used in LW202 is comprised of 18 fill in the blank and short answer questions (with a possible 20 points) that represent the major topics and issues covered in the course. The same questions will be used as post-test to ensure that the same questions.

Students are not aware that there will be post-test and neither the pre-test nor the post test are included in their semester grade calculation. However, the students were encouraged to do their best in the pre-test as the student with the highest score would be given 100% on one pop quiz.

Subject Exams

Subject Exams are divided in to 5 formats – True and False, Multiple Choice, Matching, Fill-in-the-Blanks, and short answer/essays. Each format tests different levels of the students' learning/achievement – base knowledge, rote memory, and analytical skills.

For Fall of 2008, only two tests were given: a midterm and a final exam.

For Spring of 2008, 5 tests will be given.

Mock Trial

A mock trial was set up incorporating two (2) classes – LW202 and LW306 (Criminal Law). This mock trial took place at the end of the fall semester, after LW202 learned the basic rules of evidence. Students took the roles of defendants, witnesses, attorneys and jurors. Students from LW306 reviewed the charges presented, mapped out their trial strategies, and provided the opening and closing arguments. Students from LW202 took the roles of the direct-examiners and cross-examiners. LW202 students were required to use the material they learned throughout the semester and properly introduce evidence, make proper objections, and properly reply to any objections made to their questions.

RESULTS

Pre-Test

14 students took the Pre-test that was administered at the beginning of Spring 2009. The summary of their results is set out in Table 1.

	Pre-Test
Average	3.18
Std. Deviation	1.38
High	4.5
Low	1
Number	20

Subject Exams

	Fall 2008	Spring 2009 (to date)
No. of Students	22	13
Average	81.7	68.8
Std. Deviation	17.3	17.3
Highest	103.3	91.25
Lowest	32.9	28.35

Mock Trial

Students' grades were based upon their ability to make proper objections to evidence that opposing counsels were attempting to introduce, defend against objections made by opposing counsel, and their ability to provide a coherent, understandable recitation of the events for the jury to find in their favor. Students who did not participate in that day's trial acted as jurors and decided whether the Government met their burden of proof. Surprisingly, some students performed better in this exercise than they performed in their written examinations. At least one student decided that she wanted to become an attorney based upon this exercise.

HOW ACTIVITIES ARE LINKED TO THE COURSE-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The syllabus and course outlines states as the Course's learning objective:

This course examines criminal procedure from investigation through arrest and trial. The rules of evidence and constitutional requirements regarding police investigations, search and seizure, arrests, confessions and admissibility of evidence in criminal trials are covered

The tests and exams ensure that students conceptually understand the criminal procedure from investigation through arrest and trial, the rules of evidence and constitutional requirements regarding police investigations, search and seizure, arrests, confessions and admissibility of evidence in criminal trials -- course objective. Additionally, the mock trial helps aid the students try to understand, practically, how evidence and the rules of evidence are used in criminal trials.

CLOSING THE LOOP

Because the pre-test (and subsequent post-test) are not standardized, there is no benchmark to available against which to we can compare the students' performance. Thus, the tests must be given over a longer period of time to determine whether course/program changes are warranted.

Based upon the results of the examinations from Fall 2009, the Instructor decided to increase the number of tests from two tests to five. Based upon the results of examinations in both semesters, the Instructor will be giving a comprehensive final examination whereas no comprehensive final examination was given in Fall 2009. This final examination will concentrate on the specific issues/matters that the students generally performed poorly in during the regular subject exams. A review session will be given prior to the final examination to ensure that the students thoroughly understand the material.

Because of the sequence in which the subject matter was taught/presented in Fall 2008, the mock trial could not be performed until the last three weeks of the semester. To provide the students more time to and more material necessary to analyze the fact pattern, course material has been re-sequenced (chapters are taught in a different order).