

U.S. Army Paralegal Competency Course Summative Evaluation Plan

IDE 641-Techniques in Education Evaluation

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Introduction

The scope of this project will discuss the summative evaluation plan of the United States Army Paralegal Competency Course (APCC). The Army Paralegal Competency Course (APCC) is a completely asynchronous course of instruction designed to provide innovative distance learning courses and help Army Paralegals with increased education in effective legal writing, client services, administrative law, national security law, and criminal law. According to (NSF, 2010) “the purpose of a summative evaluation is to assess a mature project’s success in reaching its stated goals. Summative evaluation collects information about outcomes, related processes, strategies, and activities that have led to them” (pg. 10). By creating a summative evaluation plan for the United States Army Paralegal Competency Course (APCC), it will enable the ability to understand the size and scope of the project. In addition, a good summative evaluation plan will help this project to reestablish a good working relationship with both the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), the United States Army Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps, and the Noncommissioned Officer Leadership Center of Excellence (NCOLCOE). It is critical to reestablish these relationships as all these agencies are responsible for the funding, approval, and influences within the project. During the outline of the scope summative evaluation plan, we will discuss the audience, established evaluation questions, the evaluation design and associated matrix, and the established summative evaluation methods.

Stakeholders

Primary Audience

The primary audience for the Army Paralegal Competency Course (APCC) is the U.S. JAG Corps Legal Center and School (TJAGLCS). This organization has vested interest within this project and the career management field. According to the (U.S. Army, 2021) “the Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center and School (TJAGLCS) seeks to be the premier legal institution in the federal government, providing legal education, strategic planning, and collection and integration of lessons learned for the Army Judge Advocate General’s Corps (JAGC).” The TJAGLCS is responsible in ensuring the education of the Army Paralegals meets the demands of worldwide contingency operations and can also provide all echelon of commanders with effective and efficient paralegal services to support their formations in garrison operations. The interest in this summative evaluation plan is due to the criticality of the success of this project, as it will enable the TJAGLCS to produce an Army Paralegal with the right skills, knowledge, and attitudes for mission success.

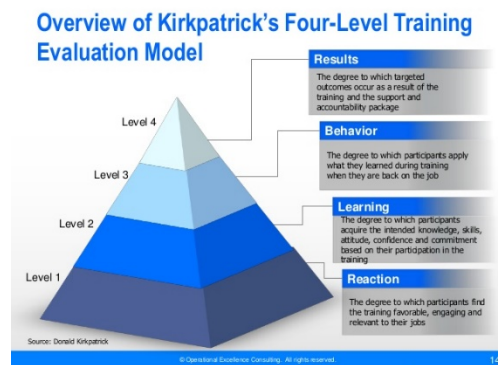
Secondary Audience

The secondary audience for this summative evaluation plan is the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). The Army Training and Doctrine Command according to the (U.S. Army, 2021) “was developed in 1973 with the purpose of shaping the Army through recruiting, training, development, guiding through doctrine, and building/integrating formations, materials, and capabilities.” Army TRADOC has interest in the summative evaluation plan and the project by serving as the proponent that will approve the project through its influence on the alignment of the National Defense Budget and will ultimately

approve the final project. Army TRADOC will not only be responsible for approval but will help apply the resources necessary to proper implementation of the Army Paralegal Competency Course (APCC) into the formal U.S. Army education system.

Summative Evaluation Questions

The summative evaluation questions for this evaluation plan were produced using Donald Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model (1955) as seen within the figure to the left.



According to Dr. (Serhart, Kurt, 2018) “the Kirkpatrick Model is probably the best-known model for analyzing and evaluating the results of training and educational programs.” It is important to note that although this model is common for many people to use, it can also in many cases is not applied properly. During this summative evaluation, the questions developed in the Kirkpatrick Four-Level Training Model were designed starting with level four and working down in sequence to level one.

