

Kimberly M. Tatum
Assistant Professor of
Legal Studies

Using a Peer
Evaluation Exercise in
Class

Purposes of Peer Evaluation

- Engages students in active learning
- Makes students responsible for the learning (Dr. Barbara Walvoord)
- Helps students retain the information longer than a lecture might
- Assists professor in the grading process

Purposes of Peer Evaluation

- Assists in meeting Student Learning Outcomes for the course
- Helps in assessing student learning
- Emphasizes importance of writing across the curriculum
- Makes students better writers

Description of Course

- Advanced Legal Research and Writing
- Capstone Course in Legal Studies Program
- Gordon Rule Course
- UWF Writing Lab administers Diagnostic Exam in beginning of semester and students go to lab to complete exercises if necessary during the semester

Description of Students in Course

- Mostly juniors and seniors
- About 70% pre-law students
- About 30% paralegal students
- Especially important for them to have writing and editing skills

Description of Activity

- Memorandum of Law
- Requires students to conduct legal research to answer a legal issue
- Students write a memo about 5-7 pages long in a standard format
- All students use the same format
- Second memorandum of the semester so students have had some practice

Description of Activity

- On day assignment is due, students are asked to bring 2 copies
- Anonymous evaluation to encourage honest critique
- After handing out the grading rubric, I lecture briefly about the components of rubric
- Give 30 minutes to conduct the activity

Grading Rubric

- 5 Components:
 - Format
 - Citation Form
 - Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation
 - Readability and Clarity
 - Content and Legal Analysis

Conclusion of Activity

- Discuss students' impressions and findings, including positive and negative comments
- Answer questions about what they found that might be unclear to them
- Identify any content areas that require further explanation for future lectures

Results

- Student comments reflect that they find the activity beneficial because they learn from each other
- Encourages them by showing them that they are on the right track in their own writing
- Helps me in grading the assignments
- Emphasizes the importance of good writing and editing