Primary Audience Questions

- Has the job performance of Army Paralegals increased in the areas of effective legal writing, client services, administrative law, national security law, and criminal law? *(Level 4-Results)*
- To what extent is the distance learning education in the APCC course applied by Army Paralegals within their units of assignment? *(Level 3-Behaviors)*
- Did the asynchronous APCC course help the students learn the new knowledge and skills to increase potential job proficiency? *(Level 2-Learning)*
- How was the asynchronous distance learning and did students enjoy the training and do they think the training is applicable to their career management field? *(Level 1-Reaction)*

Secondary Audience Questions

- Do the results of the education provided to the students of the APCC positively change the Army in a way that exceed the cost associated with funding the project? *(Level 4- Results)*
- Has the application of knowledge and skills for soldiers after formal education in the APCC course influenced positive change within the unit that constitutes formal adoption of the project? *(Level 3-Behaviors)*
- Does the APCC asynchronous course increased mission success through education by providing a paralegal that is a force multiplier for all echelons of commanders? *(Level 2-Learning)*
- How do the commanders at all echelons feel the APCC course has helped enable their Army Paralegals job performance within the unit? *(Level 1-Reaction)*

Evaluation Matrix

U.S. JAG Corps Legal Center and School (TJAGLCS) Evaluation Matrix			
Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Method (e.g., Survey, interview, observation)	Data source (e.g., participants, or existing data)	Data collection procedures (e.g., pre-test and post-test, post only survey)
Has job performance of Army Paralegals increased in the areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ effective legal writing ➤ client services ➤ administrative law ➤ national security law ➤ criminal law 	User Interviews Online Surveys	1-Course Developer 2-APCC instructors 5-APCC students	Post-Test Only
Is APCC distance learning course applications used within the unit?	Online Surveys Expert Reviews	3-Unit Commanders 4-Unit Senior NCOs 5-Squad Leaders 6-Team Leaders	Quasi-Experimental Post-Test Design
Did the APCC increase knowledge and skills for job proficiency?	Expert Reviews	4-APCC Instructors	Post-Course Only
Did the APCC students enjoy training, and do they think training was valuable?	Learner Questionnaires	10-APCC Students	Post-Test Only

Table 1. TJAGLCS Evaluation Matrix

U.S. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Evaluation Matrix			
Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Method (e.g., Survey, interview, observation)	Data source (e.g., participants, or existing data)	Data collection procedures (e.g., pre-test and post-test, post only survey)
Do the results of the APCC positively change the Army?	Commander Online Surveys TJAGCS Interviews	5-Multi-Echelon Commanders 1-NCO Academy Commandant	Pre-Test Post-Test
Has the knowledge and skills gained in the APCC resulted in a desire to formally adopt the project?	TRADOC G-1 Case Study TRADOC G-4 Case Study	1-Human Resources officer and senior enlisted advisor 1-Logistics and Budget Planner and senior enlisted advisor	Quasi-Experimental Post-Test Designs
Does the APCC increase mission success with the addition of a force multiplier?	TRADOC G-3 Interviews Army JAG General Surveys	1-The JAG Senior Officer 1-The JAG Senior Enlisted Advisor 1-G-3 Operations Officer 1-G-3 Operations Sergeants Major	Post-Test Only
How does the commanders within the Army feel the APCC course benefits their formations?	Commanders Interviews	5-Company Commanders 3-Battalion Commanders 1-Brigade Commander	Quasi-Experimental Post-Test Designs

Table 2. TRADOC Evaluation Matrix

Method Analysis

For this summative evaluation plan there will be several methods of data collection and information gathering techniques. Careful consideration was made to ensure the data and information collection methods fit the categories of both quantitative (numerical data) and qualitative (communication). The data collection methods and information collection techniques are briefly described within the previous evaluation matrix and this section will provide the depth and breadth of why they were selected. The following Tables 3 & 4 describe the data and information collection method and its analysis.

Methods Matrix

U.S. JAG Corps Legal Center and School (TJAGLCS) Methods Matrix				
Method	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
	Has job performance of Army Paralegals increased in the areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ effective legal writing ➤ client services ➤ administrative law ➤ national security law ➤ criminal law 	Is APCC distance learning course applications used within the unit?	Did the APCC increase knowledge and skills for job proficiency?	Did the APCC students enjoy training, and do they think training was valuable?
Anecdotal Records				
Questionnaire				
Interviews	✓			✓
Focus Groups				
Expert Reviews		✓	✓	
Observation Checklist				
Online Survey	✓	✓		
Case Study				

Table 3. TJAGLCS Evaluation Matrix

U.S. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Methods Matrix				
Method	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
	Do the results of the APCC positively change the Army?	Has the knowledge and skills gained in the APCC resulted in a desire to formally adopt the project?	Does the APCC increase mission success with the addition of a force multiplier?	How does the commanders within the Army feel the APCC course benefits their formations?
Anecdotal Records				
Questionnaire				
Interviews	✓		✓	✓
Focus Groups				
Expert Reviews				
Observation Checklist				
Online Survey	✓		✓	
Case Study		✓		

Table 4. TRADOC Method Matrix

U.S. JAG Corps Legal Center and School Method Analysis

Question 1- *Has the job performance of Army Paralegals increased in the areas of effective legal writing, client services, administrative law, national security law, and criminal law?*

Online Survey- The online survey method was chosen to allow a cost effective, accurate, easy to use, honest, and quick analysis method of the collected data and information. The purpose of using this method will be to ensure a methodical tailored question survey that aims at reaching quantitative results. The source of the online survey and telephonic questionnaires will come from a variety of sources to include (1x APCC course developer, 2x APCC Instructors, 5x APCC students). The online surveys will be used through a 48-question product key controlled 0-4 Linkert Scale email process. The results of the online survey will be used with the newly Army approved SurveyMonkey program. The focus of the survey will include questions that ask if their paralegals writing skills have increased, ability to execute the necessary client services tasks, and knowledge of administrative, NSA, and criminal law has increased.

Telephonic Interviews- The use of telephonic interviews will allow the interviewee to provide additional information and perspective during the interview than that of just the questions asked. Probing questions will be utilized, and the telephonic process will allow clarifying questions to be asked. Communication within this process can aide in a two-way method that will come from a variety of perspectives to include (1x APCC course developer, 2x APCC Instructors, 5x APCC students). The interviews will be conducted using a telephonic process under a military controlled NIPR line and will include tailored questions that aim at seeking the courses results within the course goals and objectives.

Question 2- *To what extent is the distance learning education in the APCC course applied by Army Paralegals within their units of assignment?*

Online Survey- Like the previous online survey method, this survey was chosen to allow a cost effective, accurate, easy to use, honest, and will provide a quick analysis of the collected data and information. The purpose of using this method will be to ensure a methodical tailored question survey that aims at reaching quantitative results. The source of the online survey and telephonic questionnaires will come from a variety of sources to include (3x Unit Commanders, 4x Senior NCOs, 5x Squad Leaders, 6x Team Leaders). The online surveys will be used through a 48-question product key controlled 0-4 Linkert Scale email process . The results of the online survey will be used with the newly Army approved Survey Monkey program. The focus of this survey will include questions that ask if their paralegals are able to apply the skills learned within the APCC to their job performance within the unit.

Expert Reviews- The expert review method for this question will allow the full analysis of the context and content of the APCC course. This expert review will allow the experts within the field of law to evaluate the practical application of the APCC course as it relates to the most current developments within the field of study. The experts can confirm or deny the results of the course objectives and goals within the operational environment. The source of the expert reviews will include(3x Unit Commanders, 4x Senior NCOs, 5x Squad Leaders, 6x Team Leaders). The expert reviews will consist of a 15 tailored question face-to-face interview that can help serve as a two-way communication to effectively evaluating the APCC course results. The questions will focus on how the APCC, has or has not, effectively provided the resident knowledge to applying those human performance skills to job application within the unit from all levels of management.

U.S. JAG Corps Legal Center and School Method Analysis Cont'd

Question 3- *Did the asynchronous APCC course help the students learn the new knowledge and skills to increase potential job proficiency?*

Expert Reviews- Like the previous expert review method, for this question, it will allow the full analysis of the context and content of the APCC course. This expert review will allow the experts within the field of law to evaluate the practical application of the APCC course as it relates to the most current developments within the field of study. The experts can confirm or deny the results of the course objectives and goals within the operational environment. The source of the expert reviews will include (4x APCC instructors). The expert reviews will consist of a 25 tailored question face-to-face interview that can help serve as a two-way communication to effectively evaluating the APCC course results. The questions will focus on the instructors prospective of the new knowledge gained from students from onset of the course through the completion. It will help to determine the growth rate of skills and knowledge throughout the distance learning course implementation.

Question 4- *How was the asynchronous distance learning and did students enjoy the training and do they think the training is applicable to their career management field?*

Telephonic Interviews- Like the previous use of telephonic interviews this method will allow the interviewee to provide additional information and perspective during the interview than that of just the questions asked. Probing questions and the telephonic process will allow clarifying questions to be asked. Communication within this process can aide in a two-way method that will come from a variety of perspectives to include (10x APCC students). Because this course is executed asynchronous, the interviews will be conducted using a telephonic process under a military controlled NIPR line. The questions will focus on the student's perspective on course application to the knowledge and skills needed for application within their job fields and fields of study.

Training and Doctrine Command Method Analysis

Question 1- *Do the results of the education provided to the students of the APCC positively change the in a way that exceed the cost associated with funding the project?*

Online Survey- Like the previously discussed online survey's this method was chosen to allow a cost effective, accurate, easy to use, honest, and quick analysis method of the collected data and information. The purpose of using this method will be to ensure a methodical tailored question survey that aims at reaching quantitative results. The source of the online survey and telephonic questionnaires will come from a variety of sources to include (5x Multi-Echelon Commanders and 1x NCO Commandant). The online surveys will be used through a 48-question product key controlled 0-4 Linkert Scale email process. The results of the online survey will be used with the newly Army approved SurveyMonkey program. The focus of this survey will include questions that ask if the APCC is cost effective and produces results that exceed the overall APCC budget cost. Commanders from multiple levels will aide with achieving the right evaluation of this time resource consideration.

Telephonic Interviews- The use of telephonic interviews will allow the interviewee to provide additional information and perspective during the interview than that of just the questions asked. Probing questions and the telephonic process will allow clarifying questions to be asked. The source of the expert reviews will include (5x Multi-Echelon Commanders and 1x NCO Commandant). Communication within this process can aide in a two-way method that will come from a variety of perspectives and will include interviews that will be conducted using a telephonic process under a military controlled NIPR line. The interviews will include tailored questions that aim at the cost to benefit ratio for the APCC course from the holistic Army organization perspective.

Question 2- *Has the application of knowledge and skills for soldiers after formal education in the APCC course influenced positive change within the unit that constitutes formal adoption of the project?*

Case Study- This case study method will help the summative evaluation plan by taking the opinions and judgements from the course and turning them into facts. This case study will take the observations throughout the course implementation and turn them into useable information and data for the APCC. The case study used in this summative evaluation will be inexpensive and accessible to all the stakeholders involved because the Army has a structural foundation to conduct these regularly. The source for this case study will involve the (TRADOC G-1 that owns the human resourcing for this course and the TRADOC G-4, who owns the fiscal budget for this course). This case study will focus on ensuring that the course goals and objectives along with the feedback from other surveys, interviews, reviews, etc. are beneficial enough to justify formal adoption of the program for holistic Army implementation.

Training and Doctrine Command Method Analysis Cont'd

Question 3- *Does the APCC asynchronous course increased mission success through education by providing a paralegal that is force a multiplier for all echelons of commanders?*

Online Survey- Like the previously discussed online survey's this method was chosen to allow a cost effective, accurate, easy to use, honest, and quick analysis of the collected data and information. The purpose of using this method will be to ensure a methodical tailored question survey that aims at reaching quantitative results. The source of the online survey and telephonic questionnaires will come from a variety of sources to include (1x JAG Senior Officer, 1x JAG Senior Enlisted Advisor, 1x G-3 Operations Officer, 1x G-3 Operations Sergeant Major). The online surveys will be used through a 48-question product key controlled 0-4 Linkert Scale email process. The results of the online survey will be used with the newly approved Army SurveyMonkey program. The focus survey will include questions that ask if the APCC is helping to shape change within the entire Army Organization. Within the bigger Army context does the APCC seem to help commanders across the Army gain the needed expertise of the assigned paralegal to help achieve greater legal success across the organization.

Telephonic Interviews- Like previously discussed the use of telephonic interviews will allow the interviewee to provide additional information and perspective during the interview than that of just the questions asked. Probing questions and the telephonic process will allow clarifying questions to be asked. The source of the expert reviews will include (1x JAG Senior Officer, 1x JAG Senior Enlisted Advisor, 1x G-3 Operations Officer, 1x G-3 Operations Sergeant Major). Communication within this process can aide in a two-way method. The interviews will be conducted using a telephonic process under a military controlled NIPR line and will include Army unit statistical data comparison on paralegal performance of those units that have paralegals that attended the APCC vs. those units that have paralegals that have not attended the APCC.

Question 4- *How do the commanders at all echelons feel the APCC course has helped enable their Army Paralegals job performance within the unit?*

Telephonic Interviews- Like previously discussed the use of telephonic interviews will allow the interviewee to provide additional information and perspective during the interview than that of just the questions asked. Probing questions and the telephonic process will allow clarifying questions to be asked. The source of the expert reviews will include (5x Company Commanders, 3x Battalion Commanders, 1x Brigade Commander). Communication within this process can aide in a two-way method and the interviews will be conducted using a telephonic process under a military controlled NIPR line. The interviews will include tailored questions that aim a total echelon perspective of how the APCC course has enabled success or failure with the requirements of paralegals human performance in the unit.

Other Tools and Techniques Not Used

The scope and timeline of this summative evaluation plan will not provide the opportunity to use all methods and tools typically available. There are many tools and methods that would have been both beneficial and aided the summative evaluation plan to even more success. Due to time and resource constraints these other tools and methods will not be used. Some of those tools and methods include:

Observation Checklists: Observation checklists can provide a reliable and valuable tool for the summative evaluation plan. The length of the checklist can be tailored to fit the needs of the data and information you are trying to collect. The creation of checklists can ensure the data and information the researcher is collecting is right in front of them. The ease of access to the data and information you are trying to collect allows for the right collection the first time. The ability to make ease of the data and information you are trying to collect can ensure that no steps are missed within the process. Due to the complexity of APCC, and the questions needed within the summative evaluation plan, the creation of multiple checklist at various echelons was not feasible. There was a need to create multiple checklists with several tailored checklist items to be effective. If given more time for this summative evaluation plan, observation checklists would have greatly enhanced the overall product.

Focus Groups: The method of using focus groups would greatly enhance the results of the summative evaluation plan and provided a better product for the APCC. The ability to interact with participants that are part of the focus group helps in providing the face-to-face interaction for breadth and depth of results. With the face-to-face interaction the research team could pick up on the non-verbal communication feedback that surveys and interviews do not provide. These groups can be assembled easily but with this summative evaluation plan, it involved a distance learning course with stakeholders spread out over various locations. Some of the stakeholders are separated not only by states but also by separate countries. Although this is a great tool and method, the resourcing needed for this tool was not feasible for this summative evaluation plan.

Questionnaires: This instrument of data and information gathering is an additional affordable way to collect large amounts of data and information. This method is practical and can provide targeted data analysis with a variety of different formats. This like interviews, can be scalable to fit the summative evaluations needs and can help solidify the quantitative data an information the project seeks. The questionnaires can provide actionable data and a comfortable environment for candid results. If more time were provided during this summative evaluation plan, the ability to create the right questionnaires for the appropriate questions would have provided even greater results.

Conclusion

During the outline of the scope of this summative evaluation plan, we discussed the audience, established evaluation questions, the evaluation design and associated matrix, and the established methods. In addition, we discussed some preferred tools and methods that would have produced greater results for this summative evaluation plan, if given more time for this project. Creating a summative evaluation plan for the Army Paralegal Competency Course (APCC), has put into motion the ability to help drive the change needed in increasing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of the paralegal students who participate within the course of instruction. In the end, this paper has helped provide a summative evaluation plan that will furnish the necessary feedback to ensuring that the APCC students have effectively and efficiently met all required and intended course goals and objectives.

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